

# Key Signatures and key Signature Charts | Amy Linington Music

A guide to how to work out key signatures. Look out for a guide explaining all about key signatures and why we have them coming soon.

## Key Signatures

In Western musical notation, a **key signature** is a set of sharp (#), flat (b) symbols situated on the staff at the beginning of a piece or section of music.

The initial key signature is placed immediately after the clef at the beginning of the first line. The Time signature would come after the key signature.



If the piece contains a section in a different key, the new key signature is placed at the beginning of that section.

Each major and minor key has its own key signature, showing up to seven flats or seven sharps, that indicates the notes used in its scale. I am going to show you the key signature to each scale and an easy way of working them out.

## Key Signature Chart



The chart displays two rows of musical staves. The first row shows major scales with their key signatures: C major (no sharps/flats), G major (one sharp), D major (two sharps), A major (three sharps), E major (four sharps), B major (five sharps), F# major (six sharps), and C# major (seven sharps). The second row shows minor scales with their key signatures: A minor (no sharps/flats), E minor (one flat), B minor (two flats), F# minor (three sharps), C# minor (four sharps), G# minor (five sharps), D# minor (six sharps), and A# minor (seven sharps).

Major Scale	Minor Scale
C major	A minor
G major	E minor
D major	B minor
A major	F# minor
E major	C# minor
B major	G# minor
F# major	D# minor
C# major	A# minor

The chart above shows the key signatures for all major and minor scales.

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There are several ways to work out key signatures on the go but for the purpose of theory exams and thorough knowledge, I suggest learning to write out the chart above before any workings out. It's much easier than you think and you can do it in about 2 minutes with practice.

All you need to remember is that

- when working out both flats and sharps, C major and a minor have no key signature and you work up from there.
- With sharps you work in 5s
- With flats you work in 4s

### Sharps

#### The rule of 5s

- Start at C which has no key signature.
- Count up a perfect 5th and you come to G which has one sharp.
- Count up a perfect 5th and you come to D which has 2 sharps
- Count up a perfect 5th and you come to A which has 3 sharps
- Keep going until you get to C Sharp major...

**C...G...D...A...E...B...F#...C#**

#### The Order Of Sharps

This also follows a rule of 5s

- The first sharp is F#
- Count up 5 and you come to C#
- Count up 5 and you come to G#
- Keep going....

**F#...C#...G#...D#...A#...E#...B#**

**Father Christmas Goes Dancing And Eats Brownies.**

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## Relative Minors

To work out the relative minor you can either count 3 semitones down from the major key or start at A and count up 5!

**A...E...B...F#...C#...G#...D#...A#**

## Flats

To work out the flats for your chart you do the exact same thing but counting a perfect 4th instead of a 5th.

So

**C...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>**

Same with the order of the Flats...

**B<sup>b</sup> ...E<sup>b</sup> ...A<sup>b</sup> ...D<sup>b</sup> ...G<sup>b</sup> ...C<sup>b</sup> ...A<sup>b</sup>**

**BEAD - Good Chain Always**

Same with the Relative Minors

A+4 and so on

**A...D...G...C...F...B<sup>b</sup> ... E<sup>b</sup> ...A<sup>b</sup>**

**See if you can complete the chart on the next page**

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A musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The first measure is a whole note chord with one sharp (F#). The following seven measures each contain a whole note chord with an increasing number of sharps: two sharps (F#, C#), three sharps (F#, C#, G#), four sharps (F#, C#, G#, D#), five sharps (F#, C#, G#, D#, A#), six sharps (F#, C#, G#, D#, A#, E#), and seven sharps (F#, C#, G#, D#, A#, E#, B#). Below the staff are eight empty rounded rectangular boxes, each containing a wavy line, corresponding to the eight measures above.

A musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The first measure is a whole note chord with one flat (Bb). The following seven measures each contain a whole note chord with an increasing number of flats: two flats (Bb, Eb), three flats (Bb, Eb, Ab), four flats (Bb, Eb, Ab, Db), five flats (Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, Gb), six flats (Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, Gb, Cb), and seven flats (Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, Gb, Cb, Fb). Below the staff are eight empty rounded rectangular boxes, each containing a wavy line, corresponding to the eight measures above.