Understanding Key Signatures TC

Without key signatures, it would be necessary to place an accidental
in front of every diatonic note requiring a sharp of flat.

Notice that E, A, and B are the
only notes being flatted.

In this melody only F and C require a
sharp to be in the key of D.

Instead of placing flats in front of each note,
the notes to be flatted are put in the key signature.

Placing the sharps in the key signature
requires the player to remember
(and look for) the effected notes as they read.

The 2 melodies on the left (and on the right) are the same.
Notice that the melodies on top have multiple accidentals while those below have none.
Key Signatures make the music less cluttered and easier to focus on notes and rhythms.
The accidentals in a key signature also reveal what scale /key is being used at any point in your music.
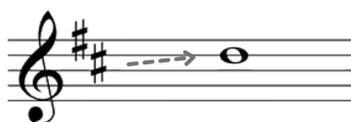
To identify sharp key signatures - count up one line or space from the last sharp.
The letter name of that line or space is the root/name of that key.
Go down a line or space you get the relative minor.
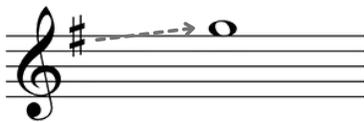
Last sharp is F, the key is G
(or E minor).
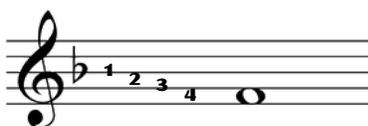
Last sharp is C, the key is D
(or B minor).

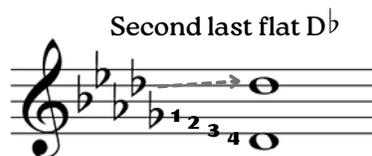Last sharp is D, the key is E
(or C# minor).

To identify the key when there are flats in the key signature,
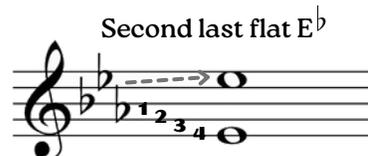the second last flat (from the right) is the root of that key.
Another way to identify the root is to count down 4 lines and spaces from the last flat.

Second last flat D♭

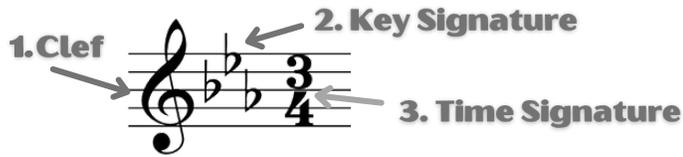Second last flat E♭

Last flat is B♭, the key is F
(or d minor).

Last flat is G♭, the key is D♭
(or Bb minor).

Last flat is A♭, the key is E♭
(or c minor).

Before reading any piece of music, always check for these three items. Every piece of music has them.

1. Clef 2. Key Signature 3. Time Signature

If there are no sharps or flats in the key signature, the music is in the key of C or atonal.
Key signatures are cumulative. Once a note is made flat or sharp,
it remains raised or lowered through all subsequent flat or sharp keys.

If your adding flats from left to right -up a 4th, down a 5th - Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, Gb, Cb, Fb
The most common mistake in flat keys is missing the flatted fourth note.

If your adding sharps from left to right - down a 4th, up a 5th - F#, C#, G#, D#, A#, E#, B#
The most common mistake in sharp keys is missing the 'sharp' seventh note.

Flat
Key Signatures
Up a perfect fourth.

Sharp
Key Signatures
Up a perfect fifth

CIRCLE OF 5THS

F C G
Bb   D
Eb   A
Ab   E
Db Gb B
    Cb F#

d a e
g   b
c   f#
f bb c#
   eb g#

The inside ring shows the relative minor key.