

What is a Mnemonic?


A “mnemonic” (pronounced nur-**mon**-ik) is any type of saying, sentence or rhyme that is designed to help you remember something. For instance, the seven colours of the rainbow are red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet. This fact can be easily called to mind by remembering the sentence “Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain”, in which the first letter of each word is also the first letter of the relevant colour. This is an example of a “mnemonic”.


In music, mnemonics are very common and very helpful. Some of these mnemonics are explored on the following pages.


Note Names By Time Value


The different lengths of notes, from the longest to the shortest, have these names:

Semibreve, Minim, Crotchet, Quaver, Semiquaver and Demisemiquaver.


 A semibreve is worth **four beats**;

 a minim is worth **two beats**;

 a crotchet is worth **one beat**;

 a quaver is worth **half a beat**;

 a semiquaver is worth **a quarter of a beat**;

 a demisemiquaver is worth **an eighth of a beat**.

This can be remembered by the sentence

“Sad Magicians Can Quite Simply Disappear.”

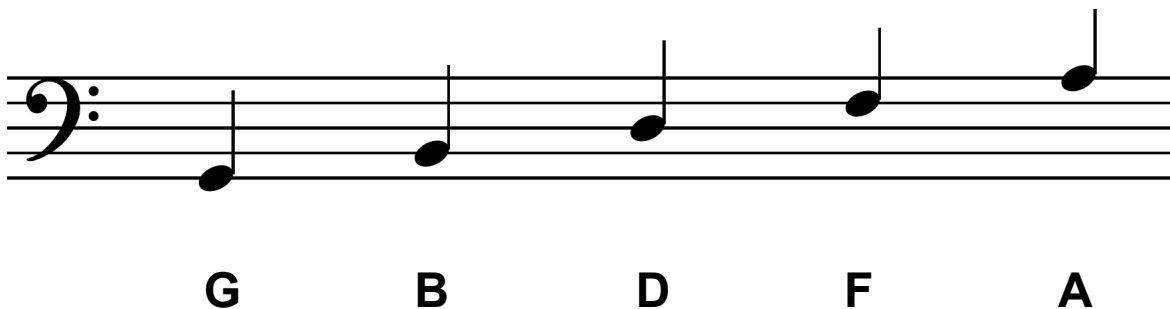
Bass Clef Notes on the Lines

The five notes **on the lines** of the bass clef, from the lowest line to the highest line, are:

G, B, D, F and A.

This can be remembered by the sentence

“Great Big Dragons Fly Away.”



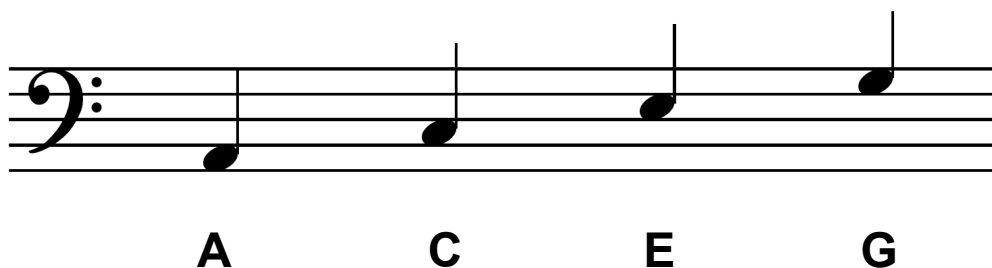
Bass Clef Notes in the Spaces

The four notes **in the spaces** of the bass clef, from the lowest space to the highest space, are:

A, C, E, and G.

This can be remembered by the sentence

“All Cows Eat Grass.”



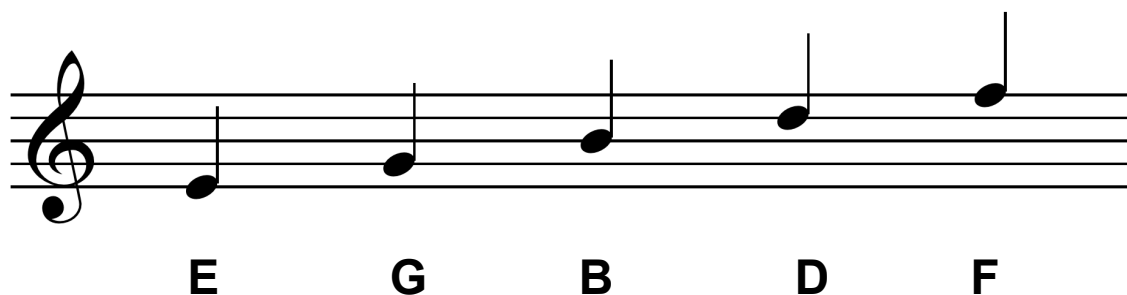
Treble Clef Notes on the Lines

The five notes **on the lines** of the treble clef, from the lowest line to the highest line, are:

E, G, B, D and F.

This can be remembered by the sentence

“Every Good Boy Deserves Football.”



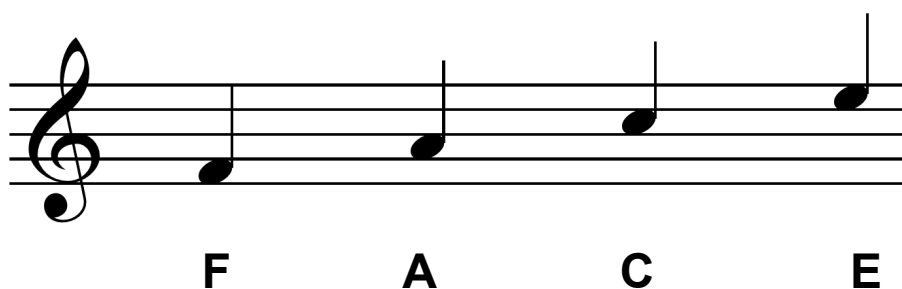
Treble Clef Notes in the Spaces

The four notes **in the spaces** of the treble clef, from the lowest space to the highest space, are:

F, A, C, and E.

This can be remembered simply by the word

“Face.”



The Order of the Sharp Keys

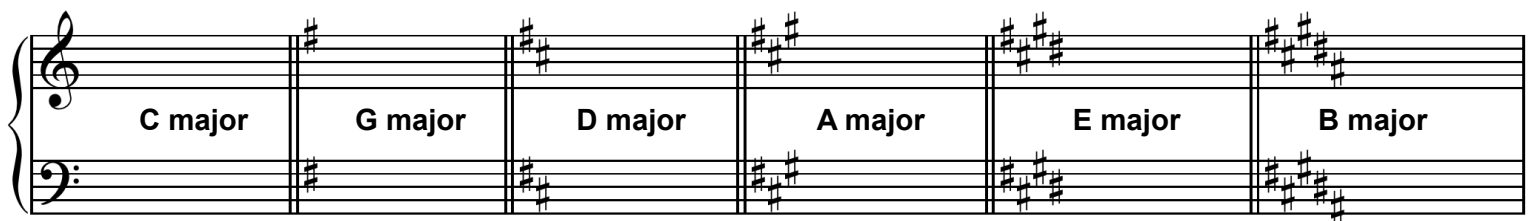
The order of the (major) keys which result from adding **sharps** to the key signature, from no sharps to five sharps, is:

C, G, D, A, E and B.

The key with **no sharps** is the key of **C**;
The key with **one sharp** is the key of **G**;
The key with **two sharps** is the key of **D**;
The key with **three sharps** is the key of **A**;
The key with **four sharps** is the key of **E**;
The key with **five sharps** is the key of **B**;

This can be remembered by the sentence

“Charlie Gave Daisy An Early Breakfast.”



The Order of the Flat Keys

The order of the (major) keys which result from adding **flats** to the key signature, from no flats to five flats, is:

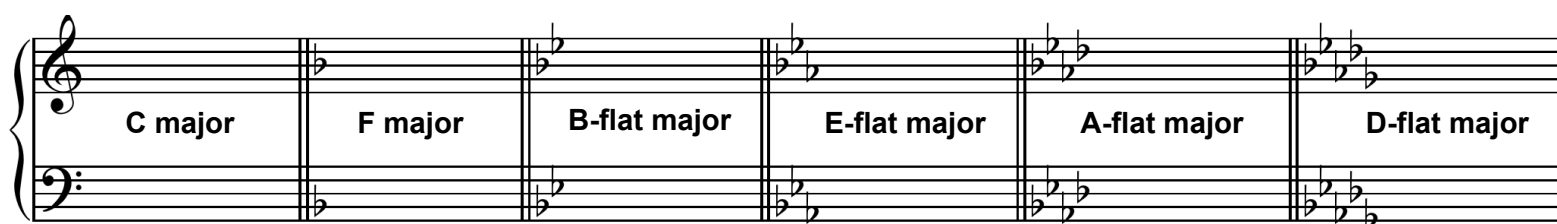
C, F, B-flat, E-flat, A-flat, and D-flat.

The key with **no flats** is the key of **C**;
the key with **one flat** is the key of **F**;
the key with **two flats** is the key of **B-flat**;
the key with **three flats** is the key of **E-flat**;
the key with **four flats** is the key of **A-flat**;
the key with **five flats** is the key of **D-flat**.

This can be remembered by the sentence

“Cut Five Bluebells Every April Day.”

(NB. It's worth noting that in this mnemonic, the words “bluebells”, “every”, “April” and “day” give you only the relevant *letter* of the key - you should insert the word “flat” after those letters to get the correct *name* of the key. So for example, the word “bluebells” gives you the letter ‘b’, and then you should say “flat” after it to get the key of B-flat.)



The Order of the Sharps in the Sharp Keys

In the key of **C major** there are no sharps (or flats) in the key signature;
to obtain the key of **G major** you add **one sharp** to the key signature (an **F-sharp**);
to obtain the key of **D major** you retain the previous sharp and add **another sharp** to the key signature (a **C-sharp**);
to obtain the key of **A major** you retain the previous sharps and add **another sharp** to the key signature (a **G-sharp**);
to obtain the key of **E major** you retain the previous sharps and add **another sharp** to the key signature (a **D-sharp**);
to obtain the key of **B major** you retain the previous sharps and add **another sharp** to the key signature (an **A-sharp**);
to obtain the key of **F-sharp major** you retain the previous sharps and add **another sharp** to the key signature (an **E-sharp**);
to obtain the key of **C-sharp major** you retain the previous sharps and add **another sharp** to the key signature (a **B-sharp**).

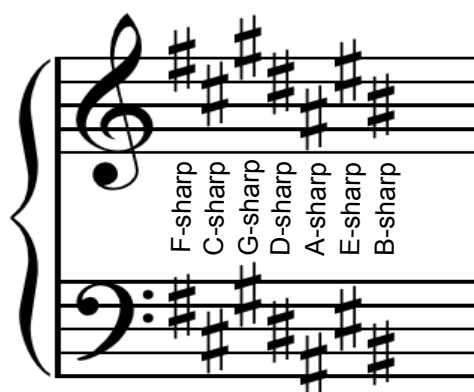
So the order of the **sharps** which get added to a key signature, from one sharp to seven sharps, is:

F-sharp, C-sharp, G-sharp, D-sharp, A-sharp, E-sharp and B-sharp.

This can be remembered by the sentence

“Father Charles Goes Down And Ends Battle.”

(NB. It's worth noting that in this mnemonic, the words give you only the relevant *letter* of the corresponding sharp - you should insert the word “sharp” after those letters to get the correct *name* of the note. So for example, the word “father” gives you the letter ‘f’, and then you should say “sharp” after it to get the note name of F-sharp.)



The Order of the Flats in the Flat Keys

In the key of **C major** there are no flats (or sharps) in the key signature;
to obtain the key of **F major** you add **one flat** to the key signature (a **B-flat**);
to obtain the key of **B-flat major** you retain the previous flat and add **another flat** to the key signature (an **E-flat**);
to obtain the key of **E-flat major** you retain the previous flats and add **another flat** to the key signature (an **A-flat**);
to obtain the key of **A-flat major** you retain the previous flats and add **another flat** to the key signature (a **D-flat**);
to obtain the key of **D-flat major** you retain the previous flats and add **another flat** to the key signature (a **G-flat**);
to obtain the key of **G-flat major** you retain the previous flats and add **another flat** to the key signature (a **C-flat**);
to obtain the key of **C-flat major** you retain the previous flats and add **another flat** to the key signature (an **F-flat**);

So the order of the **flats** which get added to a key signature, from one flat to seven flats, is:

B-flat, E-flat, A-flat, D-flat, G-flat, C-flat and F-flat.

This can be remembered by the sentence

“Busy Elephants Always Dread Getting Caught Fishing.”

(NB. It's worth noting that in this mnemonic, the words give you only the relevant *letter* of the corresponding flat; you should insert the word “flat” after those letters to get the correct *name* of the note. So for example, the word “busy” gives you the letter ‘b’, and then you should say “flat” after it to get the note name of B-flat.)



Note Mnemonics Reference Chart

This reference chart is to help you find the mnemonic you need to identify notes on the staff. There are four mnemonics in total; two for the bass clef and two for the treble clef.

Note Position	Bass Clef Mnemonic	Treble Clef Mnemonic
Lines	"Great Big Dragons Fly Away"	"Every Good Boy Deserves Football"
Spaces	"All Cows Eat Grass"	"Face"

*Remember: all the mnemonics for the notes on the staves go from **low** to **high**. For instance, in the mnemonic "Great Big Dragons Fly Away", the 'G' (represented by the word "great") is on the bottom line of the staff and the 'A' (represented by the word "away") is on the top line of the staff.*