The sharp: one half step up

A **sharp** (♯) in front of a note raises it by **one half step** (Handout 353) — play the very next key to the **right**. Usually that lands on a black key.

ONE HALF STEP UP

F becomes F♯

the very next key to the right

F♯ means "F, raised." Find F, slide **one key to the right** — you land on the black key. On the staff, the ♯ sits just **before** the notehead, on the same line or space.

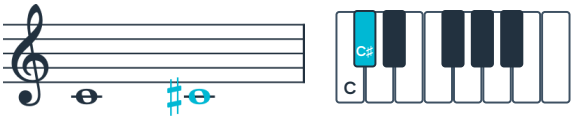


F → F♯ (+1) = 1 half step up

C becomes C♯

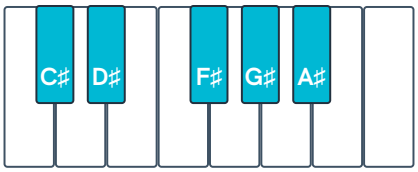
same move, anywhere

Any note can wear a sharp. C slides right to the black key C♯. The sound tilts slightly **brighter** — sharps are music's way of reaching up.



C → C♯ (+1) = 1 half step up

EVERY BLACK KEY HAS A SHARP NAME, TOO



Each black key takes its sharp name from the white key on its **left**, raised: C♯, D♯, F♯, G♯, A♯. (Finding the keys: Handout 350.)

TWO NAMES, ONE KEY

C♯ = D♭

Wait — wasn't this key called D♭ before? It was. **Every black key answers to two names**: reaching up it's a sharp, shading down it's a flat. Same key, same sound, two spellings.

Try it Play F, then F♯ — hear the reach-up. Do the same with C and C♯. Then name the black keys going up from the bottom of the octave: **C♯, D♯, F♯, G♯, A♯**. (A sharp also lasts until the barline.)

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