

Keys and Key Signatures

A piece of music made from the notes of a scale is said to be in the **key** of that scale, and the first note of the scale is the **keynote** of the music. If a piece of music is 'in the key of G major' all of the Fs will be sharp. If a piece of music is 'in the key of F major' all of the Bs will be flat.

This piece of music is in the key of D major because it uses the notes of the scale of D major:



Usually the sharps (or flats) are not written before every note which needs one. Instead, they are shown at the beginning of each line of music, after the clef (but before the time signature). This makes the music easier to read.

The melody above would normally be written like this:



Sharp or flat signs after the clef are called the **key signature** of the music. Notice the key signature in the melody above - only the top line F has a sharp on it, also only the C in the third space has a sharp sign. This is because a sharp or a flat in the key signature applies to all notes with the same letter name; so all three Fs in the melody become F# and both Cs are sharp too.

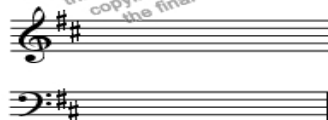
The scale of C major is the only major scale with no sharps or flats - it does not have a key signature.

When writing key signatures all of the sharps and flats must be on exactly the correct lines and spaces according to the clef:

G major (one sharp: F #)



D major (two sharps: F # and C #)



F major (one flat: B b)

