

Steps and Accidentals

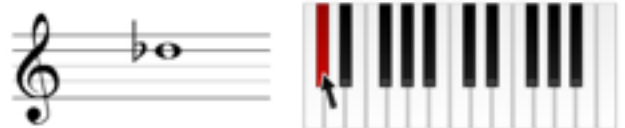
A **half step** (or “semitone”) is the distance from one key on the keyboard to the next adjacent key. Key 1 and key 2 are a half step away from each other since they are next to each other. However, a half step is not always a white key to a black key. In the image below, key 1 and key 2 are still next to each other and are a half step.



A **whole step** is the same distance as two half steps. Key 1 to Key 3 is a whole step. A whole step can be between two black keys, a black key and a white key, or two white keys. In the image below, key 1 to key 3 is a whole step. Key 1 to key 2 is the first half step, and key 2 to key 3 is the second half step.



An **accidental** is a sign used to raise or lower the pitch of a note. The first accidentals we will discuss are the flat and the sharp. The flat lowers a note by a half step, while the sharp raises a note by a half step. When typing, you can use a # to represent a sharp and a **b** to represent a flat. Let's examine the black key in between C and D. This key could be called C# since it is a half step above C. It could also be called Db since it is a half step below D.



Whenever a certain pitch has multiple names, it is called an enharmonic spelling.

Next, let's discuss the **double flat** and the **double sharp**. Uncommonly used, the double flat and double sharp alter a note by a whole step. When typing, you can use an **x** to represent a double sharp and a **bb** to represent a double flat.

Finally, a **natural** cancels out any accidental and returns a note to its original white key.

