

Key signature names and translations

When a **musical key** or **key signature** is referred to in a language other than **English**, that language may use the usual notation used in English (namely the letters A to G, along with translations of the words *sharp*, *flat*, *major* and *minor* in that language): languages which use the English system include **Irish**, **Welsh**, **Azeri**, **Hindi**, **Japanese** (based on katakana in iroha order), **Korean** (based on hangul), **Chinese**, **Thai**, **Indonesian**, **Filipino**, **Swahili**, **Esperanto**.

Or it may use some different notation. Two notation systems are most commonly found besides the English system, the **Fixed Do** key notation and the **German** key notation

- Fixed Do** key notation – used (among others) in Italian, French, Dutch (in the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium), Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan, Occitan, Breton, Basque, Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Bulgarian, Latvian, Romanian, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, Persian, Turkish (along with the English system) and Vietnamese. Most countries (though not all, e.g. Serbia) where Fixed Do solmization is used also use the Fixed Do key notation. Instead of the letters **C, D, E, F, G, A, B**, seven syllables (derived from solfege) are used to refer to the seven diatonic tones of C major: *Do* (in French *Do* or *Ut*), *Re*, *Mi*, *Fa*, *Sol* (never *So*), *La*, *Si* (never *Ti*), with some variations and adaptations according to country language and alphabet, followed by the accidental (natural is clearly most often omitted) and then the major/minor qualifier as needed.
- German** key notation – used (among others) in German, Dutch (in the Netherlands, where it is used along with the English system), Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Icelandic, Finnish, Estonian, Lithuanian (along with the English system), Serbian (along with the English system), Croatian, Bosnian, Slovene, Hungarian, Polish, Czech and Slovak. The German key notation differs from the English system in two respects, namely that **B** is referred to by the letter **H** and **B** by the letter **B** by itself, and that sharp and flat designations do not use words but suffix *is* for sharps and suffix *es* (reduced to *s* if the tone letter is a vowel) for flats, except that (as already mentioned) in the German system the letter **B** by itself already means **B flat**. However in some places where the German system is in use one may encounter the use of **B** for **B** and **Bes** for **B**. This is especially common in the Netherlands.

There has been a tendency in some countries which historically used the Fixed Do key notation or the German key notation to switch to the English system, especially among musicians working in popular music genres or jazz. The only case where this can lead to some confusion is when the letter **B** is used: should it be understood as **B[♮]** (English system) or **B[♭]** (German system)? Another tendency has been to use the English system in writing but to read it out according to either the Fixed Do or the German system if those are the systems used locally. For example recent French scores or books may use the English system (this is especially common for chord symbols), but French users would read out that notation according to the Fixed Do system. Similarly a Dutch musician may refer to a written **F** orally as **Fis**. This article is concerned with written usage.

To form a key designation, locate the note name in the pitch translation table and add the major/**♯** or minor/**♭** qualifier from the lower table as needed.

Pitch translation table

alphabetic systems					solmization systems								
English	German	Dutch (Netherlands, written)	Japanese	Korean	Italian	French	Spanish	Portuguese	Russian	Romanian	Dutch (Belgium)	Greek	Japanese
C flat	Ces	Ces / C mol	変ハ (hen-ha)	내림 다 (naerim da)	Do bemolle	Do bémol	Do bemol	Dó bemol	До-бемоль (Do-bemol)	Do bemol	Do mol	Ντο ύφεση (Do hypthesis)	ト♭ (do-flat)
C	C	C	ハ (ha)	다 (da)	Do	Do (Ut)	Do	Dó	До (Do)	Do	Do	Ντο (Do)	ト (do)
C sharp	Cis	Cis / C kruis	嬰ハ (ei-ha)	올림 다 (ollim da)	Do diesis	Do dièse	Do sostenido	Dó sustenido	До-диез (Do-diez)	Do diez	Do kruis	Ντο δίεση (Do diesis)	ト♯ (do-sharp)
D flat	Des	Des / D mol	変二 (hen-ni)	내림 라 (naerim ra)	Re bemolle	Ré bémol	Re bemol	Ré bemol	Ре-бемоль (Re-bemol)	Re bemol	Re mol	Ρε ύφεση (Re hypthesis)	レ♭ (re-flat)
D	D	D	二 (ni)	라 (ra)	Re	Ré	Re	Ré	Ре (Re)	Re	Re	Ρε (Re)	レ (re)
D sharp	Dis	Dis / D kruis	嬰二 (ei-ni)	올림 라 (ollim ra)	Re diesis	Ré dièse	Re sostenido	Ré sustenido	Ре-диез (Re-diez)	Re diez	Re kruis	Ρε δίεση (Re diesis)	レ♯ (re-sharp)
E flat	Es	Es / E mol	変ホ (hen-ho)	내림 마 (naerim ma)	Mi bemolle	Mi bémol	Mi bemol	Mi bemol	Ми-бемоль (Mi-bemol)	Mi bemol	Mi mol	Μι ύφεση (Mi hypthesis)	ミ♭ (mi-flat)
E	E	E	ホ (ho)	마 (ma)	Mi	Mi	Mi	Mi	Ми (Mi)	Mi	Mi	Μι (Mi)	ミ (mi)
E sharp	Eis	Eis / E kruis	嬰ホ (ei-ho)	올림 마 (ollim ma)	Mi diesis	Mi dièse	Mi sostenido	Mi sustenido	Ми-диез (Mi-diez)	Mi diez	Mi kruis	Μι δίεση (Mi diesis)	ミ♯ (mi-sharp)
F flat	Fes	Fes / F mol	変ヘ (hen-he)	내림 바 (naerim ba)	Fa bemolle	Fa bémol	Fa bemol	Fa bemol	Фа-бемоль (Fa-bemol)	Fa bemol	Fa mol	Φα ύφεση (Fa hypthesis)	ファ♭ (fa-flat)
F	F	F	ヘ (he)	바 (ba)	Fa	Fa	Fa	Fá	Фа (Fa)	Fa	Fa	Φα (Fa)	ファ (fa)
F sharp	Fis	Fis / F kruis	嬰ヘ (ei-he)	올림 바 (ollim ba)	Fa diesis	Fa dièse	Fa sostenido	Fá sustenido	Фа-диез (Fa-diez)	Fa diez	Fa kruis	Φα δίεση (Fa diesis)	ファ♯ (fa-sharp)
G flat	Ges	Ges / G mol	変ト (hen-to)	내림 사 (naerim sa)	Sol bemolle	Sol bémol	Sol bemol	Sol bemol	Соль-бемоль (Sol-bemol)	Sol bemol	Sol mol	Σολ ύφεση (Sol hypthesis)	ソ♭ (so-flat)
G	G	G	ト (to)	사 (sa)	Sol	Sol	Sol	Sol	Соль (Sol)	Sol	Sol	Σολ (Sol)	ソ (so)
G sharp	Gis	Gis / G kruis	嬰ト (ei-to)	올림 사 (ollim sa)	Sol diesis	Sol dièse	Sol sostenido	Sol sustenido	Соль-диез (Sol-diez)	Sol diez	Sol kruis	Σολ δίεση (Sol diesis)	ソ♯ (so-sharp)
A flat	As	As / A mol	変イ (hen-i)	내림 가 (naerim ga)	La bemolle	La bémol	La bemol	Lá bemol	Ля-бемоль (Lja-bemol)	La bemol	La mol	Λα ύφεση (La hypthesis)	ラ♭ (ra-flat)
A	A	A	イ (i)	가 (ga)	La	La	La	Lá	Ля (Lja)	La	La	Λα (La)	ラ (la)
A sharp	Ais	Ais / A kruis	嬰イ (ei-i)	올림 가 (ollim ga)	La diesis	La dièse	La sostenido	Lá sustenido	Ля-диез (Lja-diez)	La diez	La kruis	Λα δίεση (La diesis)	ラ♯ (ra-sharp)
B flat	B	Bes / B mol	変ロ (hen-ro)	내림 나 (naerim na)	Si bemolle	Si bémol	Si bemol	Si bemol	Си-бемоль (Si-bemol)	Si bemol	Si mol	Σι ύφεση (Si hypthesis)	シ♭ (si-flat)
B	H	B	ロ (ro)	나 (na)	Si	Si	Si	Si	Си (Si)	Si	Si	Σι (Si)	シ (si)
B sharp	His	Bis / B kruis	嬰ロ (ei-ro)	올림 나 (ollim na)	Si diesis	Si dièse	Si sostenido	Si sustenido	Си-диез (Si-diez)	Si diez	Si kruis	Σι δίεση (Si diesis)	シ♯ (si-sharp)

Major/minor alteration

English	German	Dutch	Japanese	Korean	Italian	French	Spanish	Portuguese	Russian	Romanian	Greek
major	Dur	groot	長調 (chōchō)	장조 (jangjo)	maggiore	majeur	mayor	maior	мажор	major	μείζονα
minor	Moll	klein	短調 (tanchō)	단조 (danjo)	minore	mineur	menor	menor	минор	minor	ελάσσονα

Note that the 'major' alteration is usually superfluous, as a key description missing an alteration is invariably assumed to be major

In the German notation scheme, hyphen is added between the pitch and the alteration (*D-Dur*). Minor key signatures are written with a lower case letter (*d-Moll*).

For example, to describe Bach's Mass in B minor one could use:

- *B minor* (English)
- *h-Moll* (German)

- *b* (*klein*) (Dutch)
- 口短調 (*ro tanchō*) (Japanese)
- 나 단조 (*na danjo*) (Korean)
- *Si minore* (Italian)
- *Si mineur* (French)
- *Si menor* (Spanish)
- *Si menor* (Portuguese)
- Си минор (Russian)
- *Si minor* (Romanian)
- Σι ελάσσονα (Greek)

External links

- [Table of the names of keys in French, German, Italian, and Spanish](#) hosted by Yale University.
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