

CIRCLE OF 4THS/5THS (TREBLE CLEF)

WHAT IS IT?

It is a diagram used in music theory that helps students memorize and understand the 24 major and minor keys used in music, key relationships, and many chord relationships.

Memorizing this circle diagram is worthwhile. It's not as hard as it seems once you understand the logic behind the circle.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Fourths and fifths are musical intervals. The Circle of 4ths (counter-clockwise) and the Circle of 5ths (clockwise) are arrangements of the 12 notes of the musical alphabet in a circle.

For example, at the top of the circle we begin on the note C. As you go **clockwise** around the circle, the notes move in perfect **5ths**, adding a sharp or subtracting a flat each time.

A perfect fifth above C is G, and G is the next note on the circle going clockwise. A perfect fifth above G is D. D is next on the circle.

Next, a perfect fifth above D is A, and so on until finally returning to C at the top. Moving from C, **counter-clockwise**, the circle moves through all 12 notes of the musical alphabet going in **4ths** until finally returning to C.

You will notice at the bottom of the circle three of the notes (B, F#, and C#) have two spellings each. The same pitch can have multiple spellings. These are called **enharmonic notes**. On the circle B and Cb are enharmonic equivalents. F# and Gb are equal. And, C# and Db are the same note.

- 4ths:** C - F - Bb - Eb - Ab - Db/C# - Gb/F# - Cb/B - E - A - D - G - (C)
- 5ths:** C - G - D - A - E - B/Cb - F#/Gb - C#/Db - Ab - Eb - Bb - F - (C)

MEMORIZING THE CIRCLE

It will be quite useful for you to memorize the sequence of note names in both fifths and fourths. It will make memorizing keys and key signatures easier, too. Learn to recite the notes on the circle from memory. Be able to start on any note (not just C) and go all the way around the circle in both directions.

Circle of 4ths: BEADGCF with natural notes, followed by BEADGCF with flats. Notice Fb would be equivalent to E. Somewhere you have to flip to the enharmonic equivalent in order to go all the way around. (**Mnemonic:** Be A Darned Good Country Fiddler)

Circle of 5ths: FCGDAEB (**Mnemonic:** Fat Cats Going Down Alleys Eating Birds)

