

Modulations

The 24 Keys

A modulation is when music shifts from one key to another.

A basic knowledge of the keys can be very useful for understanding modulations. Modulations tend to occur mostly between closely related keys; i.e. keys that are in close proximity to one another. There are 24 keys in total, but there can be more when you add enharmonic keys (i.e. keys that use the same pitches but with different spelling). Guitar music tends to use keys with relatively few sharps and flats. Therefore an exhaustive study of all 24 keys is not necessary.

The diagram illustrates the 24 keys of music, organized into seven rows of four keys each. Each key is shown with its scale and the 6th and 7th degrees. Red arrows indicate relationships between keys:

- Closely related key:** C major to G major (6th degree).
- Remotely related key:** C major to A major (7th degree).
- Enharmonic:** G \flat major and E \flat minor (6th degree).

The keys are arranged as follows:

- Row 1: Scale of C major, A minor (Relative to C major), G major (Closely related key), E minor (Relative to G major).
- Row 2: D major, B minor (Relative to D major), A major (Remotely related key), F \sharp minor (Relative to A major).
- Row 3: E major, C \sharp minor (Relative to E major), B major, G \sharp minor (Relative to B major).
- Row 4: F \sharp major, D \sharp minor (Relative to F \sharp major), F major, D minor (Relative to F major).
- Row 5: B \flat major, G minor (Relative to B \flat major), E \flat major, C minor (Relative to E \flat major).
- Row 6: A \flat major, F minor (Relative to A \flat major), D \flat major, B \flat minor (Relative to D \flat major).
- Row 7: G \flat major (Enharmonic), E \flat minor (Relative to G \flat major, Enharmonic).