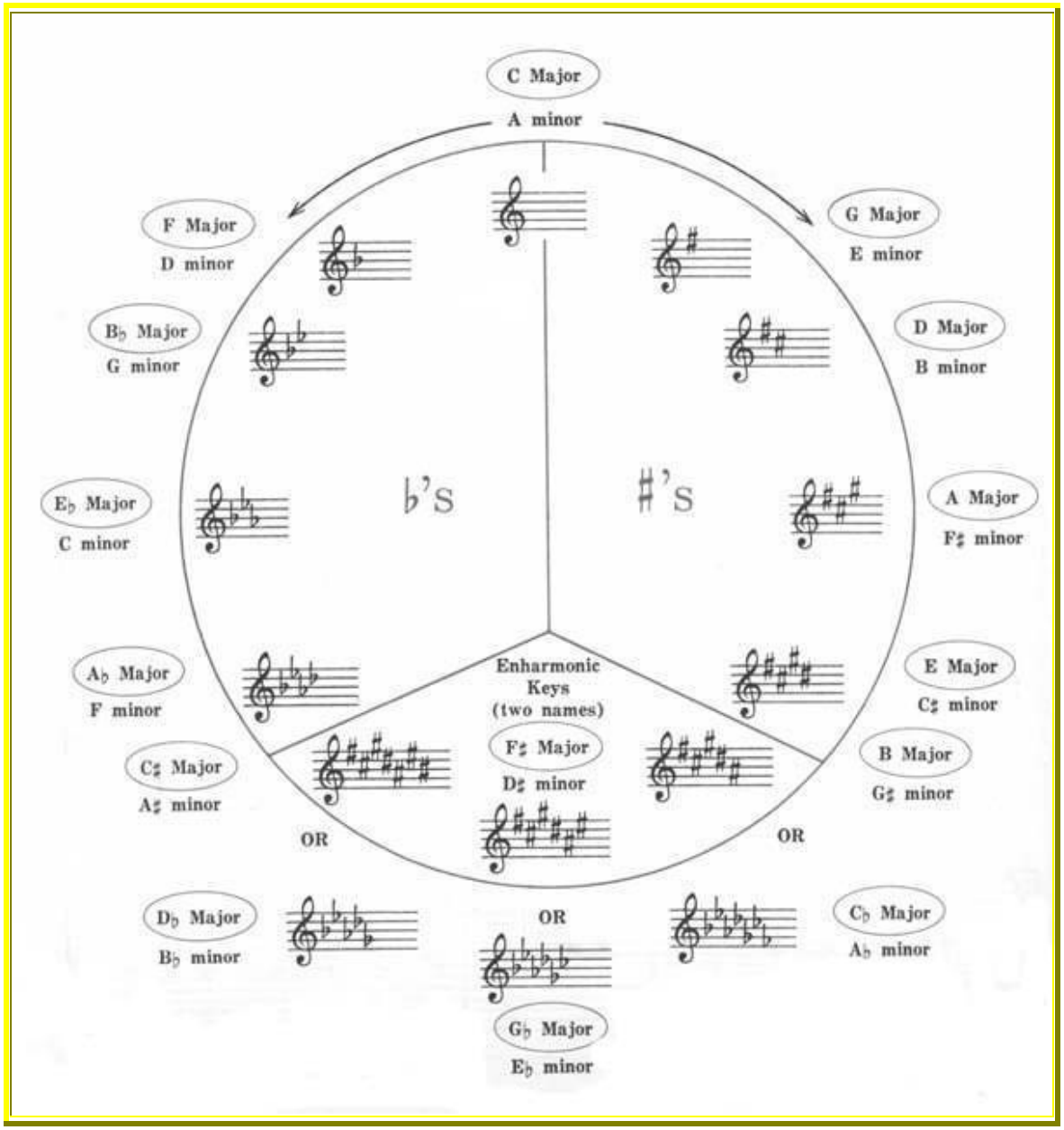
THE CIRCLE OF FIFTHS

The Circle of Fifths is an easy way to learn the key of a given musical composition. The Circle of Fifths tells you how many sharps or flats are in a given key. C has no sharps or flats. The diagram below is called the Circle of Fifths because as you go clockwise you go up a fifth. For example, the fifth note of the C major scale is G. The fifth note of the G major scale is D, and so on.

Notice that every other note is succeeded by the one before. C, skip G, D, skip D, A, etc. Also notice how there are twelve notes corresponding to twelve numbers on a clock. C is in the 12 noon position. G is in the 1 o'clock position (likewise has one sharp; F in the 11 o'clock position.) D is in the two o'clock position (likewise has sharps; F and C). A is in the 3 o'clock position (likewise has 3 sharps; F, C, G). E is in the four o'clock position and has 4 sharps (F, C, G, D). B is in the 5 o'clock position and has 5 sharps (F,C,G,D,A). F# is in the 6 o'clock position and has 6 sharps (F,C,G,D,A,E; everything is sharp except B; notice also how this corresponds with the key of F in which it has one flat, Bb). These are just some memory tags that can help you remember. Also, notice that G through E, each letter has as many pen strokes in writing the letter as it does sharps. G is made with one pen stroke and has one sharp. D is made with two pen strokes and has two sharps. A is made with three pen strokes and has three sharps. E is made with four pen strokes and has four sharps.

C	0#							
G	1#	F#						
D	2#	F#	C#					
A	3#	F#	C#	G#				
E	4#	F#	C#	G#	D#			
B	5#	F#	C#	G#	D#	A#		
F#	6#	F#	C#	G#	D#	A#	E#	
C#	7#	F#	C#	G#	D#	A#	E#	B#

C	0b							
F	1b	Bb						
Bb	2b	Bb	Eb					
Eb	3b	Bb	Eb	Ab				
Ab	4b	Bb	Eb	Ab	Db			
Db	5b	Bb	Eb	Ab	Db	Gb		
Gb	6b	Bb	Eb	Ab	Db	Gb	Cb	
Cb	7b	Bb	Eb	Ab	Db	Gb	Cb	Fb

The Circle of Fifths - Major and Relative Minor Keys