

A Rule of Thumb for Key Signatures

Use the five fingers of the right hand only

Start with the thumb and tap each finger in turn until the little finger is tapped and then change direction and tap back to the thumb and so on, back and forth. At each change of direction you will actually say the name of the **Key Signature** and find it also indicates the number of **sharps** or **flats** that it has.

Sharp Series

Each change of direction indicates the **number of sharps** in the key signature. The first change indicates one sharp, the second change, two sharps, and so on. There are two sharp series, a **minor** one and a **major** one.

Minor

As each finger is tapped, say successively the letters of the scale A through G, thus :

A B C D E F G A B C D E F G A B C D E F G A B C D E F G A

The **Minor** key series is produced : **A E B F# C# G# D# A#**

Major

The major sharp series is found in the same way except that when you first tap your thumb, don't say A, but say C and continue through the letters of the scale :

C D E F G A B C D E F G A B C D E F G A B C

The **Major** key series is produced : **C G D A E B F# C#**

Flat Series

The same procedure is used to produce the flat series (both minor and major) but **do not tap the little finger**. There are two flat series, a **minor** one and a **major** one.

Minor

A B C D E F G A B C D E F G A B C D E F G A

The **Minor** key series is produced : **A D G C F B \flat E \flat A \flat**

Major

C D E F G A B C D E F G A B C D E F G A B C

The **Major** key series is produced : **C F B \flat E \flat A \flat D \flat G \flat C \flat**

'Sharp' or 'Flat' in the Key Signature name

Whether the word **sharp** or **flat** appears in the key signature name depends on its relation to **F** in each series.

In the **sharp** series, **F** and all keys after **F** have **sharp** in their name.
In the **flat** series, only the keys after **F** have **flat** in their name.