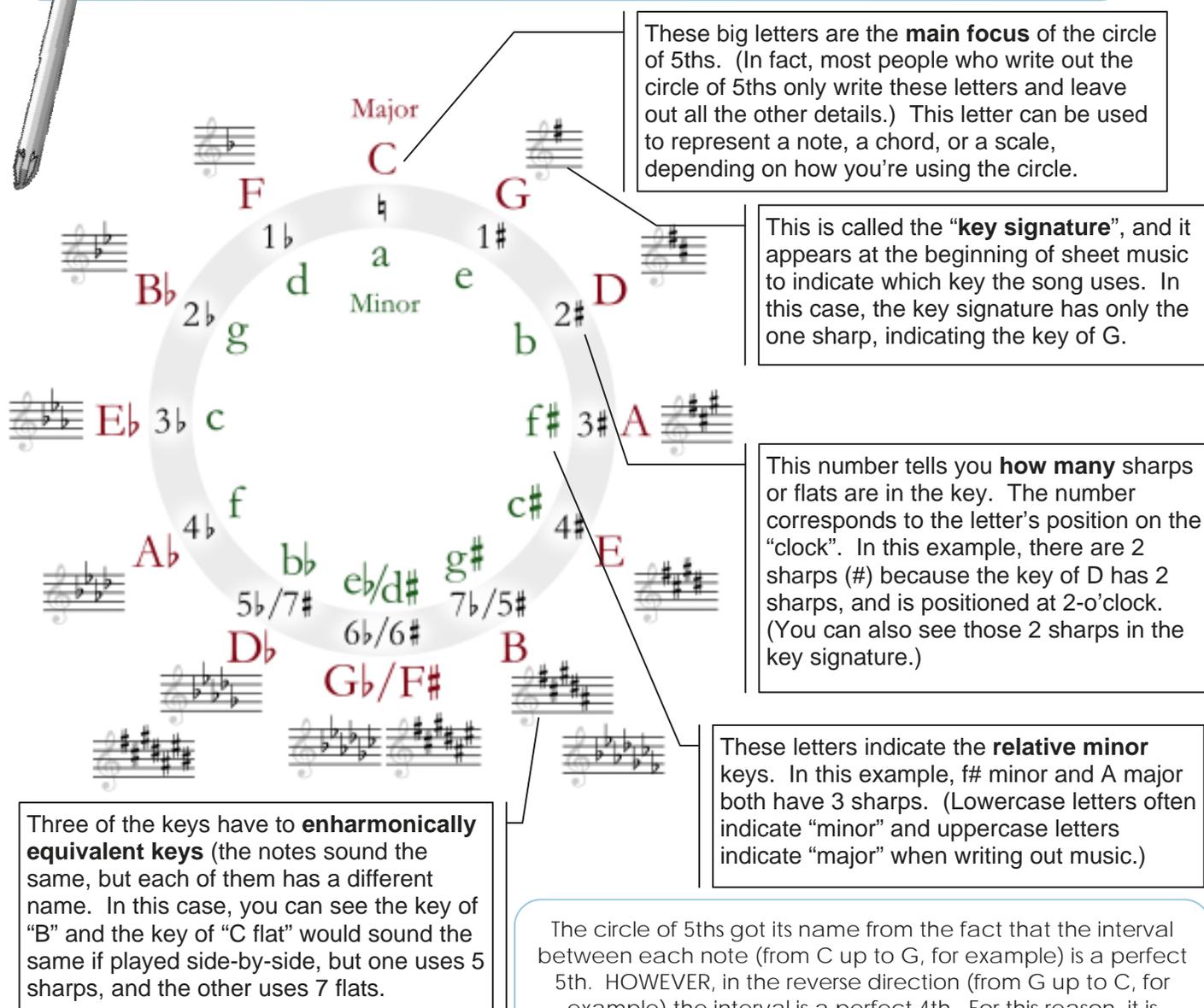


Circle of 5ths (General)



The circle of 5ths is a tool, and there is not just one way to use it. In general, it maps out the relationships between different notes, keys, and chords. Just like any tool, there is no point in having it unless you have a use for it. However, once you start learning how to use it, you will find other uses for it too.

Set up just like a clock, there are 12 positions on the circle. There are two sides: the sharp side (on the right, where there are only sharps) and the flat side (on the left, where there are only flats).



These big letters are the **main focus** of the circle of 5ths. (In fact, most people who write out the circle of 5ths only write these letters and leave out all the other details.) This letter can be used to represent a note, a chord, or a scale, depending on how you're using the circle.

This is called the **"key signature"**, and it appears at the beginning of sheet music to indicate which key the song uses. In this case, the key signature has only the one sharp, indicating the key of G.

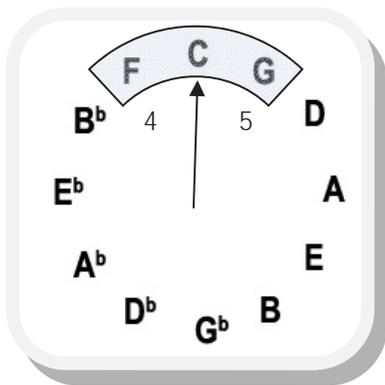
This number tells you **how many** sharps or flats are in the key. The number corresponds to the letter's position on the "clock". In this example, there are 2 sharps (#) because the key of D has 2 sharps, and is positioned at 2-o'clock. (You can also see those 2 sharps in the key signature.)

These letters indicate the **relative minor** keys. In this example, f# minor and A major both have 3 sharps. (Lowercase letters often indicate "minor" and uppercase letters indicate "major" when writing out music.)

Three of the keys have to **enharmonically equivalent keys** (the notes sound the same, but each of them has a different name. In this case, you can see the key of "B" and the key of "C flat" would sound the same if played side-by-side, but one uses 5 sharps, and the other uses 7 flats.

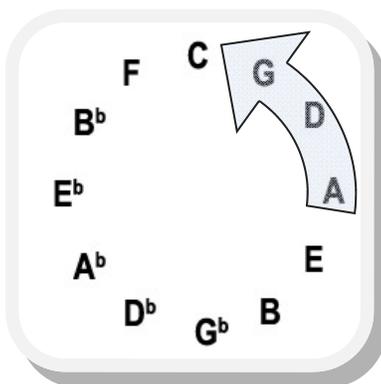
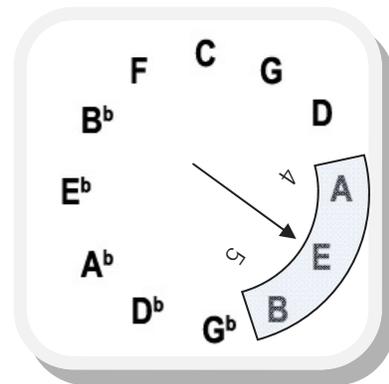
The circle of 5ths got its name from the fact that the interval between each note (from C up to G, for example) is a perfect 5th. HOWEVER, in the reverse direction (from G up to C, for example) the interval is a perfect 4th. For this reason, it is sometimes called the circle of 4ths.

Circle of 5ths for Finding Common Chords



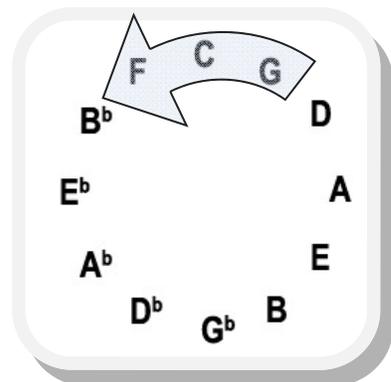
One of the uses of the circle of 5ths is to find common chords. The 1, 4, and 5 chords are commonly used in most songs. When you find the 1 chord (also the name of the key you're in, "C", in this example), the 4 is just to the left ("F" in this case) and the 5 is just to the right ("G" in this case).

In this example, we're in the key of "E". "A" is the 4, and "B" is the 5. This works with any key.



At the end of a song, a "turn-around" is used to go back to the beginning or to sing the chorus again. To create a convincing turn-around, just pick the chords to the right of the chord you want to land on. In this example, we want to land on "C" because it's the first chord at the beginning of the song, and we have enough time to play three chords first. At the end of the song, we would use the three chords to the right of "C" (A, D, & G) and then land on "C" to start the song again.**

In this example, we're in the key of "Bb". For our turn-around, we would play G, C, F, then start the song on "Bb". This works with any key.**



**For most songs, you will want to be sure that the chords to the turn-around are also diatonic (stay inside the key), so some chords will be major and some of them will be minor.