

# Key signatures and the circle of 4ths

A **Key Signature** shows how many notes are sharped or flatted in a scale. Knowing the key signatures allows the musician to spell scales quicker than using intervals. Each major scale has a specific key signature. The circle of fourths is the perfect tool for memorizing key signatures and major scales. It is helpful to picture a clock when thinking of the circle. At the 12 o'clock position is the key of C and it has no sharps or flats. Flat keys are to the right of C and sharp keys are to the left.

## Major flat keys

Every key moving clockwise from C has a flat added to the key signature. The key of Db, for example, is five keys away from C and has five flats. The key of F is one key away from C and has one flat.

Key Signature	F	B <sup>b</sup>	E <sup>b</sup>	A <sup>b</sup>	D <sup>b</sup>	G <sup>b</sup>	C <sup>b</sup>
Number of flats	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

*Mnemonic device to remember how many flats are in a key*

For B<sup>b</sup>etter E<sup>b</sup>arth A<sup>b</sup>lways D<sup>b</sup>rive G<sup>b</sup>reen C<sup>b</sup>ars

## Major sharp keys

Every key moving counter clockwise from C has a sharp added to the key signature. The key of A, for example, is three keys away from C and has three sharps. The key of F# is six keys away from C and has six sharps.

Key Signature	G	D	A	E	B	F <sup>#</sup>	C <sup>#</sup>
Number of sharps	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

*Mnemonic device to remember how many sharps are in a key*

Good Dogs Always Eat Boneless F<sup>#</sup>ried C<sup>#</sup>hicken

## Order of accidentals

The notes that are raised or lowered in a major scale follow a specific order. Flat keys start on B and go up in fourths. The key of Db has five flats and they are: B<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>, A<sup>b</sup>, D<sup>b</sup>, and G<sup>b</sup>. Sharp keys start on F and go up in fifths (back in fourths). The key of B has five sharps and they are: F<sup>#</sup>, C<sup>#</sup>, G<sup>#</sup>, D<sup>#</sup>, and A<sup>#</sup>. It is useful to memorize the order B E A D G C F to know which notes are raised or lowered in different keys. Notes in flat keys go from left to right and notes in sharp keys go from right to left.

