



Key Signatures

Key signatures (commonly referred to as “keys”) are found at the beginning of a piece of music between the clef and the time signature. Key signatures indicate the notes within a piece of music that need to be raised or lowered by a half step. Sharps raise notes by a half step while flats lower notes by a half step. In tonal music, two types of keys exist: major and minor. Every major key is shared by a relative minor key (e.g., C major = A minor). *Relative* keys share the same key signature, but have different tonal centers. *Parallel* keys share the same tonal center, but have different key signatures (e.g., G major and G minor). The *tonal center* is the same as the resolution note or tonic note of a key (e.g., B is the tonal center of B major and B minor).

Order Sharps in Key Signatures:

1 st Sharp	2 nd Sharp	3 rd Sharp	4 th Sharp	5 th Sharp	6 th Sharp	7 th Sharp
F#	C#	G#	D#	A#	E#	B#

Remember this order with the phrase: **F**ather **C**harles **G**oes **D**own **A**nd **E**nds **B**attle.

Order Flats in Key Signatures:

1 st Flat	2 nd Flat	3 rd Flat	4 th Flat	5 th Flat	6 th Flat	7 th Flat
Bb	Eb	Ab	Db	Gb	Cb	Fb

Remember this order with the phrase: **B**attle **E**nds **A**nd **D**own **G**oes **C**harles **F**ather.

It is the same phrase used with the order of sharps backwards.

The chart below links each major key with its shared relative minor key. It also shows a picture of the key signatures on a bass clef staff and lists the number of flats or sharps in each key.



Major Key	Relative Minor Key	Staff	Number of Flats	Major Key	Relative Minor Key	Staff	Number of Sharps
C major	A minor		0				
F major	D minor		1	G major	E minor		1
Bb major	G minor		2	D major	B minor		2
Eb major	C minor		3	A major	F# minor		3
Ab major	F minor		4	E major	C# minor		4
Db major	Bb minor		5	B major	G# minor		5
Gb major	Eb minor		6	F# major	D# minor		6
Cb major	Ab minor		7	C# major	A# minor		7