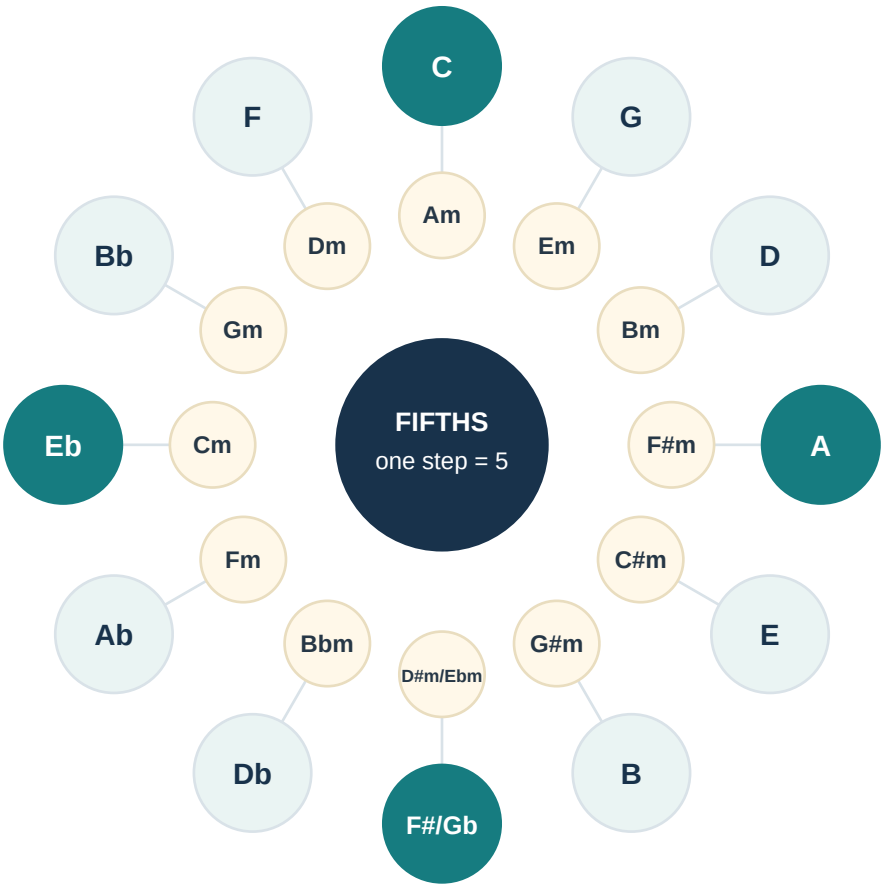
The Circle of Fifths

START WITH THE IDEA

It is a map that shows which musical keys are neighbours. Each step clockwise goes up a **fifth**. Each step the other way goes down a fifth.

CLOCKWISE: ADD SHARPS →



← ANTICLOCKWISE: ADD FLATS

WHY “FIFTHS”?

Count five note names, including where you start: **C, D, E, F, G.** So G is a fifth above C. The next step is G to D, then D to A.

How to read the circle

USE THE MAP

Start at C at the top. Take one step at a time. The circle helps you remember key signatures and find a key's relative minor.

GO CLOCKWISE: SHARPS

Each step adds one sharp to the key signature:
C (0) → **G** (1 sharp) → **D** (2) → **A** (3) → **E** (4).

The sharp order is F, C, G, D, A, E, B. The new sharp is next in that order.

GO ANTICLOCKWISE: FLATS

Each step adds one flat:
C (0) → **F** (1 flat) → **B-flat** (2) → **E-flat** (3) → **A-flat** (4).

The flat order is B, E, A, D, G, C, F.

FIND THE RELATIVE MINOR

Each major key has a relative minor. They share a key signature. **Example:** C major and A minor have no sharps or flats; A minor sits inside C major. On a keyboard, go down three semitones from the major key to find its relative minor.

NEIGHBOURS SOUND RELATED

Keys next to each other differ by just one sharp or flat. The circle is a quick way to see that connection.

Practice: questions 1–15

TRY IT

Answer first, then check the key on page 4. Use the circle on page 1 if you get stuck.

1. Count five note names from C. Where do you land?
2. One step clockwise from D: which key, and how many sharps?
3. What are the first three sharps in order?
4. One step anticlockwise from C: which key, and how many flats?
5. What are the first three flats in order? Which key has three flats?
6. What is the relative minor of G major?
7. How many semitones down from C is its relative minor?
8. What do a major key and its relative minor share?
9. F-sharp and G-flat: same pitch or different pitches?
10. Three steps clockwise from C: which key, and how many sharps?
11. Two steps anticlockwise from C: which key, and how many flats?
12. Which major key has five sharps?
13. How many flats are in A-flat major?
14. What is the relative minor of F major?
15. What is the relative major of C minor?

Answer key

CHECK YOUR WORK

Give yourself a mark for each correct answer. If one was tricky, revisit that step on the circle.

1. G	**2. A major; 3 sharps**	**3. F, C, G**
4. F major; 1 flat	**5. B, E, A; E-flat major**	**6. E minor**
7. Three semitones	**8. The key signature**	**9. Same pitch; two names**
10. E major; 4 sharps	**11. B-flat major; 2 flats**	**12. B major**
13. Four flats	**14. D minor**	**15. E-flat major**

REMEMBER

Clockwise: up a fifth and add a sharp. Anticlockwise: down a fifth and add a flat. The inner ring gives the relative minor. Relative major and minor share a key signature.