The flat: one half step down

A **flat** (♭) in front of a note lowers it by **one half step** (Handout 353) — play the very next key to the **left**. Usually that lands on a black key.

ONE HALF STEP DOWN

B becomes B♭

the very next key to the left

B♭ means "B, lowered." Find B, slide **one key to the left** — you land on the black key. On the staff, the ♭ sits just **before** the notehead, on the same line or space.



B → B♭ (−1) = 1 half step down

E becomes E♭

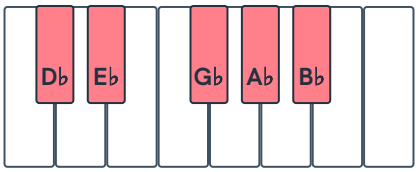
same move, anywhere

Any note can wear a flat. E slides left to the black key E♭. The sound shades slightly **darker** — flats are music's way of shading down.



E → E♭ (−1) = 1 half step down

EVERY BLACK KEY HAS A FLAT NAME



Each black key takes its flat name from the white key on its **right**, lowered: D♭, E♭, G♭, A♭, B♭.

Try it Play B, then B♭ — hear the shade-down. Do the same with E and E♭. Then name the black keys from the top of the octave going down: **B♭, A♭, G♭, E♭, D♭**. (How long does a flat last? Until the barline.)

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