

### Section 2.5

#### KEY SIGNATURES SELF-STUDY TIPS

##### Order of flats in key signatures

The order of flats on the staff for key signatures is B, E, A, D, G, C, F, which spells **BEAD-Greatest-Common-Factor**. The visual line/space pattern is up four, down five, counting the start as one each time.

##### Order of sharps in key signatures

The order of sharps on the staff for key signatures is F, C, G, D, A, E, B. You can remember this with **Fat Cats Go Down Alleys Eating Birds**. The visual line/space pattern is **down four, up five**, except A sharp.

##### Finding the key given a key signature

For flat keys, the key is the **second-to-last flat** in the key signature (except F major). For sharp keys, the key is always a **half step higher** than the **last sharp** in the key signature.

D $\flat$  is second to last.      Exceptions:      One half step above G $\sharp$  is A.      Tricky keys:

D $\flat$  major    F major    C major      A major      F $\sharp$  major      C $\sharp$  major

##### Frank/Metz key signature tool

Ken Metz and Robert Frank's excellent book **Fundamentals for the Aspiring Musician** (published by Routledge and available everywhere) includes this tool for major keys:

**STEP 1:** Write down the order of sharps: F, C, G, D, A, E, B.

**STEP 2:** Starting with C as 0, write the number of **sharps** above each note, **left to right**. G major has one sharp, D major has two sharps, A has 3, E has 4, and B has 5. When you get to 6, go back to F and write 6 for F sharp major and 7 for C sharp major.








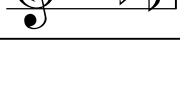
**STEP 3:** Starting with C as 0, write the number **flats** below each note, **right to left**. So F has 1, B flat has 2, E flat has 3, etc. Each column adds to 7; see **2.3 Learning Major Key Signatures**.

(F $\sharp$ )	(C $\sharp$ )					
6	7	1	2	3	4	5
F	C (0)	G	D	A	E	B
1	7	6	5	4	3	2
	(C $\flat$ )	(G $\flat$ )	(D $\flat$ )	(A $\flat$ )	(E $\flat$ )	(B $\flat$ )




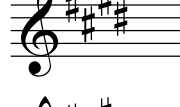

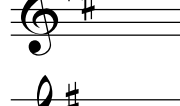


**The ultimate shortcut**

The ultimate shortcut, and ultimate goal, is to **memorize all the keys**. Cover up the answers below to quiz yourself. Work on small groups at a time, practice major and minor keys separately, and learn both directions (say the key for a given number of sharps or flats **AND** say the number of sharps or flats for a given key).

## Flat Keys

	<b>C/a</b>
	<b>F/d</b>
	<b>B<sup>b</sup>/g</b>
	<b>E<sup>b</sup>/c</b>
	<b>A<sup>b</sup>/f</b>
	<b>D<sup>b</sup>/b<sup>b</sup></b>
	<b>G<sup>b</sup>/e<sup>b</sup></b>
	<b>C<sup>b</sup>/a<sup>b</sup></b>

## Sharp Keys

	<b>C<sup>#</sup>/a<sup>#</sup></b>
	<b>F<sup>#</sup>/d<sup>#</sup></b>
	<b>B/g<sup>#</sup></b>
	<b>E/c<sup>#</sup></b>
	<b>A/f<sup>#</sup></b>
	<b>D/b</b>
	<b>G/e</b>
	<b>C/a</b>