

## How to work out what key a piece of music is in

To work out the key a piece of music is in, follow the three steps below:

### 1) Are there sharps, flats or both?

[note: if there are both, it is a minor key, and the sharp is possibly the sixth or probably the seventh note of the scale – the “leading note”]

### 2) How many sharps/flats are there?

Sharps and flats must be added to the Key Signature in the correct order. This rhyme is often used to help remember that order:

Father Christmas Goes Down An Escalator Backwards

Sharps are added : F C G D A E B  
(as per the rhyme)

Flats are added : B E A D G C F  
(the rhyme backwards!)

Always check one BEYOND what you need.

[note: In a flat key the “leading note” could be a flat note raised using a natural.]

Having established the key signature, ask:

### 3) is it the major key or the relative minor?

To work out the answer to this:

- Check the “leading note” – in a minor key it will be sharpened with an accidental
- Look at the first and final note for clues.