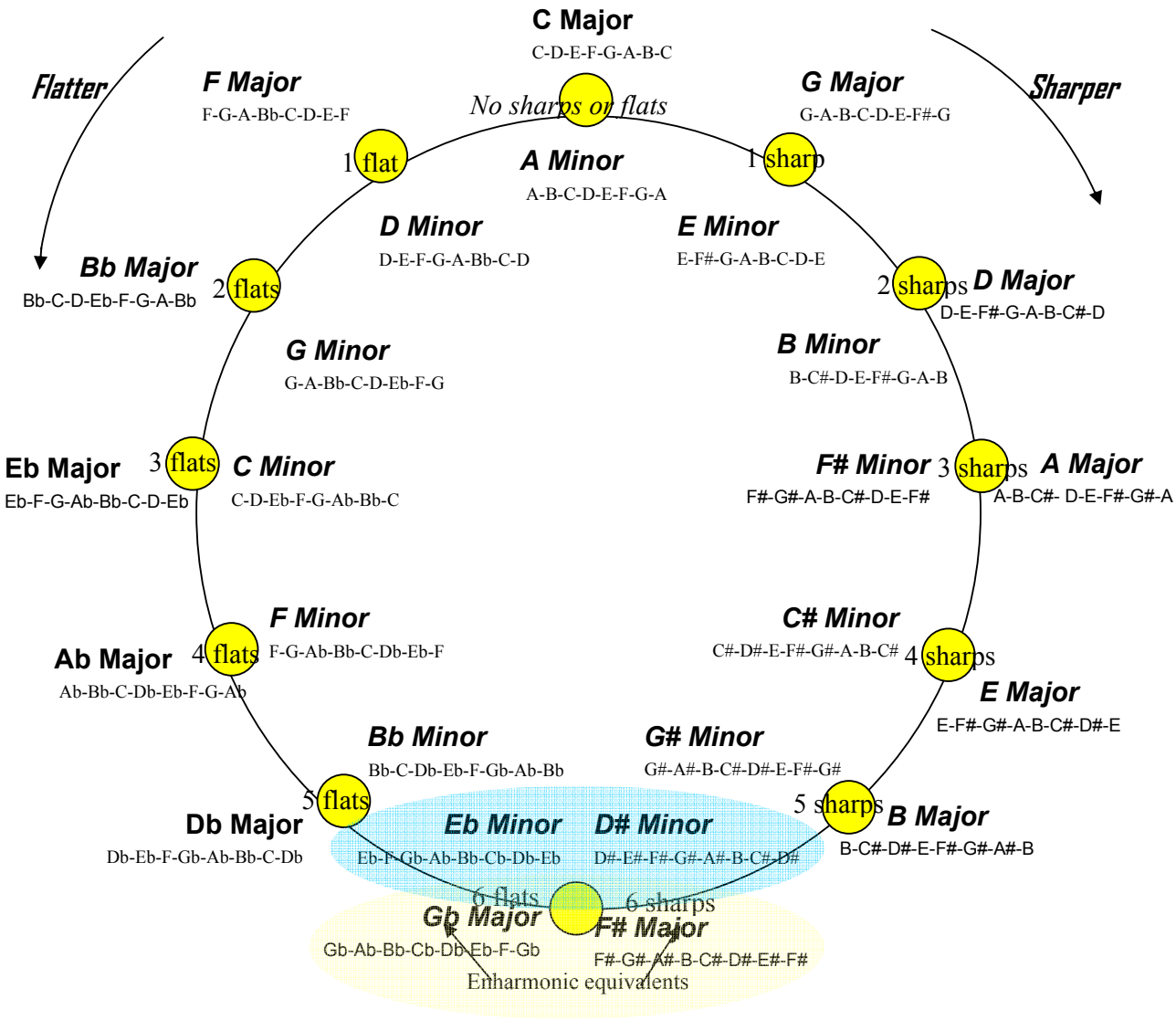
The Circle of Fifths



The ***circle of fifths*** is a teaching aid designed to show how keys are related to each other. Keys, separated by the interval of a perfect fifth, instead of by tones and semitones (as in the notes of scales) are arranged in a circle. The interval of a perfect fifth is used because keys separated by this interval are more closely related than keys separated by any other interval.

Moving by step (fifths) along the circle in a clockwise direction, the keys become increasingly distant as each stage (a fifth higher) introduces a key with **one** *sharpened* note that is foreign to the preceding key.
Moving by step along the circle in an *anti*-clockwise direction (which is by *fourths*) introduces a key with **one** *flatted* note that is foreign to the preceding key.

Every major key has an associated *relative* minor key (a minor third lower) with which it shares exactly the same arrangement of sharps or flats (key signature). These are shown inside the circle.

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