

Music – Key Signatures



All scales and patterns in music are built using tones and semitones. The western keyboard contains black and white keys in a pattern. A semitone is the distance between 2 direct 'neighbour' keys, for example, C to C# or E to F. A tone is the distance between two semitones, for example C to D or G to A.

If we play a C major scale on the keyboard, it uses only white keys. This creates a 'blueprint' for a major scale:

Tone Tone **Semitone** Tone Tone Tone **Semitone**

If you then apply this pattern to a different starting note, G for example, you will create a scale of G major:

G A B C D E F# G

Tone Tone **Semitone** Tone Tone Tone **Semitone**

In order for the blueprint to be successful, we need to use an F#. Instead of trying to remember to sharpen every F in the piece, we write it in the Key Signature at the start of the music:



Remember to use the line of 5ths to help you with key signatures.

Number of b in Key Signature							Number of # in Key Signature							
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Cb	Gb	Db	Ab	Eb	Bb	F	C	G	D	A	E	B	F#	C#

Minor Keys

- Every major key signature has a 'relative minor'. The minor uses the key signature of its cousin. Firstly, work out the Major Key Signature like before. You now need to count **down** 3 semi-tones. This is the relative minor.

E.g.



- This key is Eb Major.
- To find the Relative Minor Key, count 3 steps down
- The relative Minor Key is C Minor

