

## Figuring out keys and key signatures in scales and music:

Each key has a set of sharps/flats that apply to that key and scale.

Key - signature

C - all natural

F - B $\flat$

B $\flat$  - B $\flat$  E $\flat$

E $\flat$  - B $\flat$  E $\flat$  A $\flat$

A $\flat$  - B $\flat$  E $\flat$  A $\flat$  D $\flat$

D $\flat$  - B $\flat$  E $\flat$  A $\flat$  D $\flat$  G $\flat$

G $\flat$  - B $\flat$  E $\flat$  A $\flat$  D $\flat$  G $\flat$  C $\flat$

B - F $\sharp$  C $\sharp$  G $\sharp$  D $\sharp$  A $\sharp$

E - F $\sharp$  C $\sharp$  G $\sharp$  D $\sharp$

A - F $\sharp$  C $\sharp$  G $\sharp$

D - F $\sharp$  C $\sharp$

G - F $\sharp$

Start on C and go up four notes, you get the next key, F.

Start on G at the bottom, and count up five notes, you get D.

This is how you move “around the circle of fifths” or, if you start at the top, “the circle of fourths”.

Notice how the flats increase, one at a time, and always in the same order. B $\flat$  is always the first flat, E $\flat$  will always be the second flat, and so on.

Notice how F $\sharp$  is always the first sharp, how C $\sharp$  is always the second, and so on.

The reason why this is called a circle is because, if you take G and go up four notes, you end up back up at the top, on C. Likewise, if you take C and count up five notes, you end up on G, at the bottom.

G $\flat$ , in the middle, has six flats. That is the same exact scale/key as F $\sharp$ . F $\sharp$  and G $\flat$  are the same note, written two different ways. This is called **enharmonics**. Here are the enharmonic notes:

F $\sharp$ =G $\flat$  G $\sharp$ =A $\flat$  A $\sharp$ =B $\flat$  B $\sharp$ =C C $\flat$ =B C $\sharp$ =D $\flat$  D $\sharp$ =E $\flat$  E $\sharp$ =F F $\flat$ =E In the middle, remember that the key of G $\flat$  is the same exact thing as the key of F $\sharp$ . They are the same exact note, just named two different ways. Played at the exact same spots on the fretboard.

The order of sharps and flats will help you remember Keys. The first sharp will always be F#, second will always be C#, then G# and so on.

The order of flats operates in the same way. You always start with Bb, then Eb, then Ab and so on.

If you remove sharps, they come off in the same order. Four flats will always be Bb Eb Ab Db. Remove one and go to three flats, you will always lose the Db.

So, if you can memorize the order of the flats, and then memorize the keys, you will always know the key of D major has 2 sharps, and the first two sharps are F# and C#.

To increase sight reading ability, start learning a major scale, C, which has no sharps or flats. If you memorize the scale, you memorize the key. Memorize it on the fretboard, and be able to name each note as you play it, up and back down. Also play the arpeggio (which is the root, third, fifth, and octave) and name it as you play. And look at the notes on a staff as you play.

Then play an easy piece of music in that same exact key. Once you master the easy tune, pick a more challenging tune in that key. And so on...

Pick the next scale and learn it (maybe either G major or F major). Do music in that key the same way.

It is a slow process, but you only have to learn it once. Once you learn the C major scale (and key), you will always have it.

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