

ENHARMONIC SPELLINGS are used for visual convenience. One common reason for their use is to *visually clarify the voice-leading*. That is, a composer might change the spelling of a note enharmonically to more clearly indicate the direction a pitch will move. As we have learned, there is a general tendency for pitches with raised accidentals to continue upward, and pitches with lowered accidentals to continue downward, and if an E^b moves to E^{\natural} as in the first example below, it goes against this tendency, at least temporarily; it resolves to the D one note later.

Two of the most-common examples of this type of enharmonic spelling occur when a vii^{*7}/V or a Ger^{+6} move to a cadential $\begin{matrix} 6-5 \\ 4-3 \end{matrix}$ in major keys:

Another common reason for changing the spelling of notes enharmonically is to *make them easier to read for the performer*. B and F tend to be easier to read than C^b and E^{\sharp} for example. This is presumably the rationale behind the enharmonic respellings in example 25-2 (Mendelssohn, String Quartet op. 80, IV) in the text (see the middle voices in mm. 89-92). Respelling only *some* of the parts, however, is a relatively uncommon practice.

Most composers respell *the entire key*, as in the following example. This is adapted from example 25-3 (Schubert) in the Kostka & Payne text. It begins in B^b , then modulates briefly to G^b (=bVI), before changing mode to g^b (=bvi), a *very* distant key (double-chromatic mediant relationship). However, the key signature for g^b would require 9 flats (it is the relative minor of B^{bb} !), and presumably for this reason Schubert enharmonically respelled it as f^{\sharp} (3 sharps), making it easier to read. The first line is a harmonic reduction based on Schubert's spelling.

The second line is identical in sound, but, as an experiment, I re-spelled the modulation to G^b enharmonically (the key of G^b becomes F^{\sharp}), switching to the three-sharps signature four bars earlier than Schubert.

Play both; is one easier to read than the other?

The answer to this question may depend on the instrument you play; for example, key signatures in brass music tend to use flats more often than sharps, whereas the reverse is generally true in string music.

Enharmonically-respelled key changes may be indicated by changing the key signature, or by maintaining the key signature while using accidentals as required; the composer may have a perception that one approach is easier to read than the other, or it may simply be a matter of the composer's personal preference.

ENHARMONIC REINTERPRETATION refers to chords which, when spelled differently, allow the composer to modulate to a *different key*, not just an enharmonic respelling of the expected key. Thus, enharmonic reinterpretation affects how we *hear* the chord progression, not just how it looks. The two *most-common* examples are the $V7 = Ger^{+6}$ (they sound the same but resolve differently), and the **diminished 7th chord**, which has four different enharmonic spellings (all of which sound identical) with four different leading tones. The two *least-common* examples are the **augmented triad** and the Fr^{+6} . See examples on pp. 427 ff (6th ed., Kostka & Payne).