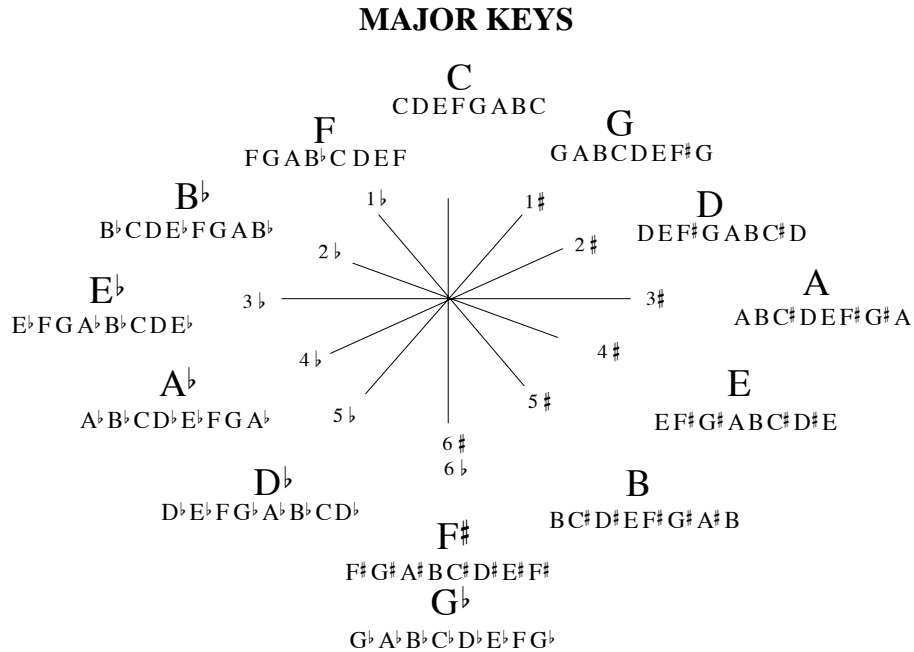


CYCLE OF FIFTHS

The *Cycle of Fifths* crops up in certain chord progressions. To understand it, look at the following diagram.



By going clockwise you add one sharp for each new key.

By going anticlockwise you add one flat for each new key.

Strictly speaking, the same pattern could continue on both sides of $F\# / Gb$. So, D^b major is the same as $C\#$ major and has 7 #s, etc, while B major is the same as C^b major and has 7 flats, and so on, although your chances of encountering this are very rare, except when accompanying certain vocalists.

From C to F is a major fifth interval downwards and the cycle of fifths usually follows this route. In fact, unless it is a technical exercise, it will not be a complete cycle, more likely it will be less than 7 changes of key.

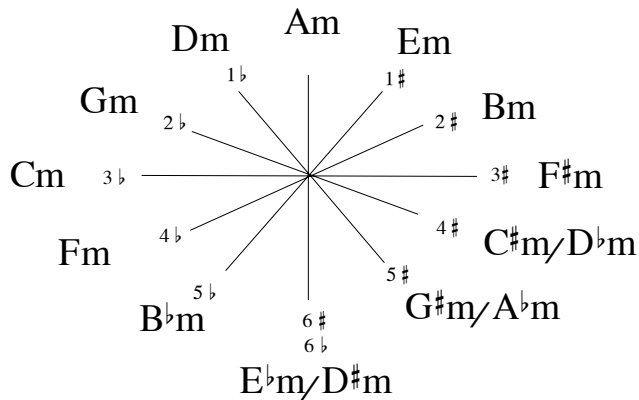
To modulate smoothly from the C major to the F major you would insert a $C7$ in between, or sometimes a $Gm7 C7$. Similarly to get from the F major to a B^b major the corresponding chords would be $F7$ or $Cm7 F7$.

In the opposite direction, say from C major to G major, you would play a $D7$ (or $Am7 D7$) between the two chords. Note that the $Am7$ is common to both the keys of C major and G major. The scale that could be used for this chord could therefore be either a C or G major.

Note that the keys a tritone away (diminished fifth interval) are directly opposite.

A diagram showing the relative minor keys is given below.

MINOR KEYS



Sharps and flats refer to key signatures

Going clockwise you add a sharp to get the new key signature each time.
Going anticlockwise you add a flat to get the new key signature each time.

To go from Am to Dm, insert A7 (or Em7(-5) A7).
To go from Am to Em, insert B7 (or F#m7(-5) B7).

Why an Em7(-5)? Because the Bb exists in the D harmonic minor scale and somehow it feels right to use the half-diminished here. The Em7 could be used but it doesn't have the same minor quality to the progression.

You could also go directly without the intervening chords.
This also applies to the major cycle.

This usually takes this form: C7 F7 Bb7 Eb7 etc. - which is the basic form of the cycle of fifths. As we have seen it could also be elongated, thus, Gm7 C7, Cm7 F7, Fm7 Bb7, Bbm7 Eb7 etc.

Returning to the basic form, there is no reason why it should only refer to dominant sevenths. Major sevenths or minor sevenths would make a refreshing change. The cycle could also go in the opposite direction (cycle of fourths). Try it.