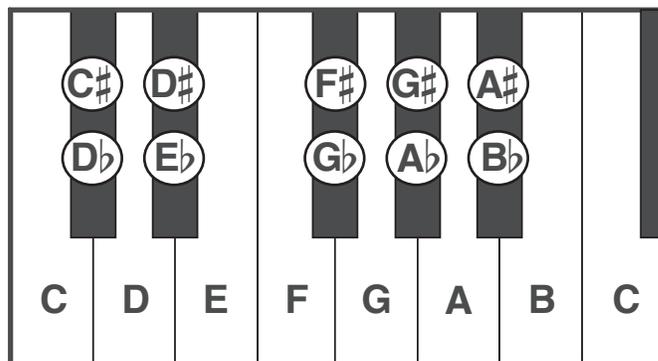


We have 7 alphabetical natural notes that exist on the white keys, but we also squeeze in 5 additional notes that exist on the black keys, for a total of **12 notes**.

Each black key is known by 2 names. For example, the black key to the right of **C** and to the left of **D** is called both **C-sharp (#)** and **D-flat (b)**. There's a good reason why we need both expressions, as you'll see.



You'll also learn why there are no black keys between **E** and **F** and between **B** and **C**.

These 12 notes from **C** to **C** are called the **C Chromatic Scale**. The word "scale" comes from the Latin word *scala*, meaning *ladder*. It may seem redundant, but the 12 notes from **D** to **D**, up one octave, is called the **D Chromatic Scale**, *but it's the same 12 notes*, only you start up from the **D** note. Really, the Chromatic Scale starting on *any* note is no more than a sequential listing of all 12 notes that appear in all 12 Chromatic Scales.

You'll see why we need this redundancy soon.

So here is the **C Chromatic Scale**, with the "black keys" expressed first as sharps, then as flats. We don't typically mix sharps and flats in the same piece of music.

**C - C# - D - D# - E - F - F# - G - G# - A - A# - B - C**  
**C - Db - D - Eb - E - F - Gb - G - Ab - A - Bb - B - C**

You might be wondering why we don't just use the letters **A** through **L**, providing a different letter for each of the 12 notes, hang the sharps and flats.

Well, it turns out that the Chromatic Scale is not the most important scale in music. We would rarely use all 12 notes together in the same melody.

The only function of the **C Chromatic Scale** is to derive the much more significant **C Major Scale**, which is a subset of 7 out of the 12 notes in the **C Chromatic Scale**. And since the Major Scale is much more useful than the Chromatic Scale, it makes sense to use 7 different letters instead of 12.