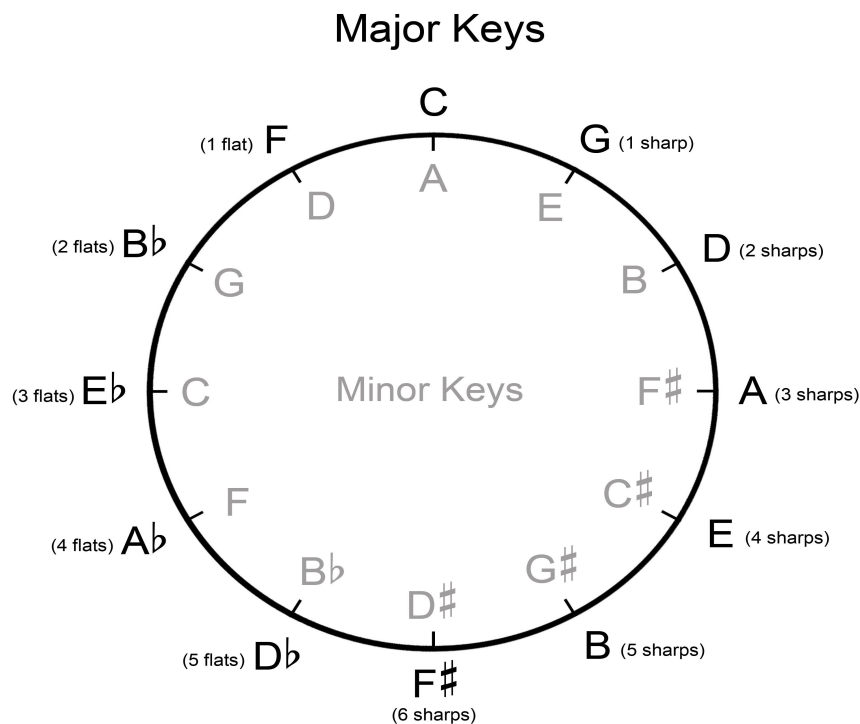


Bass Fundamentals

Column #4 – The Circle Of Life, Part Two: The Circle of Fifths

In this lesson, you will be looking at the Circle of Fifths. In much the same way as with the Cycle of Fourths, you can read **clockwise** and find the sharps of a given key. And as with the previous lesson revealing the "clock face" similarities, up to six o'clock, noting that **C** occupies the 12 noon position, just as with the Cycle of Fourths, you can associate 1 o'clock with one sharp, the key of **G Major**, 2 o'clock with two sharps, the key of **D Major**, and so forth up to 6 o'clock, the key of **F#**. Take a look...



Note also that **inside** the Circle are other keys, beginning with **A** in the 12 noon position. These are the **minor** keys and you travel **clockwise to find the sharps** and **counter-clockwise to find the flats**.

While I have separated the Circle from the Cycle, you can see the above chart is actually an all inclusive representation of both, and includes the minor key version, too. So, using the above diagram, you can travel counterclockwise (the Cycle of Fourths) to find the flats.

To differentiate between the two methods, we use Circle to demonstrate movement in 5ths, to find the keys with sharps; and Cycle to demonstrate movement in 4ths, to find the keys with flats. It keeps the two separate in their declarations to avoid confusion. It may seem a little

redundant to repeat this information, but I want to be sure you clearly understand the application of the Circle of Fifths (the "official" name of the whole thing), how you use it.

Application of the Circle of Fifths

It is most important to realise that the Circle of Fifths is a diagram portraying **natural acoustic relationships** between adjacent tones on the Circle.

Going counter-clockwise: each note represents Overtone No.3 followed by its Fundamental.

Going clockwise: each note represents a Fundamental followed by its Overtone No.3

The Circle of Fifths underlies many principles and elements of Western Music. Most of all, the Circle of Fifths is a powerful engine for **harmonic motion** (the movement from one chord to the next) which has been used in Western music for the past 300 and more years.

The **dominant 7th chord provides the strongest pull** along the Circle. But other chord qualities, too, move naturally along the Circle in a pleasing and logical progression.

The harmonic force moves counter-clockwise. But short chord progressions moving one or two steps clockwise against the flow are also common.

Feel free to explore the ideas of jumping around the Circle to see what happens. Don't forget the *minor* Circle lurking inside the main Circle. Each minor key is at its corresponding place to indicate sharps and flats each key will contain.