

# Practical Chords & Harmony: a Player's Guide

[www.practical-chords-and-harmony.com](http://www.practical-chords-and-harmony.com)

## Key Signatures & the Circle of 5ths

Starting with the key of C, notice the order of the Key signatures as the **SHARPS** are added: **G - D - A - E - B - F# - C#**  
As each sharp is added the Key is a 5th higher than the preceding key. (**The CIRCLE of 5ths - clockwise**)

C major	G major	D major	A major	E major	B major	F# major	C# major
A minor	E minor	B minor	F# minor	C# minor	G# minor	D# minor	A# minor



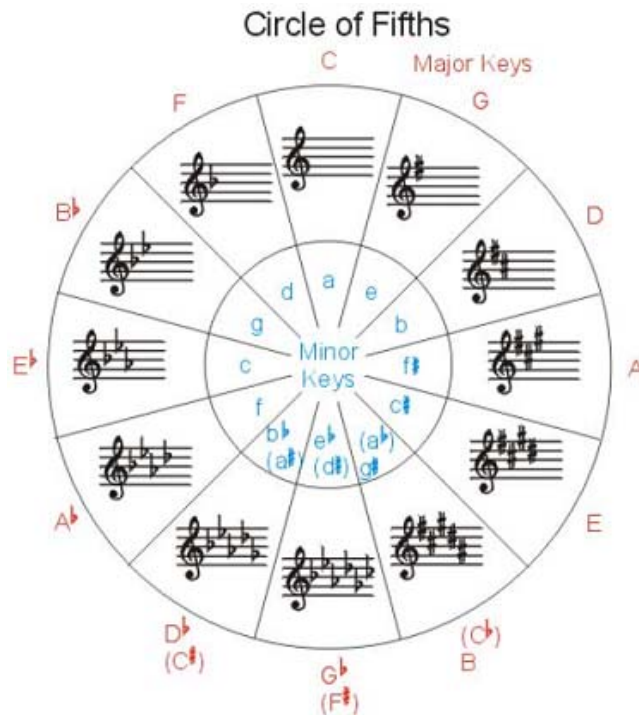
A musical staff in treble clef showing the key signatures for C major, G major, D major, A major, E major, B major, F# major, and C# major. Each key signature is represented by a series of sharp symbols (#) on the staff lines, corresponding to the notes F, C, G, D, A, E, B, and F# respectively.

Starting with the key of C, notice the order of the Key signatures as the **FLATS** are added: **F - Bb - Eb - Ab - Db - Gb - Cb**  
As each flat is added the Key is a 5th lower than the preceding key. (**The CIRCLE of 5ths - counter-clockwise**)

C major	F major	Bb major	Eb major	Ab major	Db major	Gb major	Cb major
A minor	D minor	G minor	C minor	F minor	Bb minor	Eb minor	Ab minor



A musical staff in treble clef showing the key signatures for C major, F major, Bb major, Eb major, Ab major, Db major, Gb major, and Cb major. Each key signature is represented by a series of flat symbols (b) on the staff lines, corresponding to the notes F, C, G, D, A, E, B, and F# respectively.



The circle of fifths is a handy device that shows the relationships of the twelve tones of the chromatic scale and their corresponding key signatures (major and relative minors)....

....**The circle's design is helpful in composing and harmonizing melodies, building chords, and moving to different keys within a composition....** (from Wikipedia - the free encyclopedia)

Starting at the top of the circle, the key of C Major (or A minor) has no sharps or flats. Going up 5 scale steps, or a fifth - the key of G major has one sharp; going up 5 scale steps from G, the key of D has 2 sharps, and so on. The key of A major has 3 sharps, E major has 4 sharps, etc....

Similarly, going counterclockwise from the top, we are descending by fifths - the key of F major has one flat, the key of Bb major has 2 flats, and so on. At the bottom of the circle, the sharp and flat keys overlap. These are **enharmonic spellings** of the same key; i.e., **B = Cb - F# = Gb - C# = Db** (they are the same pitches or musical tones.)