

hey, it's
kids!

SPARKY THE MUSIC THEORY DOG!



Q: Dear Sparky:
What does it mean when music theorists talk about “relative minor” and “parallel minor”? In what ways can major and minor keys be connected?

-M.T., Canton, OH

A: WOOF!*

***TRANSLATION:** WHEN TWO KEYS THAT HAVE THE SAME **KEY SIGNATURE** BUT DIFFERENT **TONIC NOTES**, WE SAY THEY'RE **RELATED**.

SINCE D MINOR HAS THE SAME **KEY SIGNATURE** AS F MAJOR, WE SAY THAT D MINOR IS THE **RELATIVE MINOR** OF F MAJOR.



SURE, D MINOR MIGHT USE A **C SHARP** AS A **RAISED LEADING-TONE**, BUT WE DON'T CONSIDER THAT AS PART OF THE **KEY SIGNATURE**.



PARALLEL KEYS, ON THE OTHER HAND, ARE KEYS THAT HAVE THE SAME **TONIC NOTE**, BUT DIFFERENT **KEY SIGNATURES**.

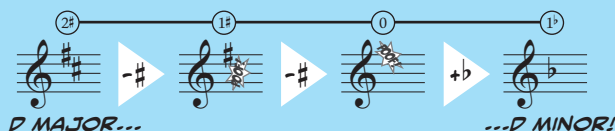
SO **F MINOR** IS THE **PARALLEL MINOR** OF **F MAJOR**!

IT'S CONVENIENT TO ADD MINOR KEYS TO THE **CIRCLE OF FIFTHS**; THEY'RE USUALLY PLACED ON THE **INSIDE** OF THE CIRCLE IN **LOWER CASE**.

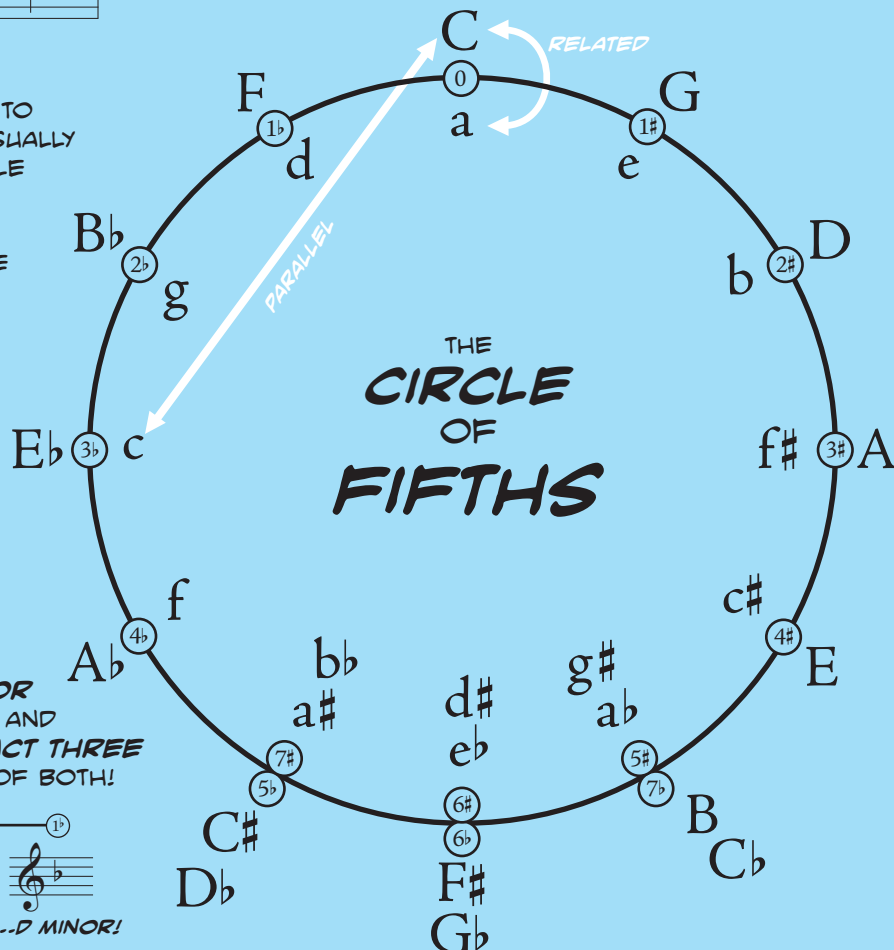
BECAUSE **RELATIVE KEYS** SHARE THE SAME **KEY SIGNATURE**, THEY ALSO SHARE THE SAME **POSITION** ON THE CIRCLE OF FIFTHS!

PARALLEL KEYS HAVE DIFFERENT KEY SIGNATURES, BUT SEEING THEM ON THE CIRCLE OF FIFTHS ILLUSTRATES THEIR **CONSISTENT KEY RELATIONSHIP**: MINOR KEYS ALWAYS APPEAR **THREE DEGREES COUNTERCLOCKWISE** FROM THEIR PARALLEL MAJOR KEY.

SO TO FIND THE KEY SIGNATURE FOR A **MINOR KEY**, START WITH THE **MAJOR** KEY SIGNATURE WITH THE SAME TONIC AND EITHER **ADD THREE FLATS**, **SUBTRACT THREE SHARPS**, OR SOME **COMBINATION** OF BOTH!



...D MINOR!



DOING STUFF THE SPARKY WAY IS ALWAYS FUN!