

Accidentals

Music

Sharps, flats and naturals — and exactly how long each one lasts.

An accidental applies to that pitch, in that octave, for the rest of the bar — then it expires.

 up a semitone ·  down a semitone ·  cancel

 on beat 1, plain F on beat 3, same bar

Both are 

The accidental is still in force.

The same F in the NEXT bar

F natural

The barline cancelled it.

 in the key signature

Every F is sharp, every bar

Key signatures do not expire.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

✗ **Applying an accidental to the same letter in another octave**

✓ **It applies only to the octave it is written in**

A written  on the top line does not sharpen the F below it, unless the key signature does.

A double sharp — written as an x — raises two semitones; a double flat () lowers two. Both are cancelled by a single natural.