**Section 2.4**

**Minor Scales: Two Roads**

**Minor scale**
The most common minor scale, the **natural minor scale**, follows the pattern of half steps and whole steps formed by the white piano keys from A up to the next A: whole, half, whole; then whole; then half, whole, whole.

![Natural Minor Scale Diagram]

**Relative keys**
**Relative keys** are any major scale and natural minor scale that share a key signature. The **third note** of the minor scale is the first note of the **relative major** with the same key signature. For example, C is the third scale note of A minor. C major and A minor are relative keys sharing a key signature with no flats or sharps. Remember: **Relatives at a family reunion look alike, and relative key signatures “look alike” also.**

![Relative Key Signature Diagram]

**Road one:**
**relative minor**
There are two roads to find key signatures for minor scales: relative and parallel. The example below illustrates the **relative minor** method for spelling E minor.

**STEP 1:** Count up **three** letter names to find the relative major.
**STEP 2:** Spell the relative major key signature.
**STEP 3:** Adjust if necessary to match the minor scale you want.

![Relative Minor Method Diagram]
Relative minor with adjustment

Sometimes counting up three letters gives a major key that doesn’t fit with the minor key you want. C minor is a good example. Counting up from C gives E: C, D, E. E major has four sharps, including C sharp. Since we want C natural, not C sharp, we need to use the key signature for E flat major (three flats) instead of E major.

Road two:

Parallel keys share the same starting note (called the tonic). To find the natural minor notes using the parallel key, write a major scale on the same note, then lower 3, 6, and 7 using accidentals. Although the parallel and relative methods both work, minor keys should be memorized.

Melodic minor

Melodic minor is natural minor with steps 6 and 7 raised going up, but like natural minor going down. Notice the F sharp in the key for E minor.

Harmonic minor

Harmonic minor is natural minor with step 7 raised (only) both up and down. Again, the F sharp reflects the key signature for E natural minor.