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WELCOME TO ALPHA ACADEMY

What trading is, what it is not, and your first four weeks — for the complete beginner.

Alpha Academy · Team Alpha Trading

Welcome to Alpha Academy: Your First Steps Into the Market

Welcome. If you have never bought a stock, never seen a trading chart, and could not explain what an option is to save your life — you are in exactly the right place. Alpha Academy was built for you. We assume you know nothing about the market, and we mean that as a compliment: everybody who trades today started right where you are.

By the end of this chapter, you will know what trading really is (and what it is not), what results are realistic for a beginner, the three skills every trader builds, and how to move through this school — plus a simple four-week plan to get started. No experience needed. No money needed. Just honesty and a little patience.

> **NOTE**
> Everything in Alpha Academy is education, not financial advice. We will never tell you what to buy, and nobody can promise you profits. Anyone who does promise you profits is selling you something.

What Is Alpha Academy?

Alpha Academy is Team Alpha Trading's school. **Team Alpha Trading** is our community of traders — people who study the market together and hold each other to real standards. The Academy organizes that learning into one path of short chapters that build on each other, from "what is a stock?" to complete trading strategies.

Think of it like learning to drive: nobody hands you car keys on a highway on day one. You learn the pedals, practice in an empty lot, and only then merge into traffic. This school works the same way: understand first, practice second, real money last.

What Trading Actually Is

Trading means buying something at one price and selling it later at a different price, hoping to keep the difference. The "something" might be a **stock** — a small piece of ownership in a company, like one slice of a very large pizza. Buy 10 shares of a company at $50 each and you spend $500. If the price rises to $60 and you sell, you get $600 back: you made $100. If it falls to $40 and you sell, you get $400 back: you lost $100. That is the whole engine. Everything else in this school — charts, options, futures, strategies — is better ways of deciding **what** to buy, **when**, and **how much** to risk when you are wrong.

A few words you will see constantly, defined right now:

- A **share** is one unit of a stock — own 100 shares and you own 100 little pieces of that company.
- A **broker** is the company whose app or website lets you buy and sell — the doorway to the market, the same way a bank app is the doorway to your bank account.
- A **trade** is one complete trip: buying something and later selling it. Buying alone is only half a trade.

What Trading Is Not

Just as important is what trading is **not**.

Trading is not a job with a paycheck. A job pays you the same amount every week whether the day went well or badly. Trading pays nothing on a schedule. Some weeks a good trader makes money; some weeks they lose money while doing everything right, because nobody controls prices. If you need this month's

rent to come from trading, you are not ready — that pressure will break every rule you make.

Trading is not gambling — if you do it with rules. The honest answer is "it depends on you." A gambler at a slot machine has no edge, no plan, and no way to control a loss. A trader with a tested plan knows in advance what they will buy, why, how much they will risk, and when they will get out. That is a business process, not a coin flip. But the moment you trade on a hunch, chase an internet tip, or refuse to sell a loser because you "feel" it will come back, the rules are gone — and now it **is** gambling, in a building where the other side plays by rules. Your rules decide which version of you shows up.

Trading is not a shortcut to getting rich. Social media shows the one winning trade and hides the forty losing ones. Real skill is built the slow way, like a trade craft — electricians and surgeons took years too.

Realistic Expectations: Read This Twice

Most beginners lose money in their first year of trading. That is not a warning we add for legal reasons; it is simply true. Beginners lose because they are learning a hard skill in a place that charges tuition in the form of losing trades.

So set the right goal. **The real goal of your first year is not profit. It is learning and survival.** Survival means your account is still alive — you never lost so much on one idea that you could not continue. Ending year one near break-even, with real skills and good habits, means you have beaten most beginners.

Progress comes in stages: first fewer dumb mistakes, then smaller losses, then break-even, then — if you keep working — wins that outnumber the losses. Nobody skips steps — the students who try are the ones who fund the market for everyone else.

The Three Skills Every Trader Builds

Every good trader is really three people in one. The Academy trains all three, in this order.

Skill 1: Understanding

This is knowledge: what a stock, an option, and a futures contract are; how prices move; how to read a chart; what makes a trade a good idea or a bad one. Understanding is what most of this school's chapters build. It is necessary — but not enough on its own. Plenty of people can explain trading perfectly and still lose money, because of skills two and three.

Skill 2: Execution

Execution means doing the trade correctly: placing the right kind of order, at the right price, for the right amount, and getting out when your plan says to get out. It sounds simple. In a live market, prices jump every second — and beginners click the wrong button, buy the wrong thing, or freeze. Execution is hands-on, which is why this school makes you practice with fake money first (more on that in a moment).

Skill 3: Self-Control

This is the hardest one, and the one that decides who lasts. Self-control means following your plan when you are scared, staying calm when you are winning, and stopping for the day when you are emotional. Fear and greed are not character flaws; they are human defaults. Every trader feels them. The ones who survive built rules for their feelings before the feelings arrived.

How Alpha Academy Is Organized

The Academy is one path, in this order:

- **Market Foundations** — what the market is, who is in it, and how prices move.
- **Stocks and Funds** — owning pieces of companies, dividends, and funds holding many stocks at once.
- **Getting Set Up** — brokers, accounts, and the order types for buying and selling safely.
- **Options** — contracts that let you trade on a stock's movement without owning the stock, explained slowly.
- **Futures and Other Markets** — contracts on indexes, gold, oil, and currencies, and how they differ from stocks.
- **Charts and Technical Analysis** — reading price charts, trends, and candlestick patterns.
- **Risk Management** — how much to risk per trade, how to size positions, and how professionals stay alive.
- **Trading Psychology** — your brain on money: fear, greed, revenge trading, and the routines that beat them.
- **Strategies and Your Trading Plan** — pulling it all together into a written plan you can follow.

Two companions travel with you: the **Alpha Trading Glossary**, a searchable dictionary of every term we use, and the **Quick Reference Cheat Sheets**, one-page tables of the facts you will look up again and again. Unknown word? The Glossary is your first stop.

Here is the golden path through every chapter:

- Read the chapter in order. Do not skip ahead — later chapters assume earlier words.
- Answer the **Check Yourself** questions at the end before reading the answers.
- Write down any term you cannot explain in your own words, and look it up in the Glossary.
- Practice every new skill in a paper account (next section) before it touches real money.

> **RULE**
> Paper trade before real money. Always. No exceptions, no matter how sure you feel.

You Need $0 to Start Learning

Here is the best news in this chapter: learning to trade costs nothing. **Paper trading** means practicing in a simulator — your broker gives you a practice account with pretend money, and everything works exactly like the real market: real prices, real charts, real order buttons. The only fake part is the money — and most brokers offer it free.

Paper trading is not a kids' version of trading — professionals test new strategies on paper first. It is where you will make your beginner mistakes (clicking buy instead of sell, ordering 100 shares when you meant 10) at a cost of exactly $0 each. Make them there, on purpose, while they are free.

And when real-money day finally comes, the rule is absolute: **only money you can afford to lose completely.** Not rent money. Not borrowed money. Not the emergency fund. Start absurdly small — an amount whose total loss would annoy you, not harm you. Experience is cheapest when the stakes are tiny.

> **TIP**
> Treat your paper account like it is real: same sizes you could afford, same rules, a journal of every trade. Take fake money seriously and real money feels familiar; gamble with it and you are rehearsing gambling.

Your Time: An Hour a Day Beats a Weekend Binge

You do not need eight free hours a day for this. You need consistency. **An hour a day, five days a week, will teach you more than a ten-hour Sunday binge** — your brain keeps what it revisits often and forgets what it crams. Read one section, answer its questions, make a few paper trades, write two lines in your journal. That is a perfect study day.

Be honest about the long game: becoming competent takes months; becoming good takes longer. There will be a week where everything clicks and a week after where nothing works. That is not failure — it is what learning a real skill feels like from the inside.

Your First Four Weeks

A starter plan: adjust the pace to your life, but keep the order.

Week	What to Read	What to Do
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Week 1	Market Foundations and Stocks and Funds	Open a free paper trading account. Watch prices move for a few days without trading anything.
Week 2	Getting Set Up: brokers, accounts, and order types	Place your first paper trades — one market order, one limit order — and note what happened.
Week 3	Charts and Technical Analysis basics	Paper trade stocks only. Start your journal: a reason before every trade, a review after.
Week 4	Risk Management	Write your personal risk rules (risk per trade, per day). Review your journal; find your most common mistake.

Options and futures come after these four weeks, once the foundations feel easy. No prize for getting there early — the prize for getting there ready is keeping your money.

Mindset Mistakes New Students Make

- **Treating this like a lottery ticket.** Buying something because it "might explode" is a wish, not a plan. Every trade here starts with a reason and an exit.
- **Believing confidence equals competence.** Feeling sure is not the same as being right. The market has humbled people far smarter than either of us. Let your results grade you, not your feelings.
- **Quitting after the first losing streak.** Losing streaks happen to every trader alive. They are weather, not a verdict — survive them and learn from them.
- **Refusing to write things down.** Memory lies, especially about losses — the journal is where honest traders are made.

- **Thinking the goal is to never lose.** Losses are a cost of doing business, like a restaurant buying ingredients. Lose small, on purpose, according to plan.

Chapter Summary

- Alpha Academy is Team Alpha Trading's school: a step-by-step path that assumes zero knowledge and builds real skill in order.
- Trading means buying something and selling it later, keeping the difference — everything else is deciding what, when, and how much to risk.
- Trading is not a paycheck and not a get-rich shortcut. With rules, it is a business process; without rules, it becomes gambling.
- Most beginners lose money early. Your first year's real goal is learning and survival, not profit.
- Every trader builds three skills: understanding, execution, and self-control — in that order, and the third matters most.
- You need $0 to start: paper trading gives you the real market with pretend money, and mistakes there are free. When real money comes in later, it must be money you can afford to lose, in amounts small enough to be boring.
- An hour a day of steady study beats weekend binges, and the first four weeks cover foundations, setup, charts, and risk — in that order.

Check Yourself

1. In one sentence, what is trading?
2. Trading without rules turns into what — and why?
3. What is the realistic main goal of your first year of trading?
4. What are the three skills every trader builds?
5. How much money do you need to start learning, and what lets you practice safely?

Answers: 1) Buying something at one price and selling it later at a different price, hoping to keep the difference. 2) Gambling — without a plan for what to buy, how much to risk, and when to exit, you are just betting on hunches. 3) Learning and survival — building skill while keeping your account alive, not profit. 4) Understanding (knowledge), execution (doing trades correctly), and self-control (following your plan under pressure). 5) Zero dollars — a free paper trading account lets you practice with real prices and pretend money.

> **RULE**
> Learn in order, practice on paper, risk only what you can afford to lose. That sentence will protect you more than any strategy in this school.