

We have seen in previous lessons the names of the notes. Well, today we will see the alterations that these notes can undergo (corresponding to the black keys for pianists)!

Among the alterations, there are 2 types: accidental, or constitutive (= armor).

1. Accidental alterations


Valid only for the duration of the measurement, there are 3 different ones:

- The sharp #

It increases the pitch of the sound by a semitone (the sound will be higher).

- The flat b

It lowers the pitch by a semitone (the sound will be lower).

- The natural 

It cancels any alteration present in the armor for the note concerned.

2. Constitutives alterations

Valid for the whole song, they are indicated at the start of the staff just after the key (this is called armor), there are 3 possibilities:

- No alteration
- Presence of one or more sharp(s)
- Presents one or more flat(s)

NB: It is impossible in armor to have sharps and flats at the same time. However, the simultaneous presence of sharps and flats to a measure (some linked to armor, others to accidental alteration) is entirely possible.

3. Order of flats and sharps


What is the point of having a sharps and flats order? Well this is used to define the armor. Let me explain: the armor is a succession of sharps or flats, but we cannot decide in what order we put these sharps or these flats! For this, we follow a defined order, which is as follows:

F - C - G - D - A - E - B

If you read from left to right, this is the order of sharps. If on the contrary you read from right to left, it is about the order of flats.

So certainly this order exists to prevent each composer from doing anything, but there is also another reason: scales, which we will see in another course.

While waiting for the range lesson, here is a table associating the armor and the ranges:

Key signature	Major key	Minor key
 no sharps or flats	C major	A minor

Key signature	Added ♯	Major key	Minor key	Key signature	Added ♭	Major key	Minor key
 1 sharp	F♯	G major	E minor	 1 flat	B♭	F major	D minor
 2 sharps	C♯	D major	B minor	 2 flats	E♭	B♭ major	G minor
 3 sharps	G♯	A major	F♯ minor	 3 flats	A♭	E♭ major	C minor
 4 sharps	D♯	E major	C♯ minor	 4 flats	D♭	A♭ major	F minor
 5 sharps	A♯	B major	G♯ minor	 5 flats	G♭	D♭ major	B♭ minor
 6 sharps	E♯	F♯ major	D♯ minor	 6 flats	C♭	G♭ major	E♭ minor
 7 sharps	B♯	C♯ major	A♯ minor	 7 flats	F♭	C♭ major	A♭ minor

Conclusion: THE TIPS TO REMEMBER

- Notes can be altered.
- There are 2 types of alterations: constitutive or accidental.
- 3 alterations exist: the sharp, the flat, the natural.
- Constitutive alterations create armor.
- There is an order to create sharps and flats in armor.