

What does all this mean when you're looking at a piece of music?? How do you make use of all this seemingly mysterious info? Check this out... Raising or lowering the pitch of a note by half steps requires the use of the symbols you saw on the previous page...

#=SHARP ♭=FLAT ♮=NATURAL (or CANCEL)

So...if you see the "sharp" symbol placed just before the note named "G"... you would then refer to that note by its new name: "G-Sharp"!! However, if the "G" was preceded by the "flat" symbol, it would instead be called "G-Flat." The use of the "Natural" symbol immediately preceding the "G" cancels the name change and restores the "G-Flat" or "G-Sharp" to being just plain ol' "G" again. Examine this example:

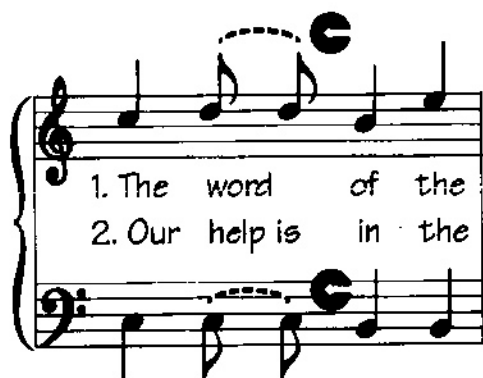


Raising or lowering a note in any measure to a value different from that indicated by the KEY SIGNATURE (more about that later...film at eleven!) is known as using an ACCIDENTAL. This accidental is valid ONLY IN THE MEASURE IN WHICH IT WAS ALTERED....EXCEPT...(of course

there's an exception!)... when the altered note is TIED to a note in one or more succeeding measures. What's a TIE? I thought you would never ask! A TIE is a curved line that is placed over two notes of the same pitch, joining them together. Two quarter notes tied together are sung as a half-note. Two half-notes tied together are sung as a whole note. Simply, COMBINE THE VALUE of any two notes that are tied together. If the first note happens to have been altered as an ACCIDENTAL, and the note to which it is tied is on the other side of a bar line, the accidental carries over to that next note! See the following example:



Here's another variation of the tie that you will sometimes see in choral music. It looks like a regular Tie but it appears to be drawn with a dashed line. This is used when there are two or more verses sung to the same music. Alternate verses may contain words with more or less syllables than when first sung. The Dashed-line tie is used to indicate that the tie applies in one verse, and is ignored in the next...sort of a yes/no, off/on thing. Here's what it looks like:



Note that this portion of the first verse has only FOUR syllables. The second verse has FIVE. The same notes are used for both verses but the first time the two eighth notes are sung as a quarter note (♪+♪=♪), the second as two eighth notes. Now that's not too hard, is it?

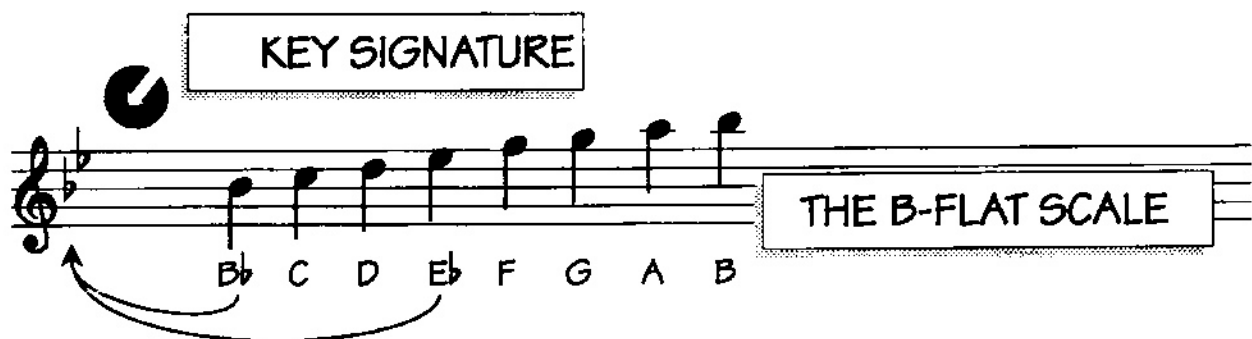
(NOTE: To insure clarity in the above example, the alto and tenor notes were removed.)

The Tie is only one of many notational conventions you will encounter. So... let us cover some of the extremely important and necessary ones. The first has already been mentioned but not explained. That is about to be remedied!

THE KEY SIGNATURE

Now, if the entire piece of music used "accidentals" ALL the time, the music would be VERY cluttered and difficult to read. Named after and based on various Major scales, the Key Signature literally "UNLOCKS" the music. It simplifies notation, makes reading easier and tells you at a glance the SCALE that was used to compose the music. It displays which notes in the chosen scale are "sharp" or "flat." It is truly the KEY to understanding how to read, or sing, or play the music.

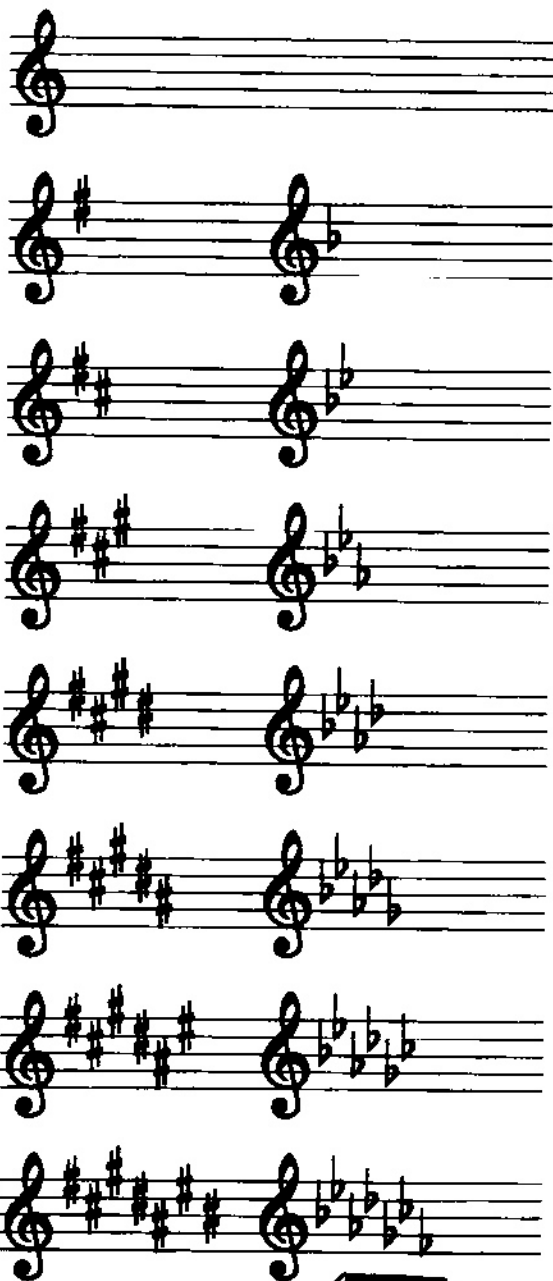
How do we use this valuable info? You may remember our brief discussion of the Treble and Bass Clef Signs. When the desired key is indicated by grouping the appropriate sharps or flats for that particular key, The resulting grouping is known as the KEY SIGNATURE. (Of course there's an exception! There's always an exception! The KEY of "C" has neither "Sharps" nor "Flats," so obviously none are shown.) Each KEY is based on the scale that gives the key its name. For example, the scale for the KEY of B-Flat begins with B-Flat and is followed by C, D, E-flat, F, G, A and the OCTAVE, B-Flat.



Now when you see a Key Signature you will know which notes are to be flattened or sharpened throughout the piece...until you run into those "accidentals, that is!

The Key Signatures of all the other keys are constructed in exactly the same manner. In order to "burn" this into your subconscious a little, take a few moments and REALLY look at the charts on the next two pages. I have prepared a list of the key signatures of all the MAJOR SCALES in both Treble and Bass clef forms...

TREBLE CLEF SIGNATURES

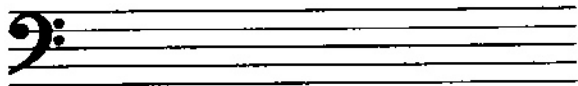









KEY NAMES

C	
G	F
D	B \flat
A	E \flat
E	A \flat
B	D \flat
F \sharp	G \flat
C \sharp	C \flat



That takes care of the UPPER HALF of the keyboard, but those singing from the BASS CLEF will see it slightly differently. Check out the page at right to see the same information as above, but as applied to the BASS CLEF..

BASS CLEF SIGNATURES	KEY NAMES	
	C	
	G	F
	D	Bb
	A	Eb
	E	Ab
	B	Db
	F#	Gb
	C#	Cb

It's time now to learn about other notational conventions that are extremely necessary when reading music...

HOW DO I KNOW WHICH PART TO SING?

WHICH NOTES DO I SING?

Here is the most common way you will see the four parts presented in four-part choral writing. The four parts are, as you probably already know, Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass. This is referred to as SATB*. You will sometimes see the parts presented as an "open" score, but more about that later.



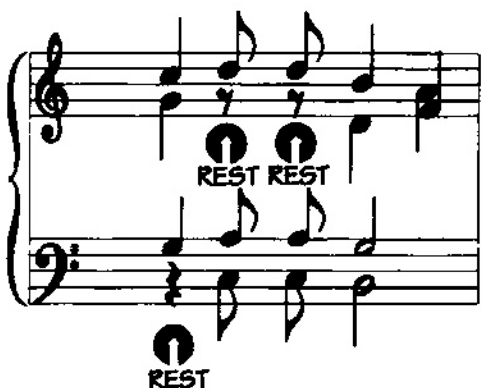
TREBLE CLEF STAFF

- ☐ Soprano notes have all STEMS up.
- ☐ Alto notes have all stems down.



BASS CLEF STAFF

- ☐ Tenor notes have all stems up.
- ☐ Bass notes have all stems down.



- ☐ One note with TWO STEMS means that both voices sing the SAME NOTE, at the same time.

If you watch the stems in your clef, you will always know which notes to sing...and, equally important...when NOT TO SING!

You will sometimes see four parts written on four separate lines (see page 31 for an example). This is usually done on major works of great complexity to avoid confusion. You are likely to see variations on this theme, but the example above seems to be the most common in general use.

*SATB is the most common combination of voices, however you will see other combinations as well: SSAA (Soprano 1 & 2, Alto 1 & 2), TTBB (Tenor 1 & 2, Baritone and Bass). There are more variations and combinations, but the principle remains the same.