

(Book 2) Lesson 29b.

Key Signatures: re-visited (Book 1 has some of this same theory)

A Key Signature is a device that allows a performer to move a composition from its established pitch to a position, higher or lower on the musical ladder. It also ensures that in a Major Key, the half tones will always be between the third and fourth notes and between the seventh and eighth notes.

This is a "C" Major Scale

Lower Major Tetrachord

Upper Major Tetrachord

The major scale divides into two equal groups of four notes, called Major Tetrachords. The two tetrachords are separated by a whole tone.

Remember that on a scale of natural notes, half tones occur between "B&C" and "E&F."

If we turn the alphabet of "F" into notes, it looks like this. It seems that the half tones don't fall between the "third and fourth", and "seventh and eighth notes."

Between 3rd and 4th notes! "Not so great!"

1/2 tone "Not so great!"

Between the 7th and 8th! "Great!"

Raising the note "A" by a semitone in the above example, would give us the correct placement for the 1/2 tones but would not give us the whole tone separation between the tetrachords. The solution is to lower the note "B". (shown below)

Key Signature of "F" Major

F Major has one flat. (Bb)

A whole tone now separates the two Major Tetrachords.

To place the flat sign in front of every note "B" is a little cumbersome, so, the Key Signature is placed at the beginning to remind us that in the Key of "F" all "B" notes (unless altered) are played flat.