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# Introduction

## Why Learn Pentascales?

Piano players often overlook pentascales.

They are considered inferior to regular scales or just for youngsters or beginners.

This idea is reinforced by many exam boards, which have pentascales at the lowest grade before swiftly moving on to “the real thing”.

Let’s explain why we believe they are essential.

Think of any piece you have played recently (it doesn’t matter if you are Grade 1 or 8!).

Got one in mind? Ok, questions...

**Question 1**

- Did you play a full scale in that piece?
- If you did have one, was it hands together as well?

**Question 2**

- Did you play chords or chord patterns in your piece? You count these whether blocked (played together) or broken chords (played one at a time).

Of course, we don’t know which piece you chose, but we are willing to bet that question 1 was a double “no” and question 2 was more likely to be a “yes—many”.

So if chords are so important why do we not drill them, like we do with several octaves scales hands together?

We don’t have the answer to this -
but we wrote this book to solve the problem!





# Introduction

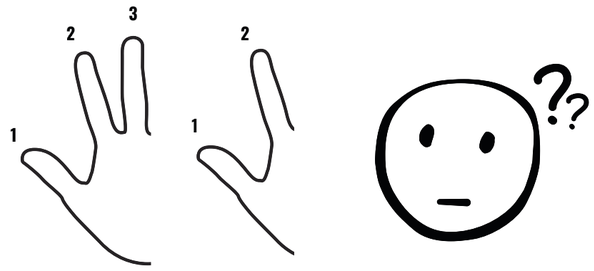
A significant drawback of learning full scales before chords are understood is the concept that chords are built on notes 1, 3, and 5 of the scale.

If you learn ANY full scale with the right hand, you will do a thumb tuck under a finger before you get to the 5th note.

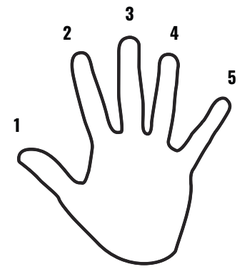
For example, in the full scale of C major—the right hand plays fingers 1 -2 -3 - 1 -2 on the first five notes.

That does not help you understand the chord concept!

## Traditional scales




## Pentascales




Play the first five notes of a scale with fingers 1 -2 - 3 - 4 - 5 and you can easily find notes 1 - 3 - 5 of the scale to play the chord!

Are you convinced yet?
If you learn your pentascales, you will find understanding chords a breeze.
We present each scale with its chord underneath, so you see the connection.
In addition, we present the related key on the opposite page to reinforce they shared key signature.

We have organised this book into sharp keys then flat keys adhering to the Circle of Fifths and the order of sharps and flats.
We also cover the theory behind the Circle of Fifths at the back of this book on P42/43.

# Introduction

Now, we aren't going to say don't learn your full scales at some point.

They do have some use.
For example, if you encounter a melody with a full scale or fragment, the fingering used for a scale might help you navigate that area.

Scales can also help with understanding key signatures.
However, in our extensive teaching experience, this doesn't always happen.

Students remember which notes to drill and don't necessarily think whether a black key is sharp or flat as long as it fits into the scale correctly in its proper place. (After all, their sole motivation for practising scales is normally just to pass an exam!)

Another pitfall is thinking of the sharps and flats in the wrong order.

How many students will say the sharps are C, F and G when learning A major?
That is the order that scale plays them, but it is not the correct order of sharps!

It is essential to know the correct order of flats and sharps so you can quickly understand the key of your piece.

The order is NEVER random. If you have one sharp, it will be F.
Two sharps will be F & C, etc.

Knowing this means you don't have to look at your music score to "work them out" by their placement.

This is so important (and helpful) that we have dedicated the opposite page to help you learn the order of sharps and flats.





# Introduction

## The Order of Sharps and Flats

### Sharps:

- One sharp is F
- Two sharps are F and C
- Three sharps are F, C, and G, etc

### Flats:

- One flat is B
- Two flats are B and E
- Three flats are B, E, and A, etc

The sentences below, where each word starts with the same letter as the order of sharps and flats, are like your musical cheat sheet!

♯ = Father Charles Goes Down And Ends Battle


♭ = Battle Ends And Down Goes Charles' Father


Order of #'s: F C G D A E B
Order of b's: B E A D G C F

The order of flats is a reverse of the order of sharps!

# Introduction

## A Guide to Our Dots

We use green for the note called the “Tonic”.
The tonic is the name of your **scale**.
For example the tonic note of the C pentascale is C.

We use red for the note called the root.
The root is the name of the **chord**.
For example the root of a C chord is C.

We use yellow in the middle for major scales and chords - happy, like sunshine.

We use silver in the middle for minor chords - darker and sad sounding.

We use blue for the other notes of the scales and chords.



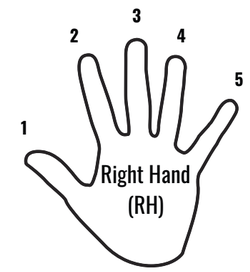


# Introduction

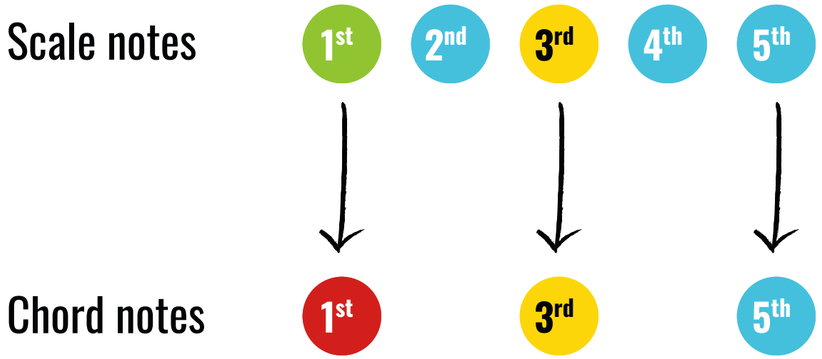
## How to Use This Book

A pentascale has five notes.

These are the first five notes of a regular major or minor scale.
We have five fingers on each hand, so these fit neatly under your fingers.


Once we know our pentascale, we can find its related chord by using just the 1st, 3rd, and 5th notes.
Use all five fingers of each hand for the scales.
Use your thumb, middle and pinkie fingers for the chords.




Remember we use green dots for the name of the scale (tonic) and red dots for the name of the chord (root).

# Introduction

We present related keys' pentascales and their matching chords on each pair of pages.

These keys are related because they have the same key signature.

- The left page shows the major scale and its chord.
- The right page shows the related minor scale and its chord.

You'll see that the related minor scale starts on the note right after the major scale ends.

As you go through this book, try playing each scale and chord with one hand at a time, then with both hands together.

Once you know each scale and chord, try playing the major scale with your left hand and put your right-hand thumb on the next key to play the related minor scale.

This practice will help you understand the key signature shared by both scales. The opposite page shows this using G Major and E Minor as an example.

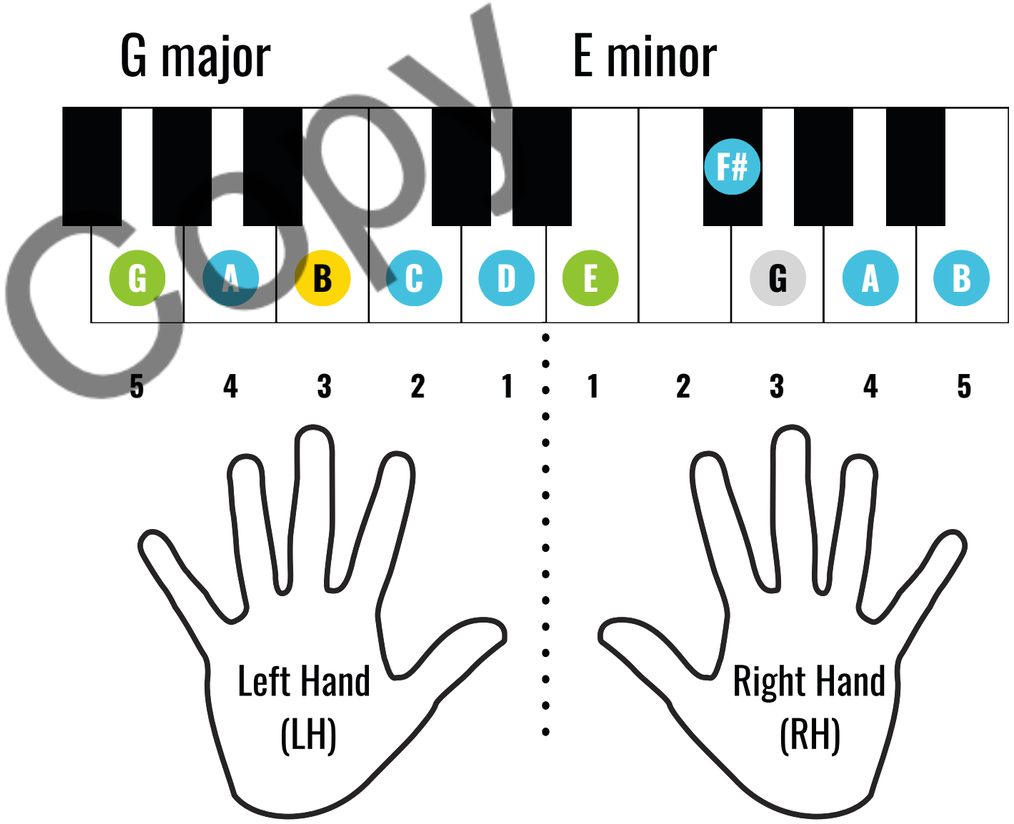
It might sound a bit different if you're used to the sound of a major scale.
You'll be playing a full one-octave (eight-note) major scale, plus two extra notes with all ten fingers!

Another option is to play the major pentascale and just the first three notes of the related minor scale.

This will give you the sound of a complete major scale by itself.








Notice that the G major pentascale does not use the F#.

This is because the F# is on note seven of the full G major scale.

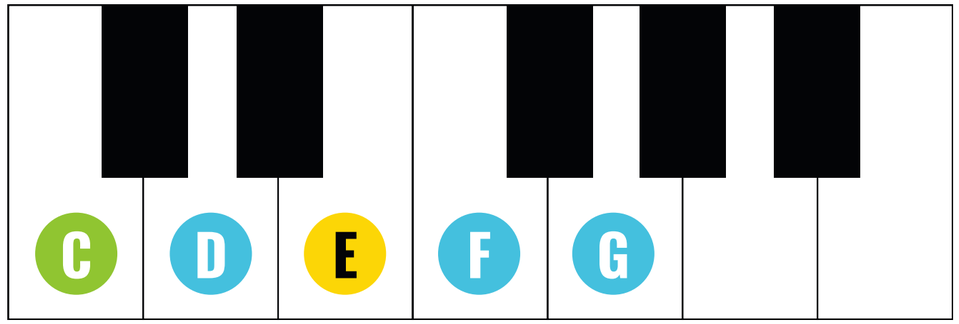
It's important to try these related keys in this way so that you can understand the key signature, even if you may not play the # or b notes in the scale or chord.

# C Major

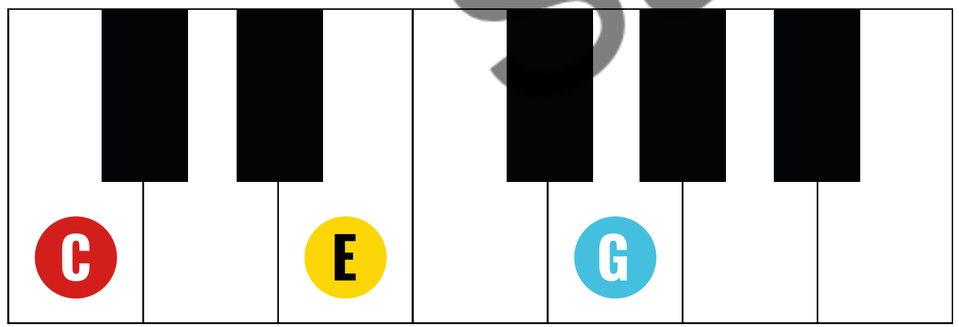
Key Signature:

No #'s or b's

## C Major Pentascale




## C Major Chord



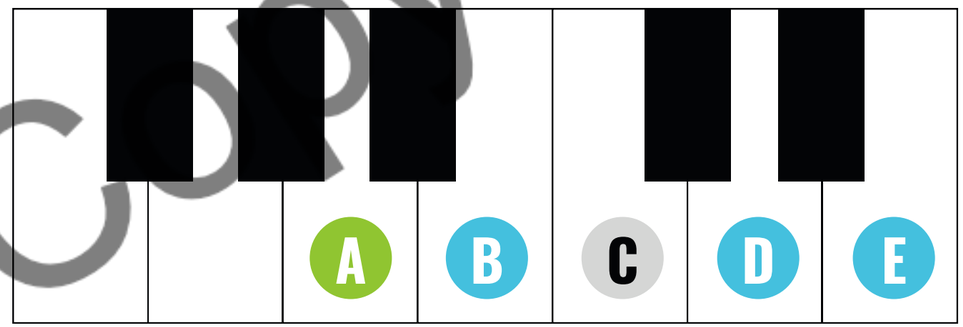



# A Minor

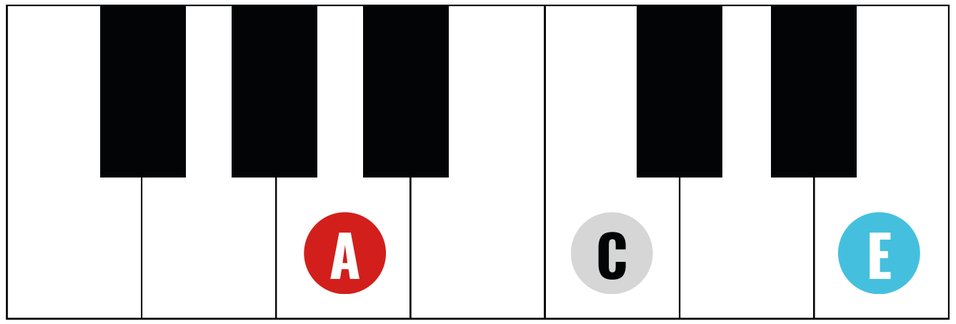
Key Signature:

No #'s or b's

## A Minor Pentascale




## A Minor Chord

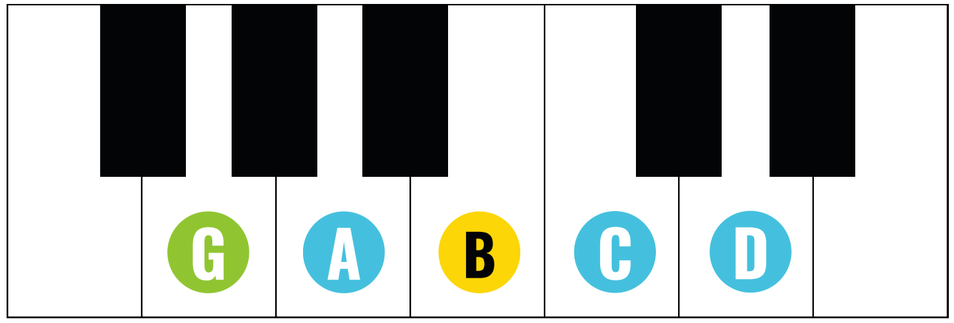


# G Major

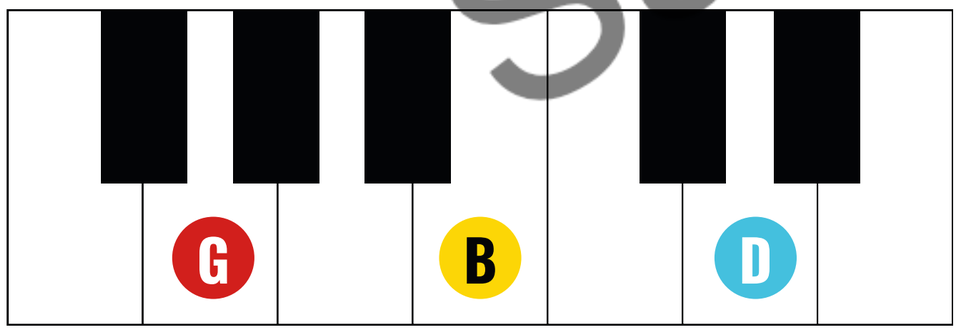
Key Signature:

1#:
F

## G Major Pentascale




## G Major Chord



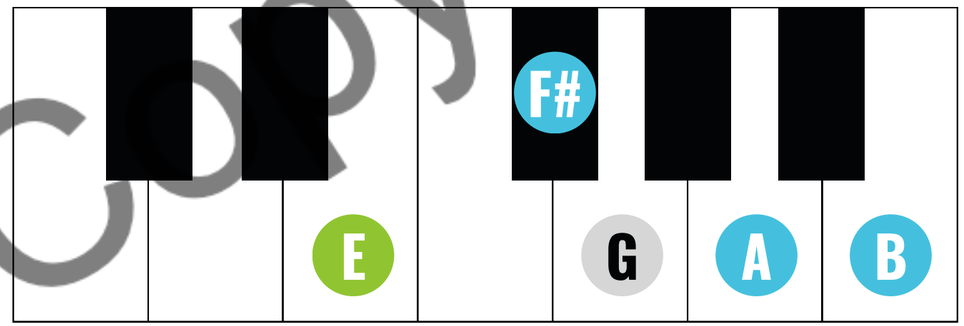



# E Minor

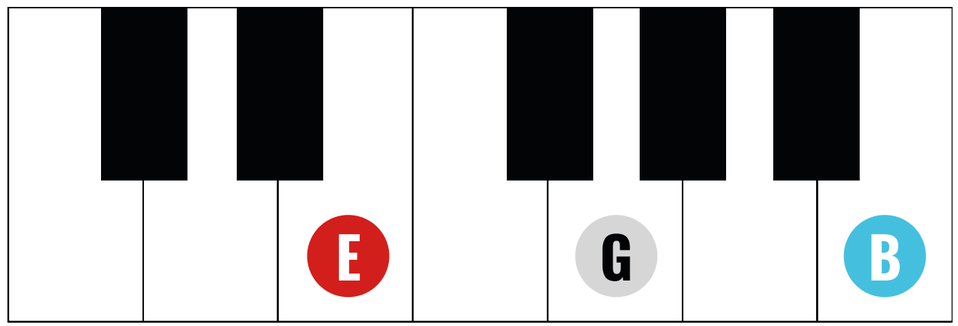
Key Signature:

1#:
F

## E Minor Pentascale




## E Minor Chord

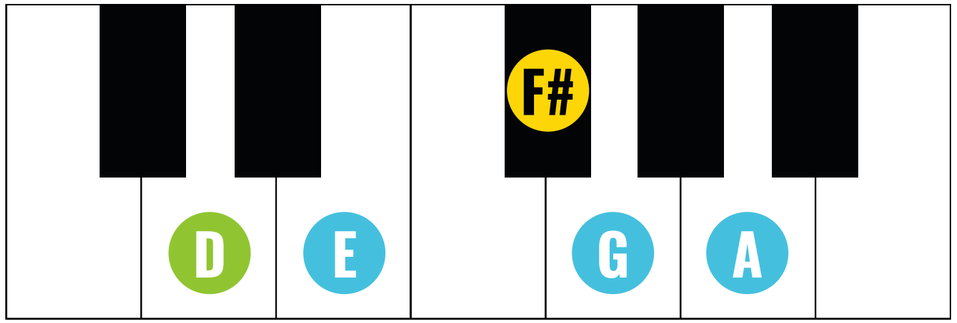


# D Major

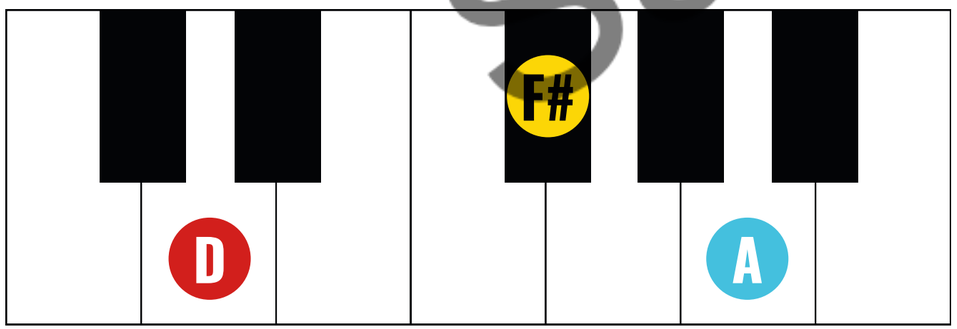
Key Signature:

2#'s:
F+C

## D Major Pentascale




## D Major Chord



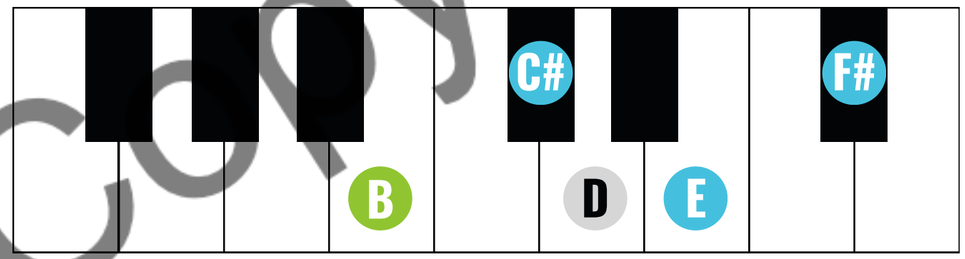



# B Minor

Key Signature:

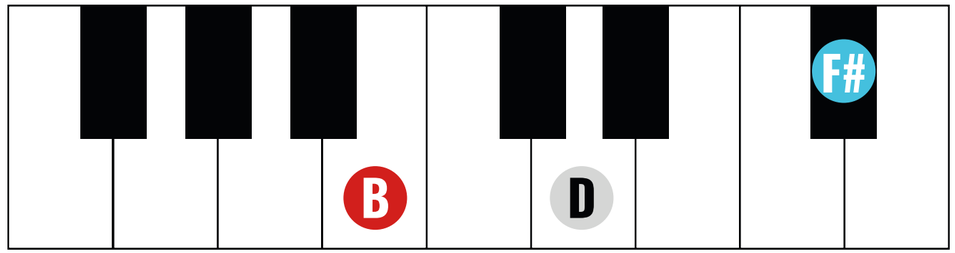
2#'s:
F+C

## B Minor Pentascale




We made this keyboard wider than others to show the notes better!

## B Minor Chord

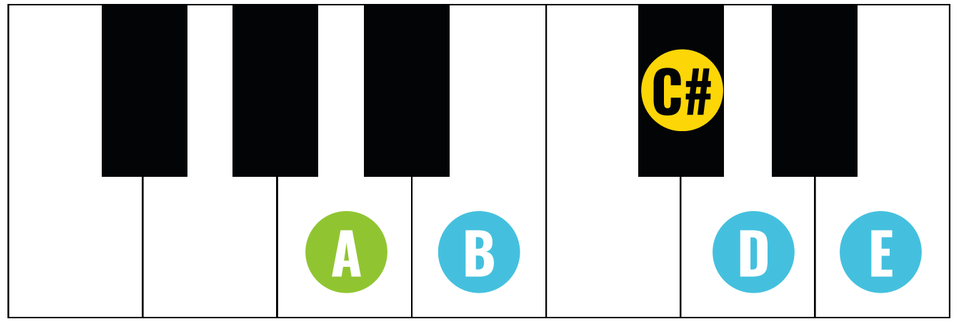


# A Major

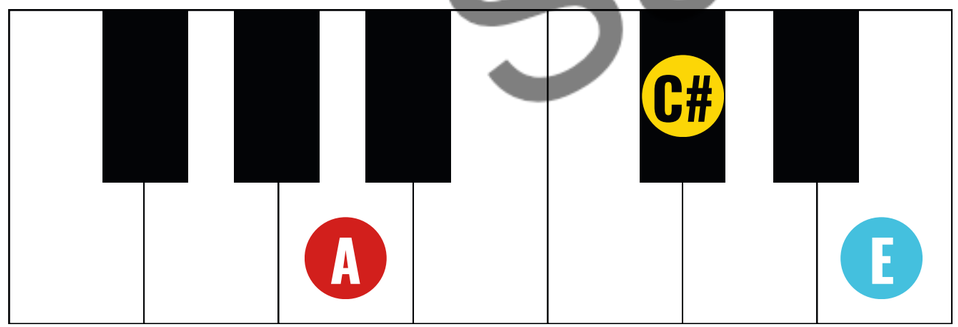
Key Signature:

3#'s:
F+C+G

## A Major Pentascale




## A Major Chord



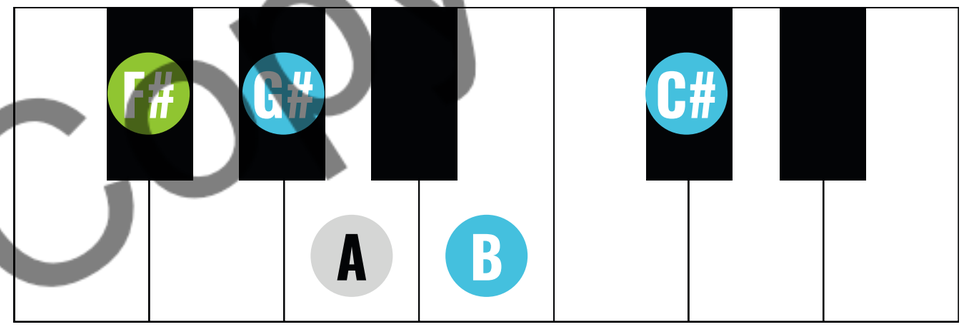



# F# Minor

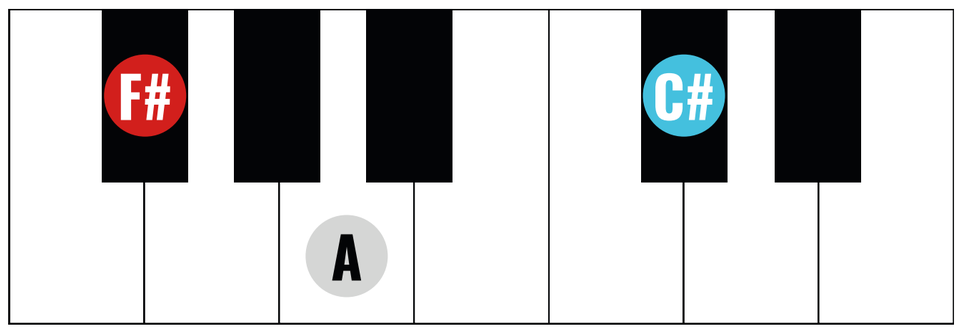
Key Signature:

3#'s:
F+C+G

## F# Minor Pentascale




## F# Minor Chord

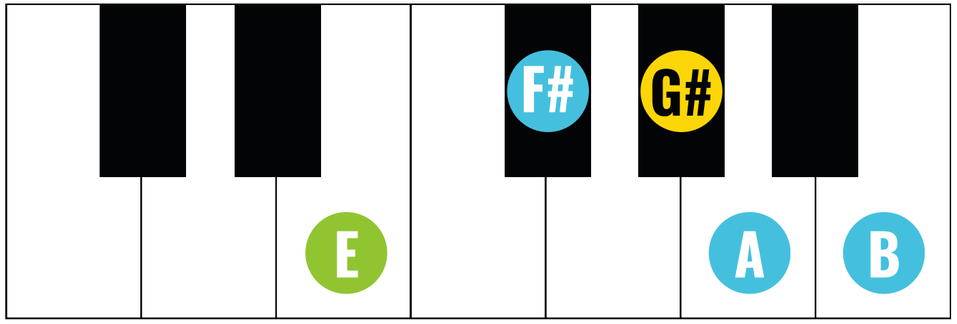


# E Major

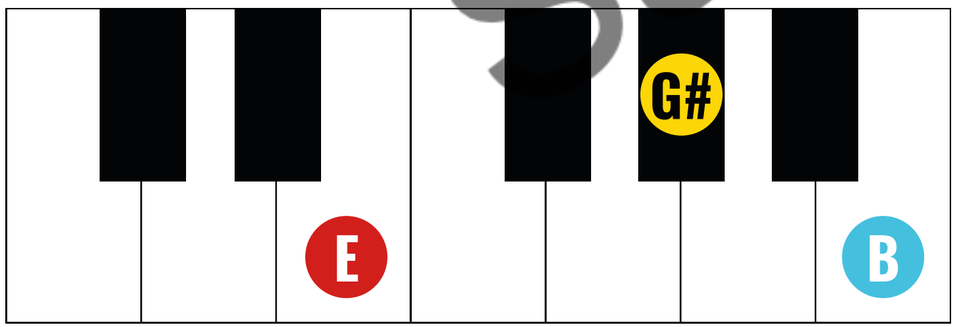
Key Signature:

4#'s:
F+C+G+D

## E Major Pentascale




## E Major Chord



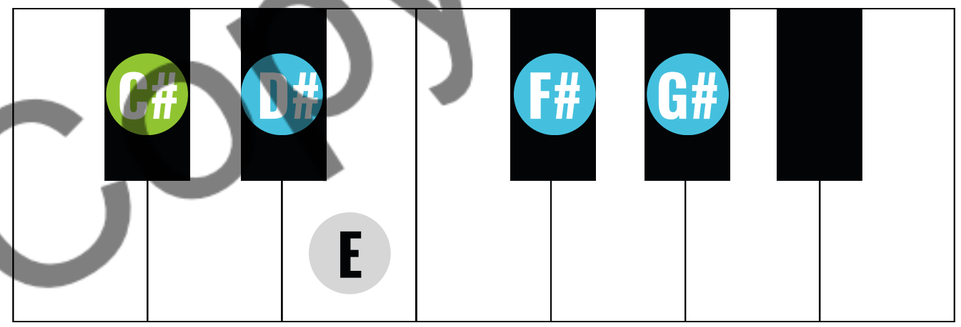



# C# Minor

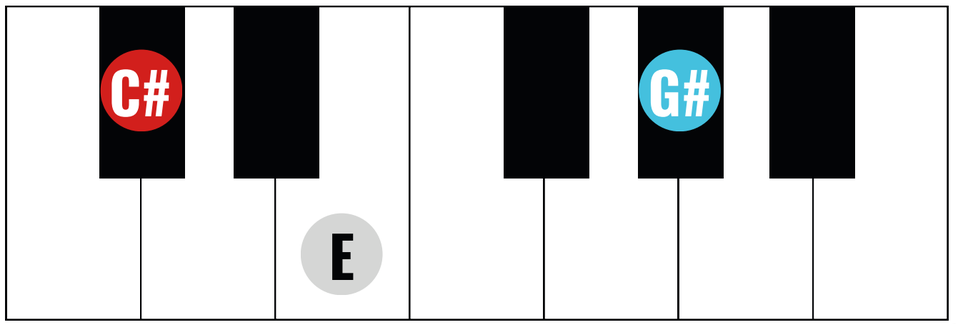
Key Signature:

4#'s:
F+C+G+D

## C# Minor Pentascale




## C# Minor Chord

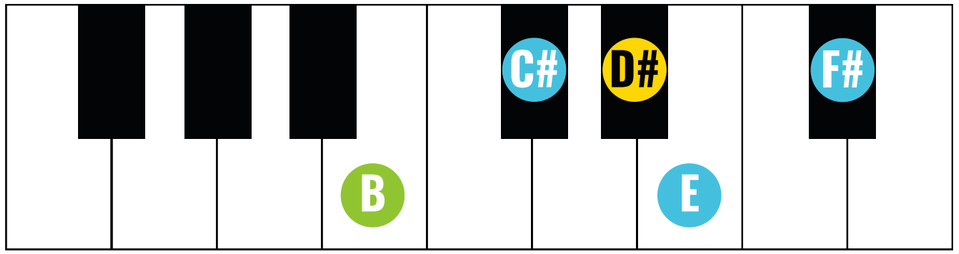


# B Major

Key Signature:

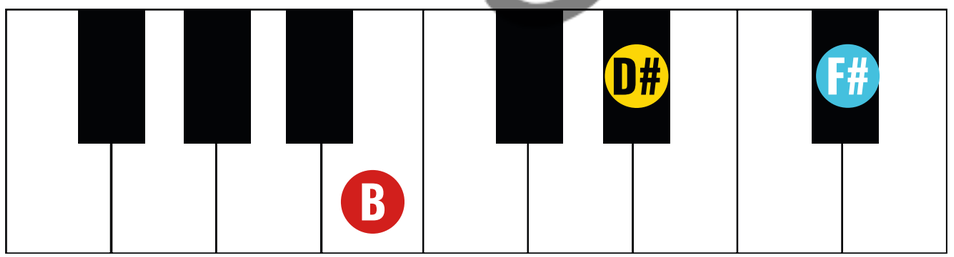
5#'s:
F+C+G+D
+A

## B Major Pentascale




We made this keyboard wider than others to show the notes better!

## B Major Chord



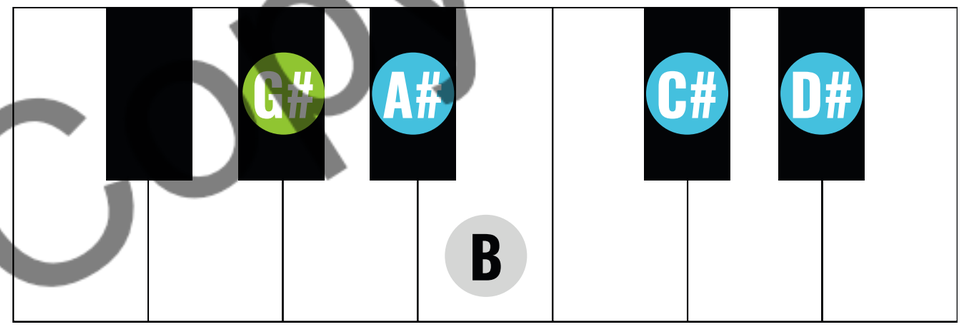



# G# Minor

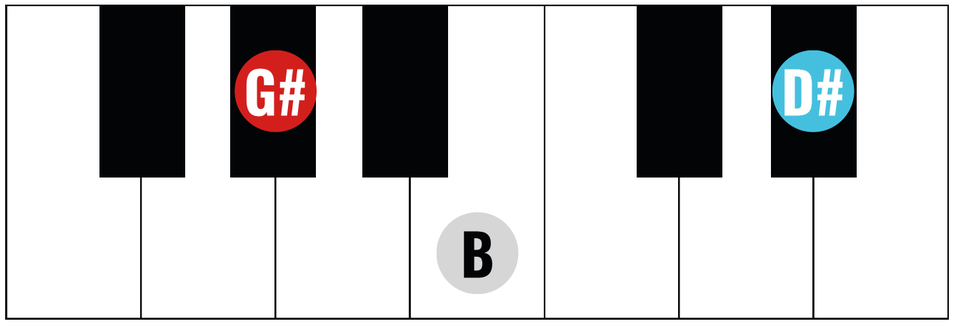
Key Signature:

5#'s:
F+C+G+D
+A

## G# Minor Pentascale




## G# Minor Chord

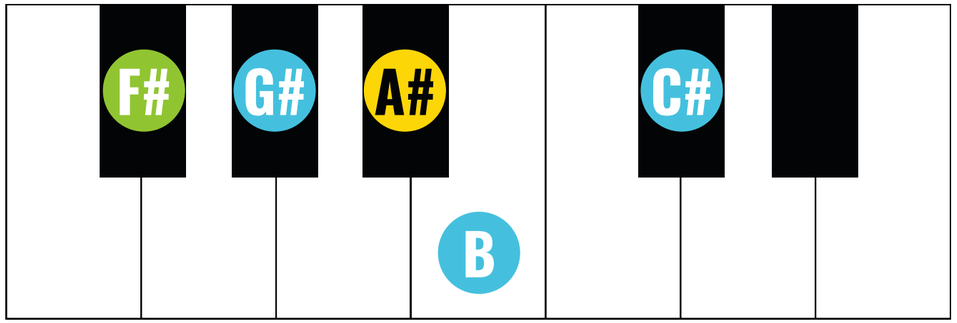


# F# Major

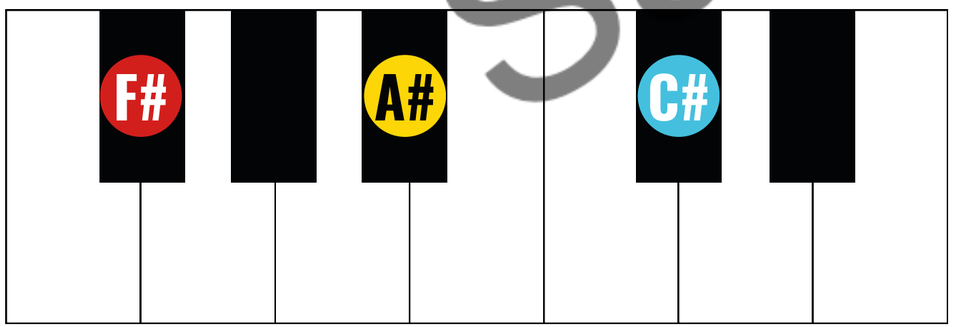
Key Signature:

6#'s:
F+C+G+D
+A+E

## F# Major Pentascale




## F# Major Chord



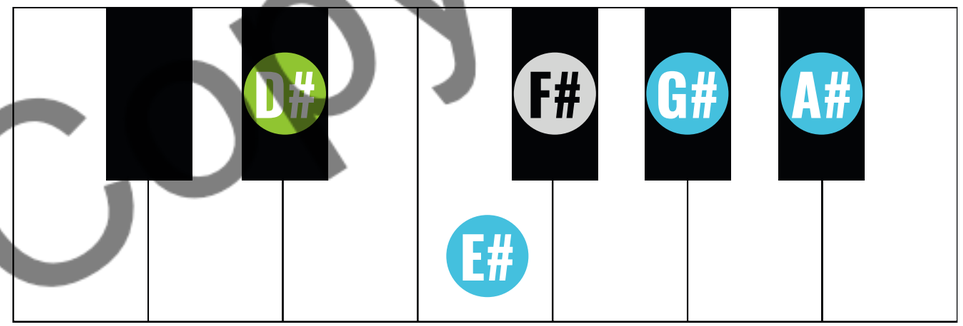



# D# Minor

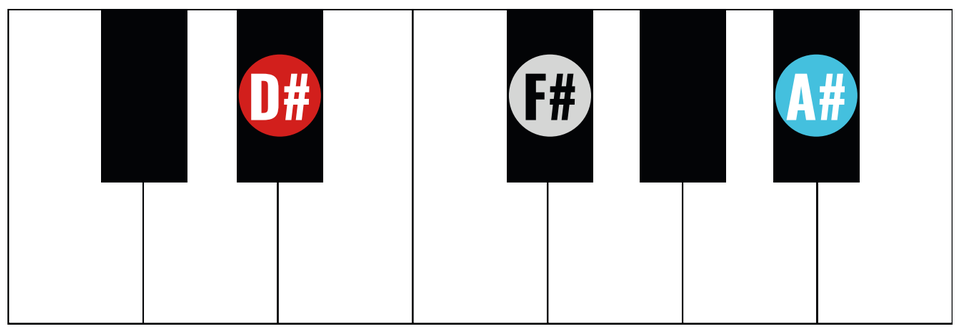
Key Signature:

6#'s:
F+C+G+D
+A+E

## D# Minor Pentascale




## D# Minor Chord

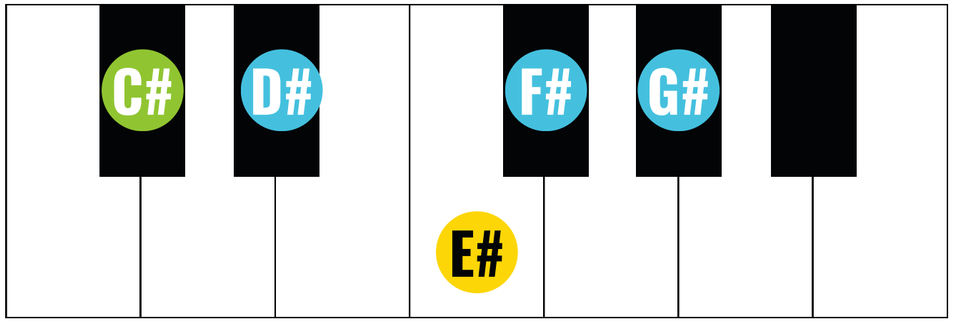


# C# Major

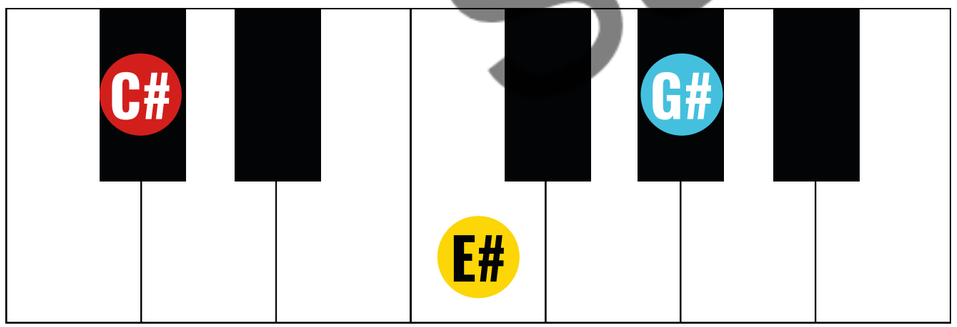
Key Signature:

7#'s:
F+C+G+D
+A+E+B

## C# Major Pentascale




## C# Major Chord



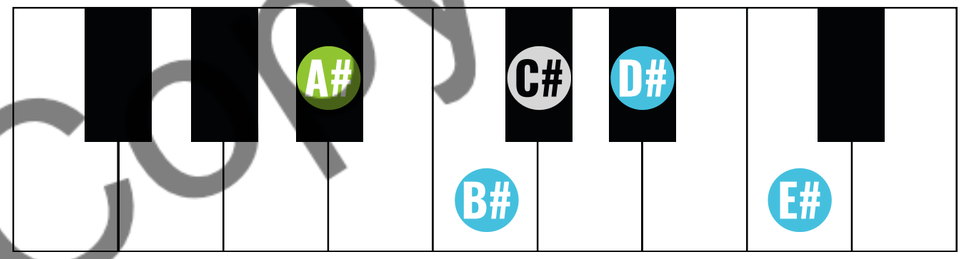



# A# Minor

Key Signature:

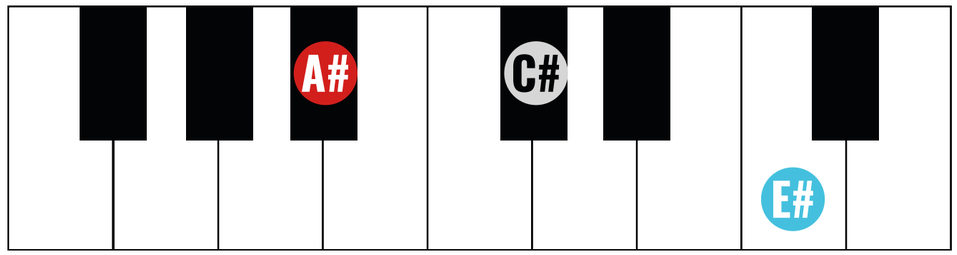
7#'s:
F+C+G+D
+A+E+B

## A# Minor Pentascale




We made this keyboard wider than others to show the notes better!

## A# Minor Chord

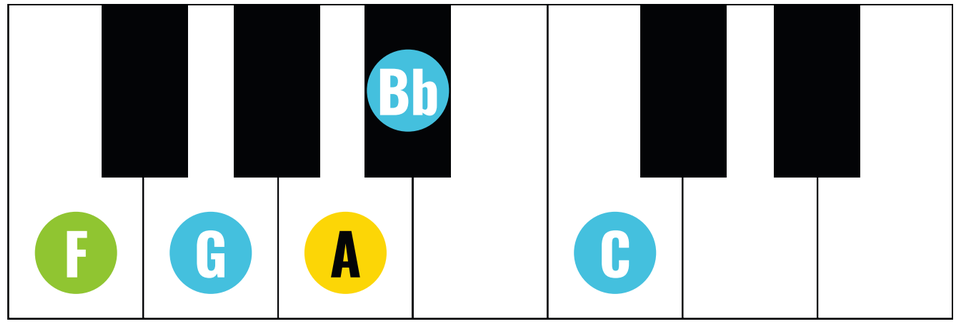


# F Major

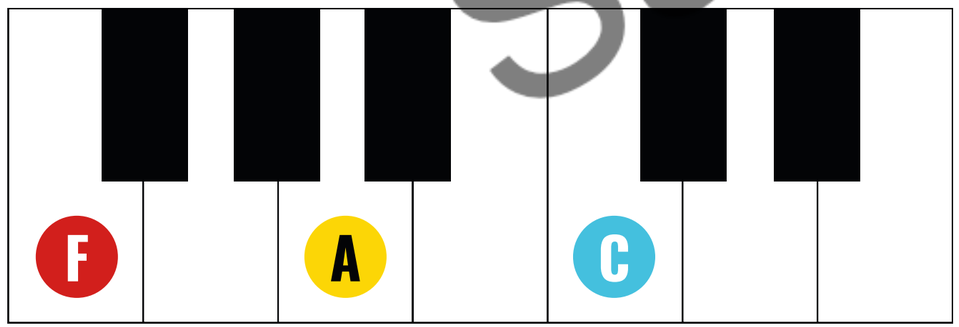
Key Signature:

1b:
B

## F Major Pentascale




## F Major Chord



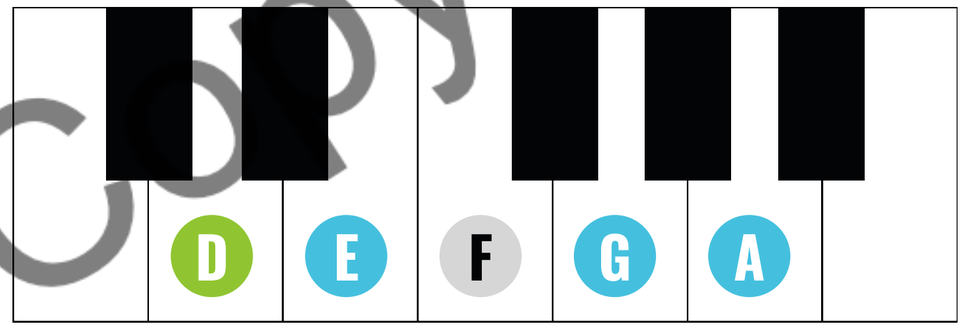



# D Minor

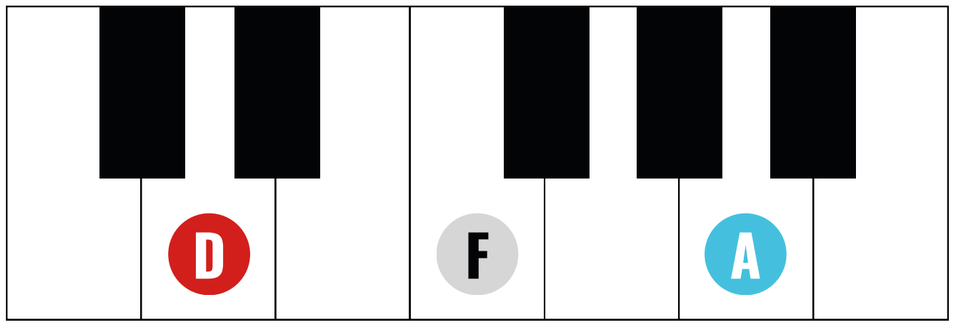
Key Signature:

1b:
B

## D Minor Pentascale




## D Minor Chord

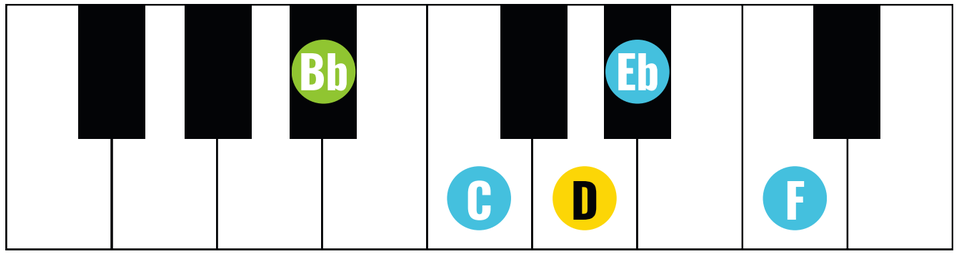


# Bb Major

Key Signature:

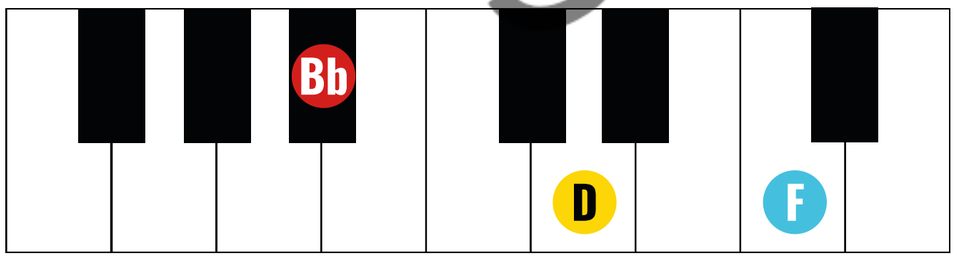
2b's:
B+E

## Bb Major Pentascale




We made this keyboard wider than others to show the notes better!

## Bb Major Chord



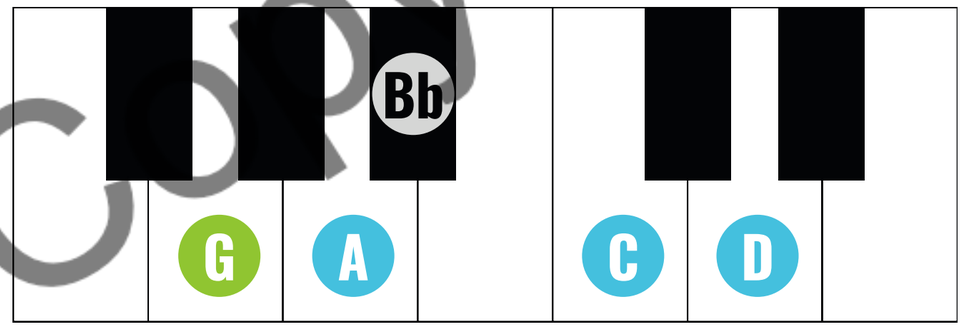



# G Minor

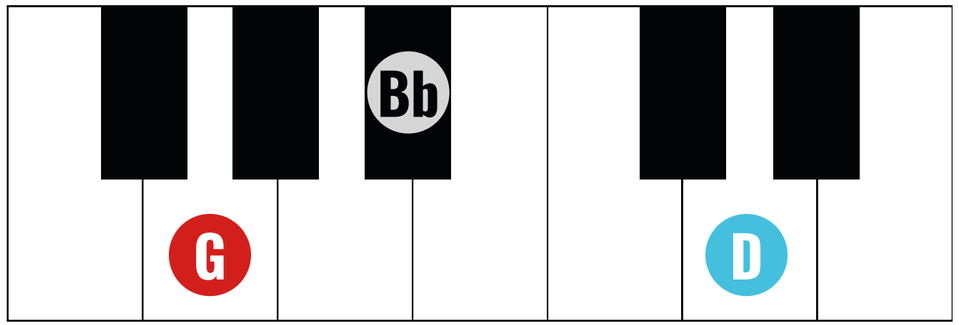
Key Signature:

2b's:
B+E

## G Minor Pentascale




## G Minor Chord

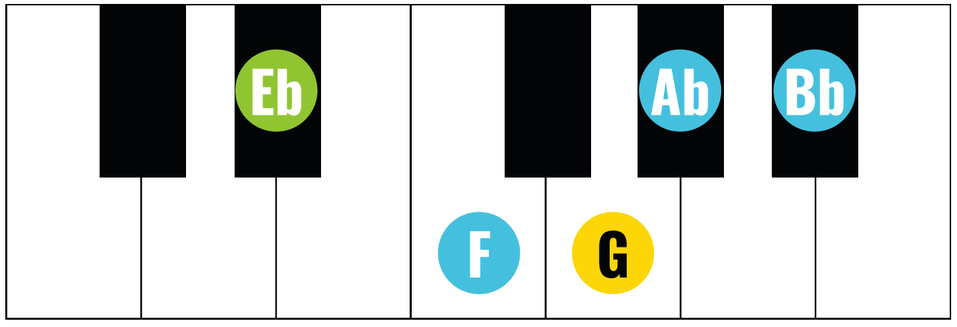


# Eb Major

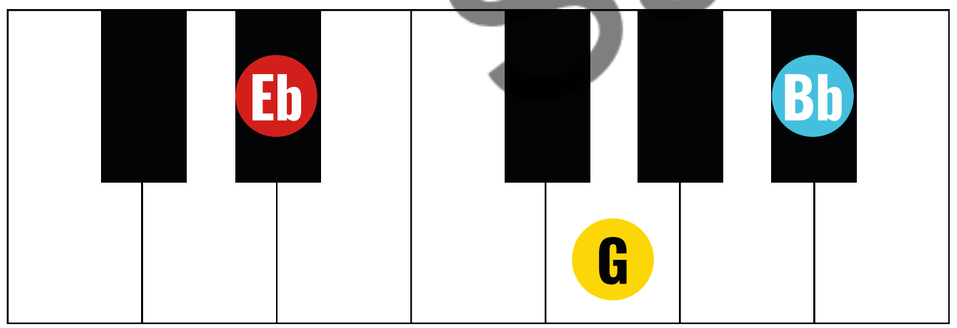
Key Signature:

3b's:
B+E+A

## Eb Major Pentascale




## Eb Major Chord



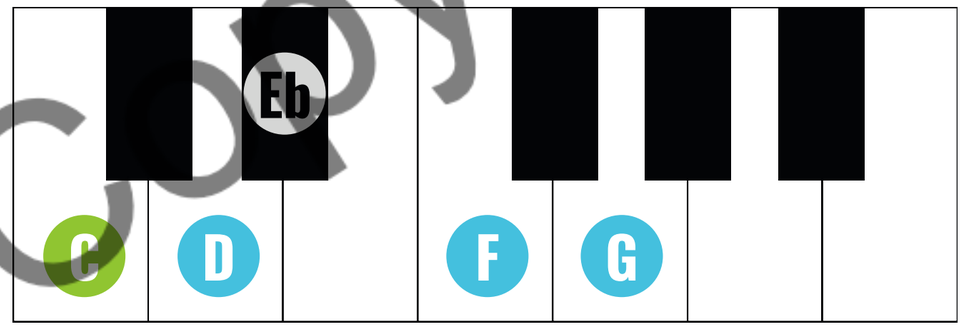



# C Minor

Key Signature:

3b's:
B+E+A

## C Minor Pentascale



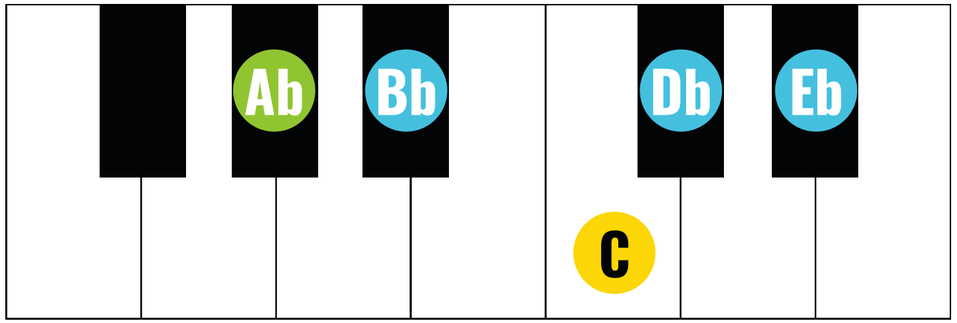

## C Minor Chord

# Ab Major

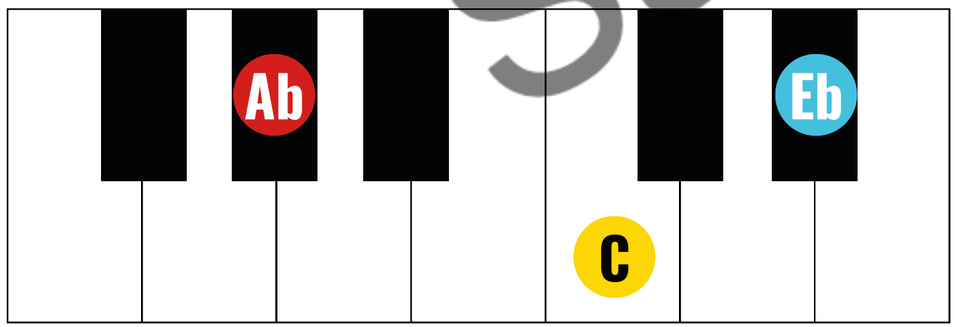
Key Signature:

4b's:
B+E+A+D

## Ab Major Pentascale




## Ab Major Chord



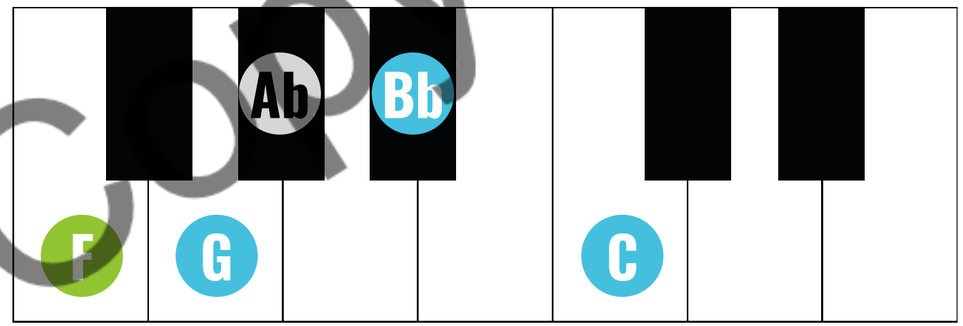



# F Minor

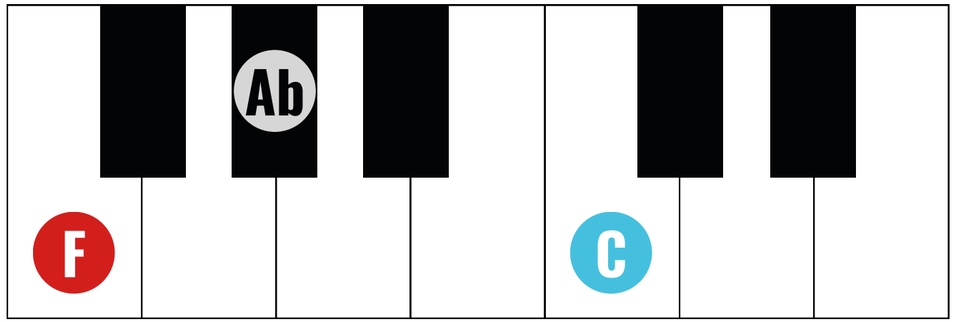
Key Signature:

4b's:
B+E+A+D

## F Minor Pentascale




## F Minor Chord

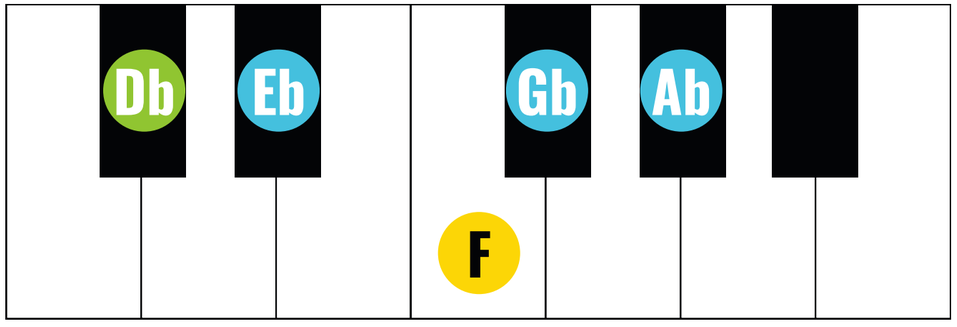


# Db Major

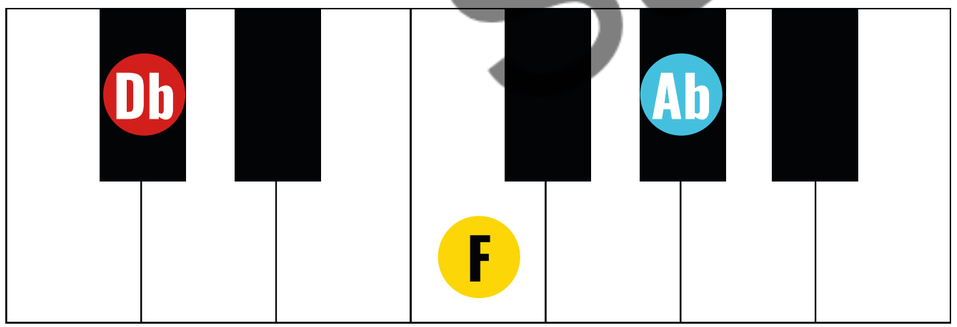
Key Signature:

5b's:
B+E+A+D
+G

## Db Major Pentascale




## Db Major Chord



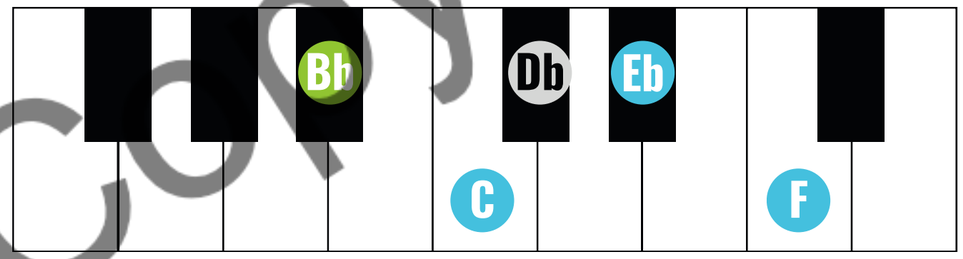



# Bb Minor

Key Signature:

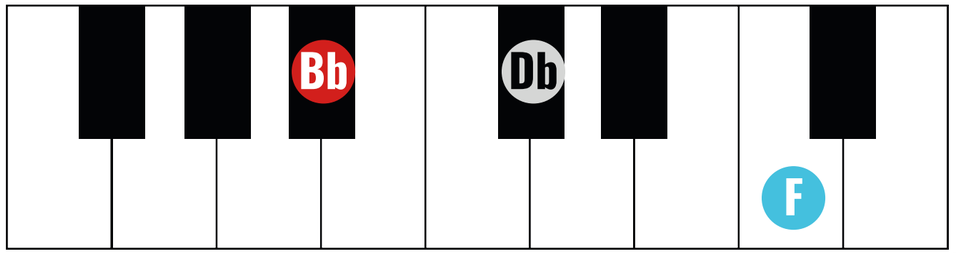
5b's:
B+E+A+D
+G

## Bb Minor Pentascale




We made this keyboard wider than others to show the notes better!

## Bb Minor Chord

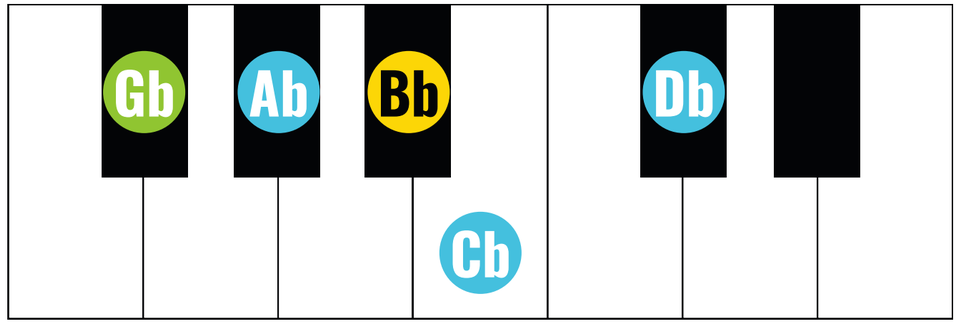


# Gb Major

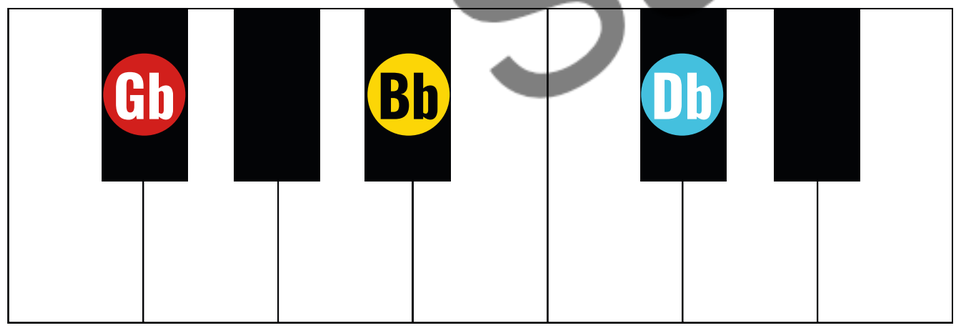
Key Signature:

6b's:
B+E+A+D
+G+C

## Gb Major Pentascale




## Gb Major Chord



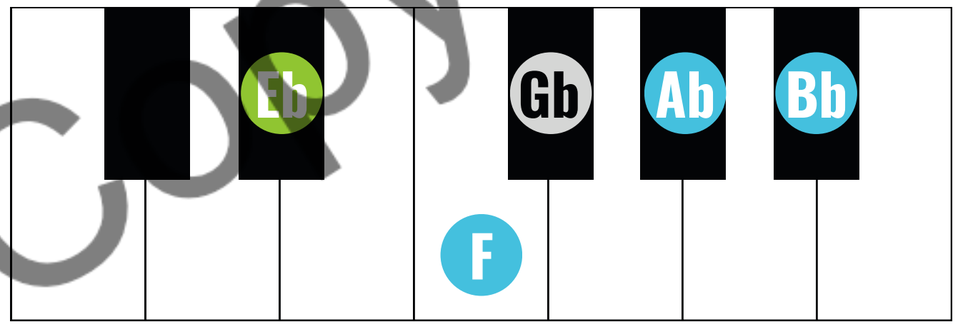



# Eb Minor

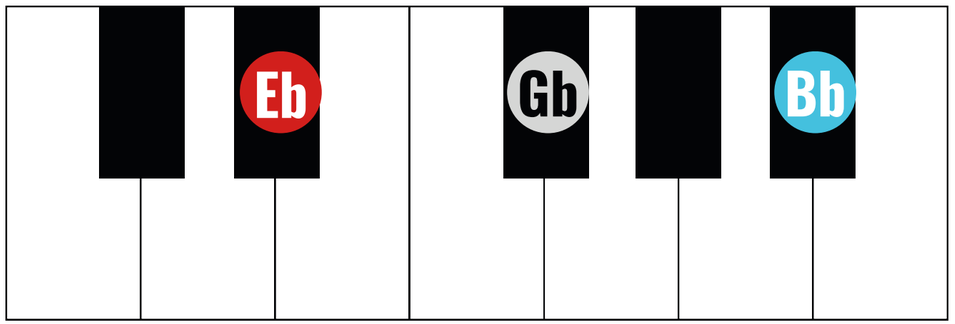
Key Signature:

6b's:
B+E+A+D
+G+C

## Eb Minor Pentascale




## Eb Minor Chord

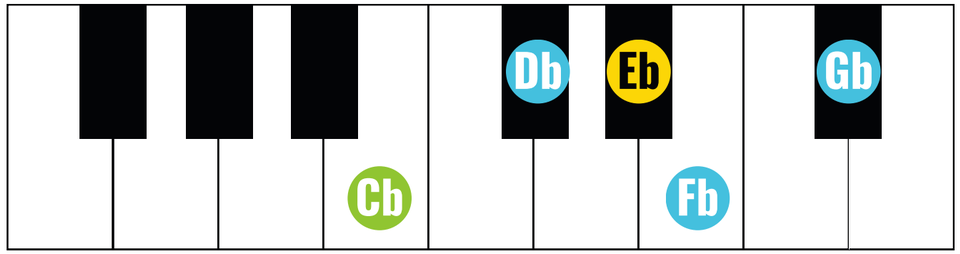


# Cb Major

Key Signature:

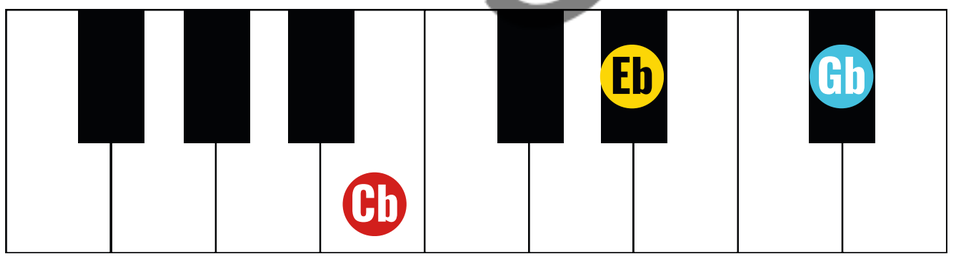
7b's:
B+E+A+D
+G+C+F

## Cb Major Pentascale




We made this keyboard wider than others to show the notes better!

## Cb Major Chord



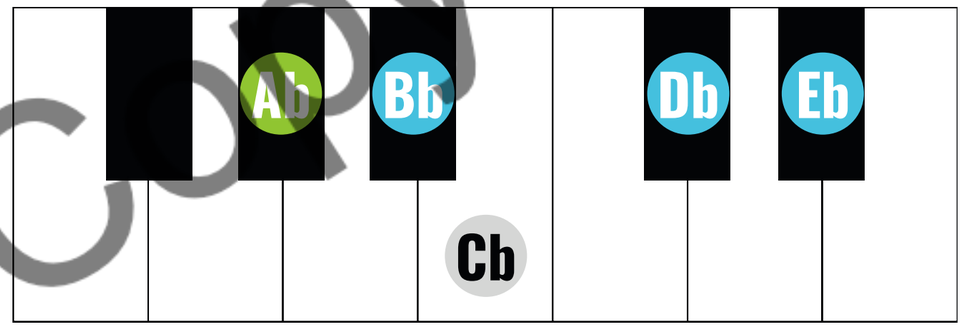



# Ab Minor

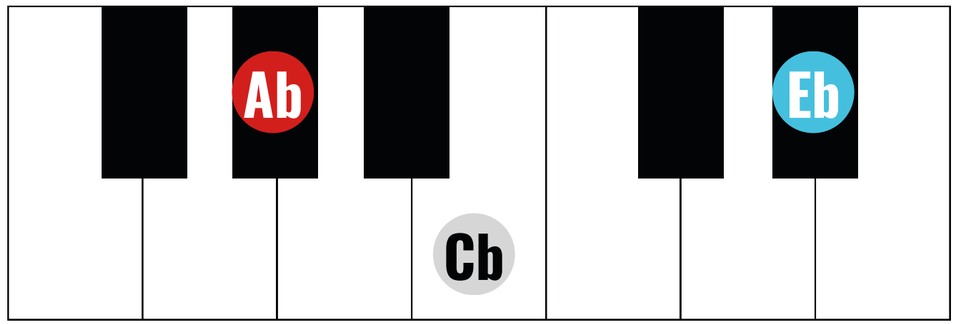
Key Signature:

7b's:
B+E+A+D
+G+C+F

## Ab Minor Pentascale




## Ab Minor Chord



# The Circle of Fifths

We have presented the keys in the order of #'s and b's.

This concept is called the "Circle of Fifths".

Every time we go up five piano keys (a fifth) using a pentascale and begin a new scale, we add a sharp. For example, C major = CDEFG. So "G" is our fifth note.
Our new scale starts on G; we have one sharp in that key signature.
If we go five scale keys down, we add a flat rather than a sharp.

## Understanding the Layout:

The diagram on the opposite page shows keys arranged in a circle, a fifth apart.
The darker green segments show the major keys with a letter.
The lighter green segments show the minor keys. We always add an "m" for minor keys.
The minor key sits directly below its relative major.
The outer grey circle segments show the key signature.
Remember that a pair of related keys share a key signature.

## Moving Clockwise:

When you move clockwise by a fifth around the Circle, each key gains one sharp in its key signature. Starting from C major (which has no sharps or flats), the following key is G major, which has one sharp, followed by D major with two sharps, and so on.

## Moving Anticlockwise:

In contrast, moving anticlockwise introduces flats to the key signatures.
For instance, moving from C major to F major (one flat), then to Bb major (two flats), and so on.

## Key Limits:

We can only have a key signature with a maximum of seven sharps or flats - matching the number of notes in music - A-G.
You may notice that the bottom three keys are "enharmonic".
They are the same pitches but notated differently. For example Gb and F# are the same piano notes.

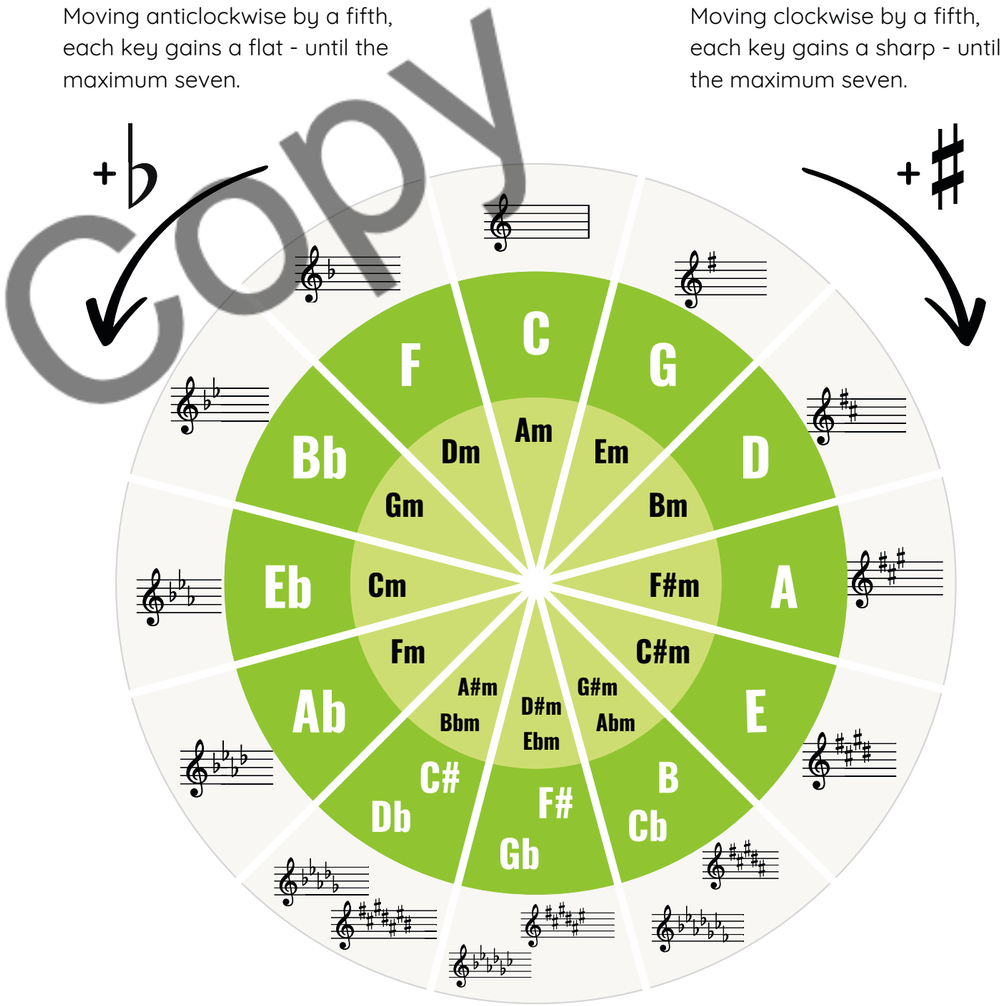




# The Circle of Fifths

Moving anticlockwise by a fifth, each key gains a flat - until the maximum seven.

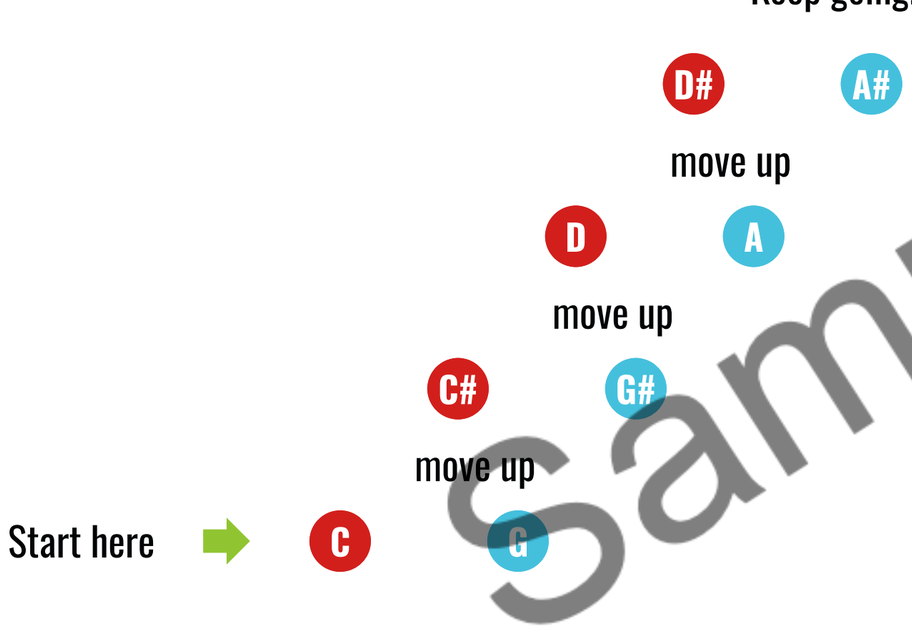
Moving clockwise by a fifth, each key gains a sharp - until the maximum seven.



# Blocked Fifths Scale

It is very common to play chords with the middle note missing.
These are called “Blocked Fifths” (as you only play two notes, a fifth apart).
In pop music these are also called “power chords”.

It’s great to practice these, and it can be done in a fun way - playing a chromatic style scale, two notes at a time.
If you are unfamiliar with a chromatic scale, it is when we play every key in turn (black or white), next door to each other.




You can also do this going down the piano keys in the same pattern!

Take care with B’s and F’s.
We will look into this on the next page.



# Let’s Talk About B and F

Did you notice that when playing blocked fifths you had either two white keys or two blacks?

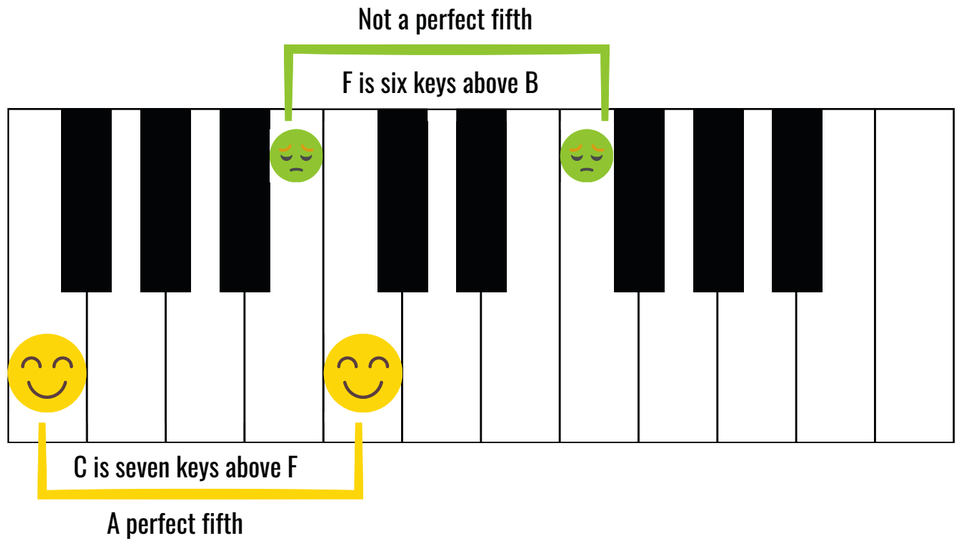
The only place you don’t is in the section of the piano around B and F.

Let’s have a look at why this is...

We know that the piano black keys are grouped into sets of two’s and three’s.
If it didn’t we would find it very difficult to find our way around!

When we talk about a fifth on the piano we mean a “perfect fifth”.
There is a lot of science behind that which we won’t cover here!
Anyway - they sound nice and that’s the important thing to know.

A perfect fifth is seven keys above our lower note (we include both black and white keys when working this out)

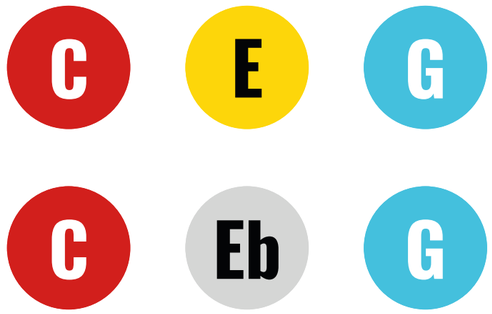



To make a perfect fifth, Bb must partner with normal F, and B must partner with F#.

# Chord Conversions

Blocked fifth chords are not major OR minor.
This is because it's the middle note that makes them major or minor.

The example below shows C major and minor—the only difference is the middle note.




C Major




C Minor

This is very useful to know because if you have forgotten how to play a minor chord but remember your major, you can just **lower** the middle note down one key (from white to black or black to white).

If you need to change your minor chord to a major then go the other way.
Raise the middle note **up** by a single key.


D Minor

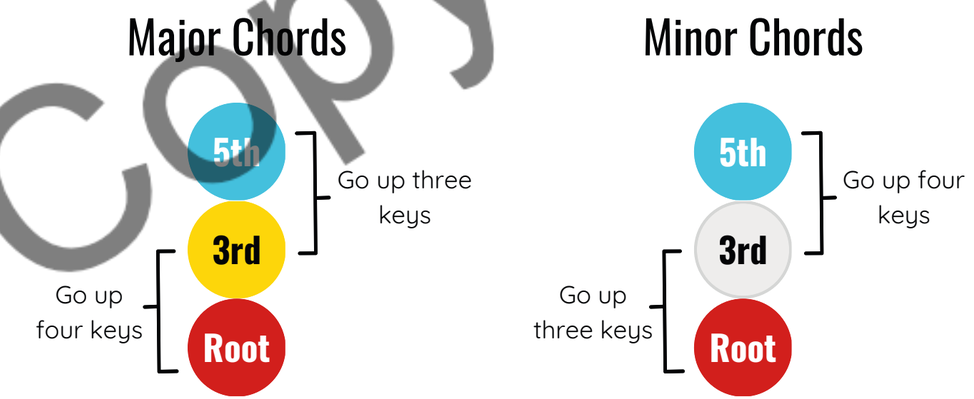

D Major





# The Ultimate Cheat

If you have a complete blank and don't have this book to hand try and remember the formula below:




Start with your root note (the name of the chord you want to build).

Go up the number of keys* you need to make either the major or minor 3rd.

Then find your top note - the 5th - by going up the next number of keys shown in the formula.

Remember when we talk about going up keys to include both black and white keys.

This works for every chord whether your root is a black or white key.
It even works in the tricky B and F spot!

*next door keys are called "half steps" in American English.
In British English they are called "semitones"

# Chord Inversions

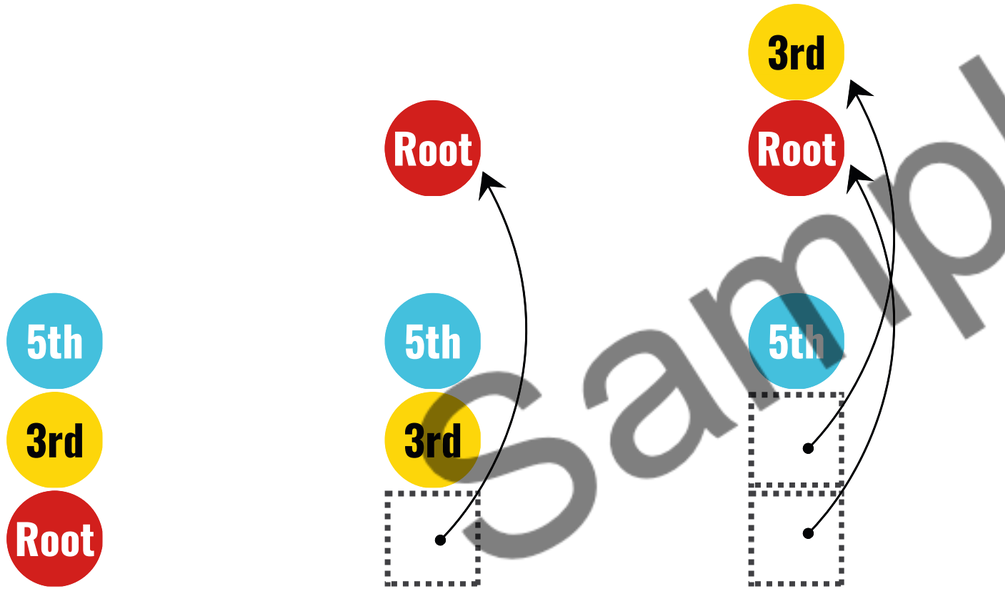
We've looked at chords in root position, where the chord's name is the lowest note.

Chords can also have the root note in the middle or at the top.

Changing the place of the notes is called inverting the chord.

The boxes and arrows show how the notes have moved from the original root position.

This will be explained more on the opposite page.





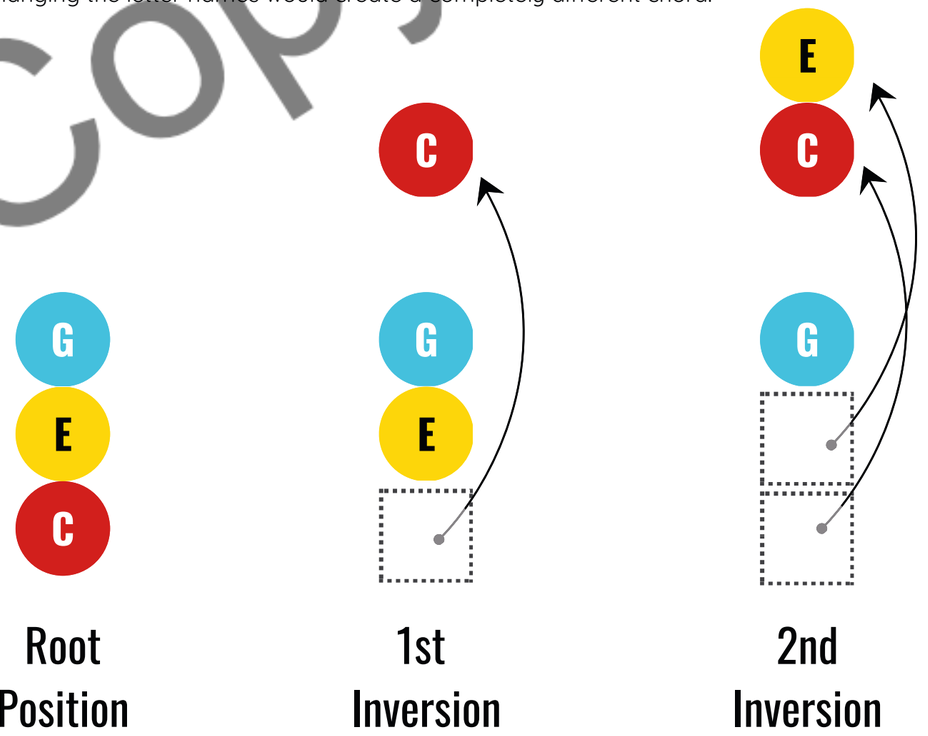



# Chord Inversions

Let's add some chord note names to our diagram, we will use C major.

It's important to remember that when you invert, the letter names stay the same: in this case, C, E, and G.

Changing the letter names would create a completely different chord!




Try playing these chords on the piano with the hand you feel most comfortable using. The notes will sit nicely beneath your hand in root position, as the chord spans only five notes from one end to the other.

In contrast, the inversions stretch six notes apart, which we have shown with spacing in the diagram.

# Chord Inversions

On the page opposite, we have given you an exercise to try playing chords in different inversions.

No matter what combination of white or black keys you have, the fingers below should always be used.

Try the exercise with the chords listed on the opposite page.
We have chosen white key chords as they are the easiest to get your fingers around.

You should also try with the other chords in this book.
You can play the notes one at a time “broken chords” or play them all together as “blocked chords”.

You will find broken chords can get tricky when you have both black and white keys in your chord!


1 - 3 - 5 = Root Position

1 - 2 - 5 = 1st Inversion

1 - 3 - 5 = 2nd Inversion


5 - 3 - 1 = Root Position

5 - 3 - 1 = 1st Inversion

5 - 2 - 1 = 2nd Inversion





# Chord Inversions

## C Major

C E G — Root Position

E G C — 1st Inversion

G C E — 2nd Inversion

## F Major

F A C — Root Position

A C F — 1st Inversion

C F A — 2nd Inversion

## G Major

G B D — Root Position

B D G — 1st Inversion

D G B — 2nd Inversion

## A Minor

A C E — Root Position

C E A — 1st Inversion

E A C — 2nd Inversion

# Thank you

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