



ASX

AUSTRALIAN SECURITIES EXCHANGE

# Understanding Options Trading



**ASX.**

*The Australian Sharemarket*

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# Contents

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<b>Before you begin</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Taxation</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>What is an option?</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Tradeability</b>	<b>17</b>
Call options	3	<b>How can options work for you?</b>	<b>18</b>
Put options	4	<b>Trading index options</b>	<b>20</b>
Advantages of option trading	5	How are index options different?	20
Risk management	5	Settlement method	20
Time to decide	5	Some key advantages of trading index options	21
Speculation	5	Examples of how trading index options can work for you	22
Leverage	5	Differences between equity options and index options	23
Diversification	5	<b>Pay-off diagrams</b>	<b>24</b>
Income generation	5	Call option taker	24
<b>Option features</b>	<b>6</b>	Call option writer	24
The 5 components of an option contract	6	Put option taker	25
1. Underlying securities/approved indices	6	Put option writer	25
2. Contract size	6	Summary	26
3. Expiry day	6	<b>Risks of options trading</b>	<b>27</b>
4. Exercise (or strike) price	7	<b>You and your broker</b>	<b>29</b>
5. Premium	7	Your relationship with your broker	29
<b>Adjustments to option contracts</b>	<b>8</b>	The paperwork: Client Agreement forms	29
<b>Option pricing fundamentals</b>	<b>9</b>	Instructing a broker to trade options	30
Intrinsic value	9	Role of Market Makers	31
Call options	9	ASX Clear Pty Limited	32
Put options	9	Options information on the ASX web site	33
Time value	10	<b>Glossary of terms</b>	<b>37</b>
The role of dividends in pricing and early exercise	10	<b>Option contract specifications</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Parties to an option contract</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>Further information</b>	<b>40</b>
The option taker	11		
The option writer	13		
<b>Tracking positions and costs</b>	<b>14</b>		
How to track options positions	14		
Costs	14		
<b>Margins</b>	<b>14</b>		

## Before you begin

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The ASX options market has been operating since 1976. Since the market started, volumes have increased significantly. There are now over 80 different companies and two indices to choose from. A list of companies and indices over which Exchange Traded Options (options) are traded can be found on the ASX website, [www.asx.com.au/options](http://www.asx.com.au/options).

This booklet explains the concepts of options, how they work and what they can be used for. It should be noted that this booklet deals exclusively with Exchange Traded Options over listed shares and indices, and not company issued options. Information on other ASX products is available by calling 131 279 or visiting [www.asx.com.au](http://www.asx.com.au). To assist in your understanding there is a glossary of terms on page 37.

Option sellers are referred to as 'writers' because they underwrite (or willingly accept) the obligation to deliver or accept the shares covered by an option. Similarly, buyers are referred to as the 'takers' of an option as they take up the right to buy or sell a parcel of shares.

Every option contract has both a taker (buyer) and a writer (seller). Options can provide protection for a share portfolio, additional income or trading profits. Both the purchase and sale of options, however, involve risk. Transactions should only be entered into by investors who understand the nature and extent of their rights, obligations and risks.

# What is an option?

An option is a contract between two parties giving the taker (buyer) the right, but not the obligation, to buy or sell a security at a predetermined price on or before a predetermined date. To acquire this right the taker pays a premium to the writer (seller) of the contract.

For illustrative purposes, the term shares (or stock) is used throughout this booklet when referring to the underlying securities. When considering options over an index, the same concepts generally apply. From time to time options may be available over other types of securities.

The standard number of shares covered by one option contract on ASX is 1,000. However, this may change due to adjustment events such as a new issue or a reorganisation of capital in the underlying share.

All of the examples in this booklet assume 1,000 shares per contract and ignore brokerage and ASX fees. You will most definitely need to consider these when evaluating an option transaction. For options over an index, the contract value is based on a dollar value per point. Details can be checked in the contract specifications.

There are two types of options available: call options and put options.

## Call options

Call options give the taker the right, but not the obligation, to **buy the underlying shares** at a predetermined price, on or before a predetermined date.

### Call option example

Santos Limited (STO) shares have a last sale price of \$14.00. An available 3 month option would be an STO 3 month \$14.00 call. A taker of this contract has the right, but not the obligation, to buy 1,000 STO shares for \$14.00 per share at any time until the expiry\*. For this right, the taker pays a premium (or purchase price) to the writer of the option. In order to take up this right to buy the STO shares at the specified price, the taker must exercise the option on or before expiry.

On the other hand, the writer of this call option is obliged to deliver 1,000 STO shares at \$14.00 per share if the taker exercises the option. For accepting this obligation the writer receives and keeps the option premium whether the option is exercised or not.



It is important to note that the taker is not obligated to exercise the option.

\* The expiry day for stock options is usually the Thursday before the last Friday in the expiry month unless ASX Clear determines another day. This may change for various reasons (eg. for public holidays), so please check with your broker. For index options, refer to the contract specifications.

## Put options

Put options give the taker the right but not the obligation to **sell the underlying shares** at a predetermined price on or before a predetermined date. The taker of a put is only required to deliver the underlying shares if they exercise the option.

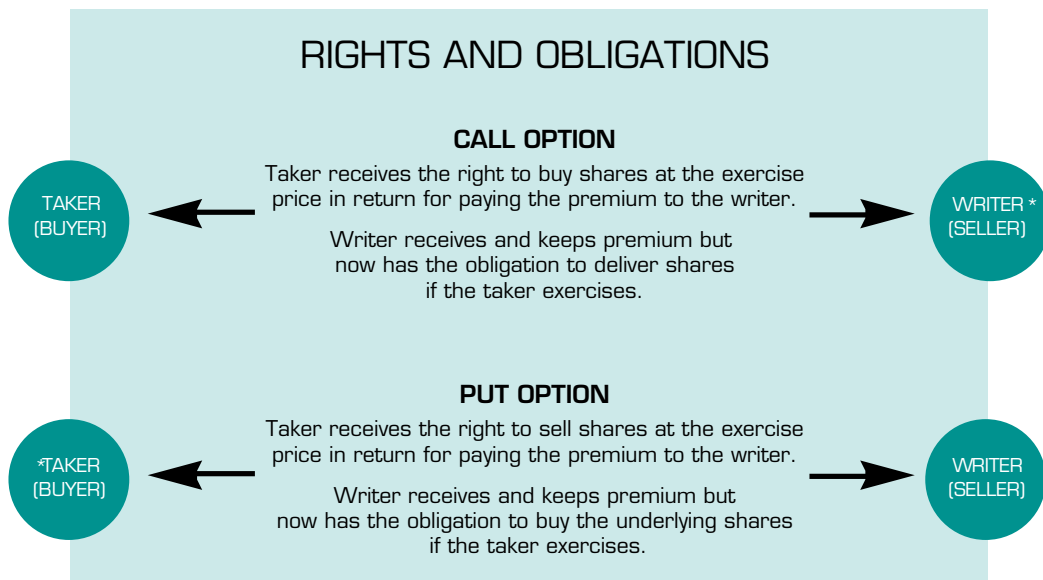
### Put option example

An available option would be an STO 3 month \$14.00 put. This gives the taker the right, but not the obligation, to sell 1,000 STO shares for \$14.00 per share at any time until expiry. For this right, the taker pays a premium (or purchase price) to the writer of the put option. In order to take up this right to sell the STO shares at a specified price the taker must exercise the option on or before expiry. The writer of the put option is obliged to buy the STO shares for \$14.00 per share if the option is exercised. As with call options, the writer of a put option receives and keeps the option premium whether the option is exercised or not.

It is important to note that the taker is not obligated to exercise the option.

If the call or put option is exercised, the shares are traded at the specified price. This price is called the exercise or strike price. The last date when an option can be exercised is called expiry day.

There are two different exercise styles: American style, which means the option can be exercised at any time prior to the expiry; and European style, which means the option can only be exercised on the expiry day. Most stock options traded on ASX are American style.



\* The taker of a put and writer of a call option do not have to own the underlying shares.

# Advantages of option trading

## Risk management

Put options allow you to hedge against a possible fall in the value of shares you hold.

## Time to decide

By taking a call option, the purchase price for the shares is locked in. This gives the call option holder until the expiry day to decide whether or not to exercise the option and buy the shares. Likewise the taker of a put option has time to decide whether or not to sell the shares.

## Speculation

The ease of trading in and out of an option position makes it possible to trade options with no intention of ever exercising them. If you expect the market to rise, you may decide to buy call options. If you expect a fall, you may decide to buy put options.

Either way you can sell the option prior to expiry to take a profit or limit a loss.

## Leverage

Leverage provides the potential to make a higher return from a smaller initial outlay than investing directly. However, leverage usually involves more risks than a direct investment in the underlying shares. Trading in options can allow you to benefit from a change in the price of the share without having to pay the full price of the share. The following example helps illustrate how leverage can work for you.

The table below compares the purchase of 1 call option and 1,000 shares. The higher percentage return from the option demonstrates how leverage can work.

	OPTION	STOCK
Bought on October 15	\$380	\$4,000
Sold on December 15	\$670	\$4,500
Profit	\$290	\$500
Return on investment (not annualised)	76.3%	12.5%

## Diversification

Options can allow you to build a diversified portfolio for a lower initial outlay than purchasing shares directly.

## Income generation

You can earn extra income over and above dividends by writing call options against your shares, including shares bought using a margin lending facility. By writing an option you receive the option premium up front. While you get to keep the option premium, there is a possibility that you could be exercised against and have to deliver your shares at the exercise price.

It is important that you balance the advantages of trading options with the risks before making any decisions. Details of the risks of options trading are set out on page 27.

# Option features

The ease of trading in and out of options on ASX's options market is assisted by the standardisation of the following option contract components:

1. Underlying securities
2. Contract size
3. Expiry day
4. Exercise prices

There is a fifth component, the option premium, which is not standardised but rather determined by market forces. ASX operates the options market, while ASX Clear Pty Limited (ASX Clear) operates the clearing facility for ASX's options market. Among ASX's responsibilities is the setting of the standardised option components.

**1 option contract usually represents 1,000 underlying shares.**

## The 5 components of an option contract

### 1. Underlying securities/approved indices

Options traded on ASX's options market are only available for certain securities and approved indices. These securities are referred to as underlying securities or underlying shares. They must be listed on ASX and are selected by ASX Clear according to specific guidelines. The issuers of underlying securities do not participate in the selection of securities against which options may be listed.

Calls and puts over the same underlying security are termed classes of options. For example, all call and put options listed over Lend Lease Corporation (LLC) shares, regardless of exercise price and expiry day, form one class of option. A list of all the classes of options trading on ASX's options market can be found on the ASX website [www.asx.com.au/options](http://www.asx.com.au/options) (in the "Trading Information" section on the dividend and volatility estimates page).

### 2. Contract size

On ASX's options market an option contract size is standardised at 1,000 underlying shares. That means, 1 option contract represents 1,000 underlying shares. As mentioned earlier, this may change if there is an adjustment such as a new issue or a reorganisation of capital in the underlying share. In the case of index options, contract value is fixed at a certain number of dollars per index point (for example, \$10 per index point). The size of the contract is equal to the index level x the dollar value per index point (for example, for an index at 3,500 points, 1 contract would be  $3,500 \times \$10 = \$35,000$ ).

### 3. Expiry day

Options have a limited life span and expire on standard expiry days set by ASX Clear. The expiry day is the day on which all unexercised options in a particular series expire and is the last day of trading for that particular series. For options over shares this is usually the Thursday before the last Friday in the month. For index options, expiry is usually the third Thursday of the contract month. However, ASX Clear has the right to change this date should the need arise.

Options series are listed with an expiry date, discussed above, and an expiry month. As options expire new expiry months are added further out.

All option classes (stock or index) have expiries based on the financial quarters (March, June, September and December).

- For category 1 stock options these quarterly expiries are offered 4 quarters out. In addition, the nearest 6 rolling months are also offered. For example, the spot month say April, then May, June, July, August and September for a total of 6 rolling months.
- For category 2 stocks these quarterly expiries are only offered 2 quarters out and only the nearest rolling 3 months are offered.



- For index options the quarterly expiries are offered 6 months out rather than 4 months out. The first 2 serial months are offered compared to 6 serial months in the case of stock options.

Category 1 and category 2 stocks are listed on the ASX website. (Category is also relevant for market making obligations).

A June expiry means that the option expires on the expiry day in June. If Thursday or Friday are not business days, the expiry day is brought forward. Expiry day information is available on the ASX website, [www.asx.com.au/options](http://www.asx.com.au/options) (under Expiry Calendar in the "Trading Information" section).

There are also longer term option contracts listed over certain securities, some with terms of up to five years. For more information on these types of options please ask your broker.

#### 4. Exercise (or strike) prices

The exercise price is the predetermined buying or selling price for the underlying shares if the option is exercised.

ASX Clear sets the exercise prices for all options listed on ASX's options market with a range of exercise prices available for options on the same expiry. New exercise prices are listed as the underlying share price moves.

For example, if the underlying share is trading at \$3.50, it is likely that option contracts with the following strike prices would be listed: \$3.00, \$3.25, \$3.50, \$3.75 and \$4.00. A range of exercise prices allows you to more effectively match your expectations of the price movement in the underlying share to your option position. Exercise prices may also be adjusted during the life of the option if there

is a new issue or a reorganisation of capital in the underlying shares.

#### 5. Premium

The premium is the price of the option which is arrived at by the negotiation between the taker and the writer of the option. It is the only component of the five option components that is not set by ASX Clear.

Option premiums are quoted on a cents per share basis. To calculate the full premium payable for a standard size option contract, multiply the quoted premium by the number of shares per contract, usually 1,000.

For example, a quoted premium of 16 cents represents a total premium cost of \$160.00 (\$0.16 x 1,000) per contract. To calculate the full premium payable for an index option, you simply multiply the premium by the index multiplier. For example, a premium of 30 points, with an index multiplier of \$10, represents a total premium cost of \$300 per contract.

#### No eligibility for dividends and voting

The taker of the call option or the writer of a put option does not receive dividends on the underlying shares until the shares are transferred after exercise. Nor do they obtain any voting rights in relation to the shares until that time.

Option information is available on our website [www.asx.com.au](http://www.asx.com.au) or in The Australian Financial Review newspaper.

# Adjustments to option contracts

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The specifications of option contracts listed on ASX's options market are standardised as much as possible.

However, ASX may make adjustments to options to preserve, as far as practicable, the value of positions in options held by takers and writers. Adjustments are made as a result of corporate events that affect the price of the underlying, such as a bonus issue, share split or rights issue.

Adjustments may be made to one or more of the components of an option, including exercise price, contract size, underlying securities, and number of contracts. With some events, ASX has adopted adjustments which are understood by the market to be conventions that will be applied when those circumstances arise. These are specific adjustments set out in the ASX Operating Rules.

The adjustment assumes that the corporate event giving rise to a need to make an adjustment has an ex-date or a deemed ex-date, and the event must affect the parcel of underlying securities. ASX considers that the value of the option to both the taker and the writer is best preserved over the ex-date by maintaining the total exercise value. The total exercise value is the product of three parameters:

- the quantity of option contracts
- the number of the underlying securities represented by the option contract
- the exercise price of option contracts in the series.

Corporate events that do not strictly affect shares in a pro-rata manner, that is proportionally, are generally excluded from an option adjustment. For instance, an entitlement issue of 500 shares for each shareholder, (irrespective of the number of shares held by a shareholder) is not a strictly pro-rata issue. But a bonus issue of 1 for 2 does result in an adjustment as it is a pro-rata issue of 500 new shares for each 1,000 old shares held.

The various adjustment circumstances and also a detailed treatment of option adjustments, titled Explanatory Guide for Option Adjustments can be found on the ASX website at [www.asx.com.au/options](http://www.asx.com.au/options) (under "Corporate Actions and Notices").

This document covers:

- what an adjustment is
- why adjustments are made
- how adjustments are determined
- different types of adjustments
- examples of past adjustments.

# Option pricing fundamentals

When considering an option it is important to understand how the premium is calculated. Option premiums change according to a range of factors including the price of the underlying share and the time left to expiry. An option premium can be separated into two parts – intrinsic value and time value. Different factors influence intrinsic and time value.

## Intrinsic value

Intrinsic value is the difference between the exercise price of the option and the market price of the underlying shares at any given time. Here are some examples for call and put options.

## Call options

For example, if CSL Limited (CSL) June \$30.00 call options are trading at a premium of \$1.50 and CSL shares are trading at \$31.00 per share, the option has \$1.00 intrinsic value. This is because the option taker has the right to buy the shares for \$30.00 which is \$1.00 lower than the market price. Options that have intrinsic value are said to be **'in-the-money'**.

CSL SHARE PRICE	OPTION PREMIUM	INTRINSIC VALUE (SHARE PRICE – EXERCISE PRICE)	TIME VALUE (OPTION PREMIUM – INTRINSIC VALUE)
\$31.00	\$1.50	= \$1.00	+ \$0.50
CALL OPTION EXERCISE PRICE: \$30.00			

In this example, the remaining 50 cents of the premium is time value.

However, if the shares were trading at \$29.00 there would be no intrinsic value because the \$30.00 call option contract would only enable the taker to buy the shares for \$30.00 per share which is \$1.00 higher than the market price. When the share price is less than the exercise price of the call option, the option is said to be **'out-of-the-money'**.

Remember, call options convey to the taker the right but not the obligation to buy the underlying shares. If the share price is below the exercise price it is better to buy the shares on the sharemarket and let the option lapse.

## Put options

Put options work the opposite way to calls. If the exercise price is greater than the market price of the share the put option is in-the-money and has intrinsic value. Exercising the in-the-money put option allows the taker to sell the shares for a higher price than the current market price.

For example, a CSL July \$31.00 put option allows the holder to sell CSL shares for \$31.00 when the current market price for CSL is \$30.00. The option has a premium of \$1.20 which is made up of \$1.00 of intrinsic value and 20 cents time value.

A put option is out-of-the-money when the share price is above the exercise price, as a taker will not exercise the put to sell the shares below the current share price.

CSL SHARE PRICE	OPTION PREMIUM	INTRINSIC VALUE (SHARE PRICE – EXERCISE PRICE)	TIME VALUE (OPTION PREMIUM – INTRINSIC VALUE)
\$30.00	\$1.20	= \$1.00	+ \$0.20
PUT OPTION EXERCISE PRICE: \$31.00			

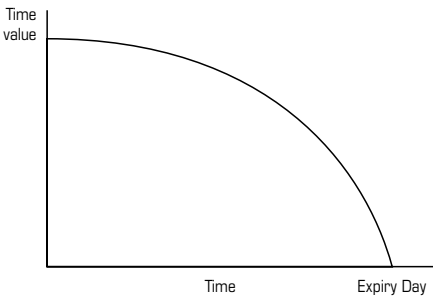
Once again, remember put options convey the right but not the obligation to sell the underlying shares. If the share price is above the exercise price it is better to sell the shares on the share market and let the option lapse.

When the share price equals the exercise price, the call and the put options are said to be **'at-the-money'**.

Time value

Time value represents the amount you are prepared to pay for the possibility that the market might move in your favour during the life of the option. Time value will vary with in-the-money, at-the-money and out-of-the-money options and is greatest for at-the-money options.

As time draws closer to expiry and the opportunities for the option to become profitable decline, the time value declines. This erosion of option value is called time decay. Time value does not decay at a constant rate, but becomes more rapid towards expiry.



The role of dividends in pricing and early exercise

When a share goes “ex-dividend” its price usually falls by the amount of the dividend. As option contracts do not carry any right to dividends paid on the underlying shares it follows that option prices, both puts and calls need to take account of any dividend likely to be paid during the life of the option. Although companies usually follow a pattern as to the timing and the amount, these can change.

Time value

The amount you are willing to pay for the possibility that you could make a profit from the option transaction. It is influenced by the following factors:

- time to expiry
- volatility
- interest rates
- dividend payments
- market expectations.

For more information on option pricing refer to [www.asx.com.au/options](http://www.asx.com.au/options) (under “Options tools and calculators”).

Options investors need to make an assessment of when and how much a dividend is likely to be and factor this into their assessment of the fair value of any particular option series. The ASX theoretical options price calculator can assist with this task.

Dividend payments can also influence the likelihood of an option being exercised early. ASX also has a calculator to assist with assessing this likelihood.

THE KEY FACTORS WHICH AFFECT THE TIME VALUE OF AN OPTION ARE:

Time to expiry	The longer the time to expiry, the greater the time value of the option.
Volatility	In general, the more volatile the price of the underlying share or index, the higher the premium will be. This is due to the wider range over which the stock can potentially move.
Interest rates	A rise in interest rates will push call option premiums up and put option premiums down.
Dividend payments	If a dividend is payable during the life of an option, the premium of a call option will be lower, and the premium of a put option higher, than if no dividend was payable. Holders of option contracts who do not own the underlying securities are not eligible for dividends payable on those shares.
Market expectations	Ultimately supply and demand determine the market value of all options. During times of strong demand, premiums will be higher.

# Parties to an option contract

## The option taker

An option taker is an investor or trader anticipating a significant move in a particular share price. Taking an option offers the opportunity to earn a leveraged profit with a known and limited risk.

Taking a call option gives you the right to buy the shares covered by the option at the exercise price at any time until expiry. In general, call option premiums rise as the underlying share price rises. For this reason the taker of a call option expects the underlying share price will rise.

Taking a put option gives you the right, but not the obligation, to sell the underlying shares. Put option premiums usually rise as the underlying share price falls. For this reason the taker of a put option expects the underlying share price to fall.

In taking this right to buy or sell shares, the taker pays the premium. This premium represents the maximum possible loss on the option for the taker.

It is important to remember that it is not necessary for the taker of a put option to own the underlying shares at the time of taking the put. Certainly, if the taker chooses to exercise the put option they will be required to deliver the underlying shares, at the exercise price, to a randomly selected writer of put options in that series. However, the taker also has the choice of closing out the position on ASX's options market prior to expiry. A full explanation of closing out can be found on page 17.

If the taker chooses to close out the option, a loss will be incurred if the premium that the investor receives on closing out is lower than the premium paid by the investor for the original taken contract. A profit will occur if the reverse is true. Any time value in the premium for the option will be lost if the option is exercised.

On average 15% of options are exercised. However this does not mean 85% expire or worthless. Instead 60% of options are closed out whilst 25% expire worthless. These figures represent the average over recent times and may vary depending on current volatility and other features.

Assume AMP Limited (AMP) shares are trading at \$4.24. Anticipating an increase in the share price, you take a 3 month AMP \$4.25 call for 45 cents, or \$450 total premium (\$0.45 x 1,000 shares per contract).

Close to the expiry day, AMP shares are trading at \$5.25 and the option premium is now \$1.02 per share. You could exercise the option and buy 1,000 AMP shares at \$4.25, which is \$1.00 below the current market price, realising a gain of 55 cents per share:  $\$1.00 - \$0.45 = \$0.55$  (excluding brokerage and exchange fees).

Alternatively you can close out the call on ASX's option market by completing an equal and opposite transaction to your opening transaction. In this example you would write an AMP August \$4.25 call for \$1.02 (the current premium) and realise a gain of 57 cents per share (excluding brokerage and exchange fees).

The 2 cent profit difference between exercising and closing out the call is due to the option having some remaining time value (as explained on page 10).

If AMP shares had declined over this period, the call premium would have also declined. Depending on the timing and magnitude of the share price decline, the option may have retained some value prior to expiry, allowing you to recoup a portion of the original premium by liquidating the position. The first table on the following page summarises the two alternatives.

## EXERCISE VS CLOSEOUT

CURRENT HOLDING: ONE \$4.25 AMP CALL

AMP SHARES TRADING AT \$5.25

EXERCISE	CLOSEOUT
Exercise option / buy 1,000 AMP shares for \$4.25*	Closeout / sell ONE AMP \$4.25 call for \$1.02**
Sell 1,000 AMP shares at market price of \$5.25*	
Total profit \$5.25 - \$4.25 = \$1.00 per share (\$1,000)	Less initial cost \$1.02 - \$0.45 = \$0.57 cents profit per share (\$570)
Less initial cost \$1.00 - \$0.45 = \$0.55 cents profit per share (\$550)	

\* Fees and Commission are payable on each of these steps

\*\* Fees and Commission are paid on the sale of the option to close

**Put buying example**

Say AMP Limited (AMP) shares are trading at \$5.48. Anticipating a fall in the share price, you take a 3 month AMP \$5.25 put option for 15 cents per share.

Close to the expiry day, AMP shares are trading at \$4.00 and the option premium is now \$1.30 per share.

You could exercise the option and sell 1,000 AMP shares at \$5.25 which is \$1.25 above the current market price, realising a gain of \$1.10 per share (excluding brokerage and exchange fees). If you don't own the shares you

would need to purchase these before exercising the put option. Alternatively, you could close out the option by selling the 3 month AMP \$5.25 put at \$1.30 (the current market premium) and realise a gain of \$1.15 per share (excluding brokerage and exchange fees). The 5 cent difference represents time value remaining in the option premium. If AMP shares had risen in price over this period, the option premium would have declined. As with the call option, the put option may have retained some value and you may have been able to close out the option to recover some of the initial premium. The second table summarises the two alternatives.

## EXERCISE VS CLOSEOUT

CURRENT HOLDING: ONE \$5.25 AMP PUT

AMP SHARES TRADING AT \$4.00

EXERCISE	CLOSEOUT
Before exercising option, buy AMP shares at market price of \$4.00*	Close out / sell ONE AMP \$5.25 put for \$1.30**
Exercise put and sell 1,000 AMP shares for \$5.25*	Less initial cost
Total profit \$5.25 - \$4.00 = \$1.25 per share (\$1,250)	\$1.30 - \$0.15 = \$1.15 cents profit per share (\$1,150)
Less initial cost \$1.25 - \$0.15 = \$1.10 profit per share (\$1,100)	

\* Fees and commission are payable on each of these steps

\*\* Fees and commission are paid on the sale of the option to close

## The option writer

Option writers earn premium for selling options. Both put and call option writers are generally looking for prices to remain steady.

### Call writing example

Suppose you own 1,000 Australia and New Zealand Banking Group (ANZ) shares and write one ANZ June \$20.00 call option. If you are exercised against, you must sell 1,000 ANZ shares for \$20.00 per share. If you do not already own ANZ shares you will be obliged to buy 1,000 ANZ shares at the current market price. Writing uncovered call options therefore exposes the writer to substantial risk and should not be undertaken lightly.

### Put writing example

The writer of a Computershare Limited (CPU) November \$9.50 put option is obliged to buy 1,000 CPU shares at \$9.50 as long as the position remains open. If CPU shares fall to \$8.50 and the taker of the put option exercises the option, the writer is obliged to buy the shares at \$9.50. On the other hand if the CPU shares rise to \$10.00 it is unlikely that the taker of the put option will exercise and accordingly, the put writer will earn the option premium.

As the example shows, the writer of a put option has risk if the share price falls. In extreme cases the risk is that the price of the shares falls to zero.

The decision to exercise the option rests entirely with the option taker. An option writer may be exercised against at any time prior to expiry. However, this is most likely to occur when the option is in-the-money and close to expiry, or when the underlying share is about to pay a dividend. Call option takers may exercise in order to receive the dividend. ASX Clear will require payment of margins to ensure the obligations of the option writer to the market are met unless the underlying stock is held as collateral.

# Tracking positions and costs

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When deciding whether to trade options, there a number of factors to be aware of:

- the costs of trading options
- how to track the value of your options or option positions
- the requirement to pay margins when selling options.

## How to track options via the internet and in the newspapers

Option codes and prices are available in the options section of the ASX website. To access this go to [www.asx.com.au/options](http://www.asx.com.au/options). The ASX website also has pricing and other information about the underlying securities or indices. Details of the previous day's trading are published in summary form in The Australian Financial Review. Current option prices are also available from your broker.

## Costs

Brokerage is payable at a flat rate or as a percentage based on the full premium. ASX Clear charges a fee per contract, and also an exercise fee, if you exercise an option. For more information contact your broker, or visit the ASX website, [www.asx.com.au/options](http://www.asx.com.au/options) (under Costs In the "Trading Information" section).



# Margins

Margins are designed to protect the financial security of the market. If you write an option contract, you have a potential obligation to the market because the taker of the option may exercise their position. A margin is an amount that is calculated by ASX Clear as necessary to ensure that you can meet that obligation on that trading day.

Note that ASX Clear's relationship is with your broker, and not directly with you. Once an option trade is registered with ASX Clear, the process of novation results in ASX Clear becoming the counterparty to both the buying and the selling broker. ASX Clear calls margins from your broker, who then calls margins from you.

References to margins and collateral in this document reflect the practices of ASX Clear in risk margining ASX Clearing Participants. It is important to note that individual clients may be risk managed differently by their ASX Clearing Participant or broker with respect to (for example) the type and quantity of margin applied, the type of collateral accepted and the interest paid on cash collateral. Individuals should contact their broker to establish their practices.

## How margins are calculated

ASX Clear calculates margins using a system known as the ASX Derivatives Margining System (ADMS), which takes into account the volatility of the underlying security when calculating margin obligations.

The total margin for ETOs is made up of two components:

1. The **premium margin** is the market value of the position at the close of business each day. It represents the amount that would be required to close out your option position.
2. The **risk margin** covers the potential change in the price of the option contract assuming the maximum probable intra-day movement (daily volatility) in the price of the underlying security. The daily volatility figure, expressed as a percentage, is known as the **margin interval**.

Each week ASX Clear publishes the margin interval for all option classes. You can find this figure on the ASX website at [www.asx.com.au/options](http://www.asx.com.au/options) (under Margins and Collateral in the "Trading Information" section). If you have a number of option positions open, ADMS will evaluate the risk associated with your entire options portfolio and calculate your total margin obligation accordingly. It is possible that some option positions may offset others, leading to a reduction in your overall obligation.

The ASX website has a tool available to help you to *estimate* your margin liability. It can be found at [www.asx.com.au/options](http://www.asx.com.au/options) (under "Calculators and tools").

## How margins are met

Your broker will require you to provide cash or collateral to cover your margin obligations. Note that minimum margin requirements are set by ASX Clear, but higher margin requirements may be imposed by brokers.

There is a range of collateral that is acceptable to ASX Clear. This includes certain shares and bank guarantees. ASX Clear applies a "haircut" in relation to the value of some collateral to protect against a sudden fall in the value of collateral held.

Details of eligible collateral are published on the ASX website at [www.asx.com.au/options](http://www.asx.com.au/options) (under Margins and Collateral in the "Trading Information" section).

## Payment of margins

Margins are recalculated on a daily basis to ensure an adequate level of margin cover is maintained. This means that you may have to pay more if the market moves against you. If the market moves in your favour, margins may fall.

Settlement requirements for trading options are strict. You must pay margin calls by the time stated in your Client Agreement. This is usually within 24 hours of being advised of the margin call by your broker. If you do not pay in time, your broker can take action to close out your positions without further reference to you.

# Taxation

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It is beyond the scope of this booklet to provide a detailed treatment of the taxation issues that are relevant to trading or investing in options. You should, however, take taxation into consideration when you are investing in options, just as you would when investing in shares.

Some of the issues that may be relevant include:

- Are you classified as a trader, as a speculator or as a hedger?
- Is an option trade on revenue account or on capital account?
- Are there timing issues, for example when an option is opened in one tax year and closed in the next tax year?
- Where an option strategy is in place around the time a stock goes ex-dividend, are you in danger of not satisfying the 45-day Holding Period Rule and therefore being disqualified from receiving the franking credits attached to the dividend?
- Could the exercise of an option position crystallise a taxation event for the underlying shareholding?

This is by no means a comprehensive list of the taxation issues of options trading. The information contained in this booklet is provided for educational purposes only and does not constitute investment, taxation or financial product advice. Taxation issues will vary from investor to investor. It is therefore important to discuss your taxation situation with your financial adviser or accountant, to ensure that any options trades you enter will not have adverse taxation implications.

For a paper discussing the taxation treatment of options, prepared by Patrick Broughan, Director, and Alison Noble, Principal, Deloitte Touche Tomatsu Ltd., please refer to the ASX website, at [www.asx.com.au/options](http://www.asx.com.au/options) (under Tax in the "Trading Information" section).

This document covers aspects of options trading such as:

- classification of the options trader as a trader, speculator, hedger or investor
- the treatment of realisation of profits or losses from options trading
- the use of options in superannuation funds
- franking credits – Holding Period Rule and Related Payments Rule.

# Tradeability

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As explained previously, an option is a contract between two parties – the taker and the writer. An option contract comes into existence when a writer and a taker agree on the option price and the contract is registered with ASX Clear. The establishment of a contract is referred to as an open position.

Once the taker has an open position they have three alternatives:

1. The taker can close out their position by writing an option in the same series as originally taken and instructing their broker to 'close out' the position.

For example, if you take a call option as an opening transaction, you may liquidate or close out your right to exercise by writing an identical call option to another party.

2. The taker can exercise the option and trade the underlying shares. In the case of index options it is impractical to take delivery of the many shares contained in the index, so index options are only exercisable at expiry into a cash payment. Index options are further explained on page 20.
3. The taker can hold the option to expiry and allow it to lapse.

The writer of an option has two alternatives:

1. Close out the option prior to the expiry.  
For example, if you write a put option as an opening transaction, you may liquidate or close out your obligations by taking an identical put option contract with another party; or
2. Let the option go to the expiry day. The option will either be exercised against or expire worthless.

You would close out:

- to take a profit
- to limit a loss
- when there is a risk of unwanted early exercise.\*

With options, there is no transfer of rights or obligations between parties.

\* Note that with index options, exercise can only occur on the expiry day, so this risk does not exist for index options.

It is important to note that once the taker exercises an option it is too late for the writer of that option to close out their position.

# How can options work for you?

There are a number of different reasons why investors trade in options. Some of these are outlined below.

## 1. Earn income

Writing options against shares you already own or are purchasing can be one of the simplest and most rewarding strategies. Below are two scenarios when this strategy may be appropriate. In each of these scenarios, your risk is that you will have to sell your shares at the exercise price but you still keep the option premium. This is most likely to happen if the market rises strongly.

### Scenario 1: Writing options against shares you already own

Assume you own 1,000 Wesfarmers Limited (WES) shares. The current price is \$24.00 and you would be happy to sell your shares if the price reached \$26.50. You look in the newspaper and see a one month WES call option is worth around 70 cents. You call your broker and instruct them to sell a one month WES \$26.50 call option which they do for 72 cents (\$720 less fees and commissions). You now have the obligation to sell your WES shares for \$26.50 any time between now and expiry. For undertaking this obligation you received \$720 (less brokerage and exchange fees). Calls can also be written against stock bought on margin. Find out more from your margin lender, broker or ASX.

### Scenario 2: Writing options at the same time as buying the shares

Assume you are interested in purchasing 1,000 WES shares but would like to reduce the cost of doing so. You could establish a buy and write over WES shares. This means you would buy 1,000 WES shares at around \$24.00 and at the same time sell a one month WES \$26.50 call for say 72 cents. The extra income of \$720 (less brokerage and exchange fees) reduces the cost of buying the shares. You now have the obligation to sell your WES shares for \$26.50 at any time between now and expiry.

\*Please note: you will have to pay margins for the difference between the options settling and subsequent stock settlement (options settle T+1 vs stock T+3)

## 2. Protecting the value of your shares

This strategy can be useful if you are a shareholder in a particular company and are concerned about a short term fall in the value of the shares. Without using options you can either watch the value of your shares fall, or you could sell them.

### Scenario 1: Writing call options to give you downside protection

Previous examples show how you can generate extra income from your shares by writing options. Writing call options can also generate extra income to offset a decline in share price.

If WES is trading at \$24.00, writing a one month \$22.00 call option for \$2.50 means the shares could fall by \$2.50 before you begin to incur a loss. If the share price falls to \$21.50 the loss on WES shares is offset by the \$2.50 option premium. If WES falls further, the \$2.50 premium will not be enough to fully offset the fall in price.

If WES closes above \$22.00 at expiry, the option will be exercised unless the option has been closed out.

### Scenario 2: Take put options

Assume you own 1,000 WES shares and you think the price will fall. Writing call options will offset some of the loss, but you would like to be able to lock in a sale price for your shares if the market does fall. You could take 1 WES June \$24.00 put option for 90 cents (\$900 plus fees and commissions). If the price falls, you have until the end of June to exercise your put option and sell your shares for \$24.00. If you are wrong and the market rises you could let the option lapse or alternatively close out before the expiry day.

### 3. Capitalising on share price movements without having to purchase shares

You can profit from a movement, either up or down, in the underlying shares without having to trade the underlying shares themselves. Some examples are outlined below.

#### Scenario 1: Take calls when expecting the market to rise

Buying call options allows you to profit from an increase in the price of the underlying shares. Suppose you believe Computershare Limited (CPU) shares will rise in price over the next few months. You don't want to pay the full \$9,000 to buy 1,000 shares so you decide to buy a 3 month \$9.50 call for 40 cents (\$400 plus brokerage and exchange fees). If you are correct and the price of CPU shares rises then the value of your option will also rise. You can then sell an equivalent call option to close out any time prior to the expiry date and take your profit. You will not have to buy the CPU shares if you don't want to.

If the market doesn't move as expected, you can either close out the option and recoup some of your initial investment, or you can simply let the option expire worthless. When you take a call option, the most you can lose is the premium you have paid in the first place.

#### Scenario 2: Take puts when expecting the market to fall

Assume you believe CPU shares will fall in value. You don't like the idea of short selling the shares as you believe this is too risky so you decide to buy a 3 month CPU \$9.00 put option for 60 cents (\$600 plus fees and commissions). If you are correct and the price of CPU falls, the value of your put should rise. You can then sell the put to close out any time up to and including the expiry. If the market does not fall, then you can close out the option and recoup some of your initial investment, or you can simply let the option expire worthless.

When you take a put option you don't have to own the underlying shares and, as with call options, the most you can lose is the premium you have paid in the first place.

### 4. Using options gives you time to decide

Taking a call option can give you time to decide if you want to buy the shares. You pay the premium which is only a fraction of the price of the underlying shares. The option then locks in a buying price for the shares if you decide to exercise. You then have until the expiry day of the option to decide if you want to buy the underlying shares.

Put options can work in a similar manner. By taking a put option you can lock in a selling price for shares that you already own and then wait until the expiry day of the option to see if it is worthwhile exercising the option and selling your shares. Or you can let the option lapse if the price does not fall as expected.

In both cases the most you can lose is the premium you have paid for the option in the first place.

### 5. Index options let you trade all the stocks in an index with just one trade

By using call and put options over an index, you can trade a view on the general direction of the market, or hedge a portfolio with just one trade. If you are bullish on the market but don't know what stock to buy or which sector of the market will rise, you can buy a call option over the whole index. This means you don't have to choose a particular stock to invest in, you can just take a view on the direction of the broad stockmarket. If the level of the index rises the value of the call options will rise, just as for call options over individual shares. All the concepts about call and put options explained in this booklet apply to index options, which are explained in detail on page 20.

### 6. Other strategies

Writing covered calls on stock bought on margin is an increasingly popular strategy. Options can allow you to construct strategies that enable you to take advantage of many market situations. Some can be quite complex and involve varying levels of risk.

# Trading index options

## How are index options different?

Except where specific reference has been made to index options, up to this point the options we have been discussing have been over shares in individual companies. Individual stock options enable you to trade a view on a particular company. ASX also offers options which are traded over a share price index (that is, a group of listed securities).

As the name suggests, index options give you exposure to a sharemarket index. They offer similar benefits and flexibility to that of options traded over individual stocks, with the added advantage of offering exposure to a broad range of securities comprising an index rather than being limited to one particular company. You can use index options to trade a view on the market as a whole, or on the sector of the market that is covered by the particular index.

There are some important differences between index options and options over individual securities:

- Index options are cash settled, rather than deliverable. You will receive a cash payment on exercising an in-the-money index option.
- Index options are European in exercise style. This means there is no risk of early exercise for sellers.
- The strike price and premium of an index option are usually expressed in points.

A multiplier is then applied to give a dollar figure. For example, the multiplier may be \$10 per point, meaning that to buy an index option with a premium of 50 points, you would pay \$500 (plus brokerage and exchange fees).

## Settlement method

The index options settlement price is based on the *opening* price of each stock in the underlying index on the morning of the expiry date. It is not based on the closing index level. As the stocks in the index open, the first trading price of each stock is recorded. Once all stocks in the index have opened, an index calculation is made using these opening prices. This process is called the Opening Price Index Calculation (OPIC). Shortly afterwards the OPIC is confirmed to ASX and ASX Clear, it is announced to the market. The OPIC is then posted onto the ASX website at [www.asx.com.au/options](http://www.asx.com.au/options)

This method of calculating the index level for settling index options is used by several major exchanges internationally. It is regarded as an effective way to manage potential volatility around the expiry of index options and futures contracts.

The Australian market staggers the opening of stocks, with stocks opening in five tranches, according to the initial letter of the stock name:

- A and B
  - C to F
    - G to M
      - N to R
        - S to Z.

The staggered opening means it is not possible for the entire market to be traded in one 'hit' during the opening period. The unwinding of large positions to match the index option expiry can be done in a more orderly fashion. Furthermore, market opening is typically a time of higher liquidity, and therefore the time the market is better able to absorb orders placed by traders looking to unwind index arbitrage strategies.

## Some key advantages of trading index options

### 1. Exposure to the broader market

Investing in index options approximates trading a share portfolio that tracks a particular index. It provides exposure to the broader market which the index represents, with no specific company risk.

### 2. Greater leverage

Like options over a single company, index options can provide leveraged profit opportunities. When the market rises (or falls), percentage gains (or losses) are far greater for the option than rises (or falls) in the underlying index.

### 3. Protection for a share portfolio

By purchasing index put options, you can lock in the value of a share portfolio. You may fear a market downturn, but have good reasons for not wanting to sell stocks. By purchasing index put options, you can make profits if the index falls. Profits on put options should compensate you for the loss of value in the stocks in the portfolio.

For example, you hold a \$45,000 share portfolio that tracks the index. Assume the index is at 4500 points and assume you buy a 3 month 4500 put option for 250 points (or \$2,500 plus fees and commissions). At expiry the index has fallen to 4000 points. You receive a cash payment equal to the difference between 4500 points (the insured value) and the level of the index at expiry, in this case 4000 points.

In other words, you receive a cash payment of \$5,000 (500 points x \$10 a point) for a net profit on the option of \$2,500. *If your share portfolio has moved in line with the underlying index*, then the profits on the put options purchase will largely offset the fall in the value of the portfolio.

DATE	INDEX	OPTION TRADE	PREMIUM VALUE
Late today	4500 points	Buy 3 month 4500 Put @ 250 points	\$2500 (PAY)
Expiry	4000 points	Exercise option, Receive 500 points x \$10	\$5,000 (RECEIVE)
			PROFIT = \$2,500

## Examples of how trading index options can work for you

### Example 1: Using an index put option to protect a share portfolio

When you decide to buy shares in the sharemarket you are exposed to two types of risks:

1. Company risk – the risk that the specific company you have bought into will underperform.
2. Market risk – the risk that the whole market underperforms, including your shares.

There are a number of ways to protect your shares against market risk using index options. You can, for example, buy the shares you believe in and buy an index put option to protect yourself against a fall in the whole market. Depending on the amount of risk you wish to remain exposed to, you can choose to hedge all or only part of your portfolio. Let's assume that it is June, and the broad market index is at 4500 points. You have a share portfolio worth \$135,000 which approximately tracks the index. You believe that there may be a downturn in the market over the next three months. As an alternative to selling shares, you decide to buy index put options to protect your portfolio. As the 3 month 4500 index put option has a contract value of \$45,000 (4500 points x \$10 per point), you are able to protect your \$135,000 portfolio by buying three contracts, for 250 points each. The total cost is \$7,500 (ignoring brokerage and exchange fees).

The 3 month 4500 put gives you the right, but not the obligation, to "sell" the index at a level of 4500 at expiry.

At expiry, the index has fallen to 4000 points, and your options have the following value:

DATE	INDEX	SHARE PORTFOLIO	4500 PUT	PREMIUM VALUE
Today	4500 points	\$135,000	250 points	3 contracts x \$2,500 = \$7,500 (PAY)
Expiry	4000 points	\$115,000	500 points	3 contracts x \$5,000 = \$15,000 (RECEIVE)
Profit (Loss)		(\$20,000)		(\$12,500) = (\$20,000 - \$7,500)

Your net position is a loss of \$12,500. The loss of \$20,000 in the value of your shares has been largely offset by the profit of \$7,500 on the option trade.

Alternatively, you could buy index put options with an exercise price greater than the value of the share portfolio you want to protect. This will provide you with a larger profit on the option trade if the index falls as expected. However, you will be paying a higher amount in premium, an amount which will be lost if the expected market decline does not take place.

### Example 2: Using an index call option to trade a bullish view of the market

You are expecting the broad sharemarket to rise over the next 3 months. Assume the index is at 4500. As an alternative to buying a portfolio of shares directly, you decide to buy a 3 month 4500 index call option for 200 points, or \$2,000 (plus brokerage and exchange fees). That gives you the right, but not the obligation, to "buy" the index at a level of 4500 at expiry. Ignoring brokerage and exchange fees, your break even point at expiry is  $4500 + 200 = 4700$  points.

The most you are risking in this trade is \$2,000, the cost of the option. You have potentially unlimited profits. At expiry, for every point the index is above your break-even point of 4700 points, you will make a profit of \$10. Two months later, it turns out that you were right in your prediction. The value has increased as shown in the table on the next page.

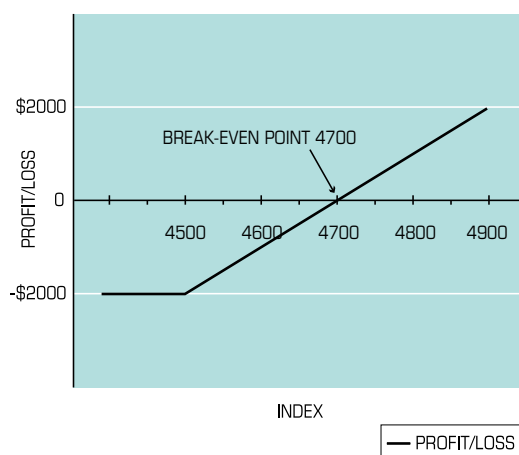


DATE	INDEX	4500 CALL	PREMIUM VALUE
Now	4500 points	200 points	\$2,000
2 Months later	4725 (+5%)	320 points	\$3,200
Profit / loss			+\$1,200 (+60%)

The profit/loss profile (or pay-off diagram) for this position at expiry looks like this.

Note our example trades out of the position 1 month prior to expiry.

#### INDEX 4500 CALL OPTION



As you can see, the option has increased by 60% compared to a relatively small (+5%) increase in the index. This is the advantage of the leverage which an index call option provides. Since the option has not yet expired, you could also have:

1. Sold the option and realised the profit.
2. Kept the option and hoped for more upside (but remember that time decay is working against you).

These are just two of many strategies that are possible using index options. The range of expiry dates and exercise prices available makes it possible to structure a strategy to reflect any view you may have on the direction of the broader market.

The chart above is called a pay-off diagram.

To learn more about these, check page [24](#).

## Differences between equity options and index options

The table below summarises the main differences between exchange traded options over individual securities and index options.

	EXCHANGE TRADED OPTIONS	INDEX OPTIONS
Exercise style	American	European
Settlement	Deliverable	Cash settled
Last trading and expiry day	The Thursday before the last Friday in the expiry month	The third Thursday of the month
Underlying asset	ASX approved securities	ASX approved indices
Premium	Expressed in dollars and cents	Expressed in points
Exercise price	Expressed in dollars and cents	Expressed in points
Contract size	1,000 shares	The exercise price of the option multiplied by \$ value

# Pay-off diagrams

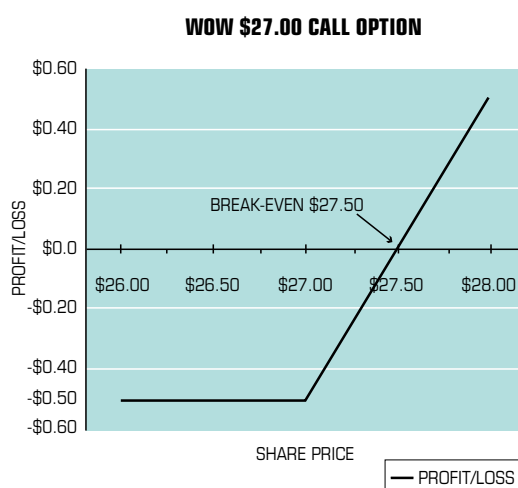
A pay-off or break-even diagram shows the potential profit or loss on the strategy at different stock prices at expiry. Pay-off diagrams can be drawn for any option or combination of options in the one class.

Visit the ASX website, [www.asx.com.au/options](http://www.asx.com.au/options) (under "Calculators") to download any of the calculators and tools that will plot options profiles.

## Call option taker

Using the example of buying a 3 month Woolworths Ltd (WOW) \$27.00 call for 50 cents.

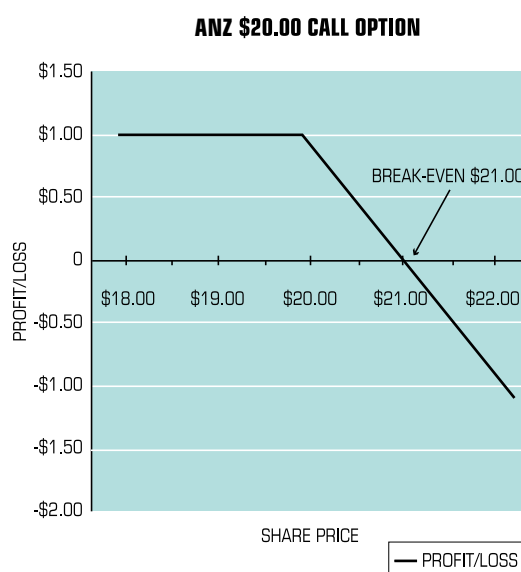
The break-even point for the call option taker is the exercise price of the option plus the premium paid. In this example it is \$27.50 (\$27.00 exercise price + 50 cent premium).



The diagram shows that while WOW is below \$27.50 the call option taker has an unrealised loss. The most the call option taker can lose is the premium paid (50 cents). As the WOW share price rises above \$27.50 the call option taker begins to profit. The maximum profit is unlimited as the higher the share price goes, the larger the taker's profit.

## Call option writer

Using the example of selling a ANZ \$20.00 call for \$1.00.



The diagram shows that the call option writer has potential profit limited to the premium received (\$1,000). If the option writer does not own the underlying shares the potential loss is unlimited. In this case, as the share price rises the writer will have to pay more to buy the shares at the market price if the option is exercised.

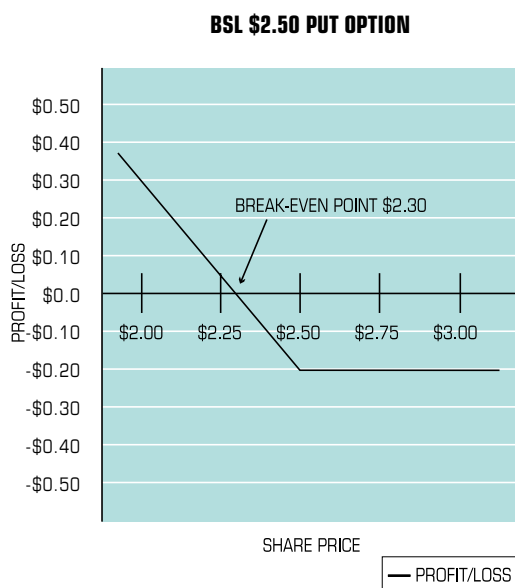
The break-even point for the call option writer is the exercise price of the option plus the premium received. This is the same as for the call option taker.

**For call options the break-even point is the exercise price plus the premium.**

For put options the break-even point is the exercise price less the premium.

### Put option taker

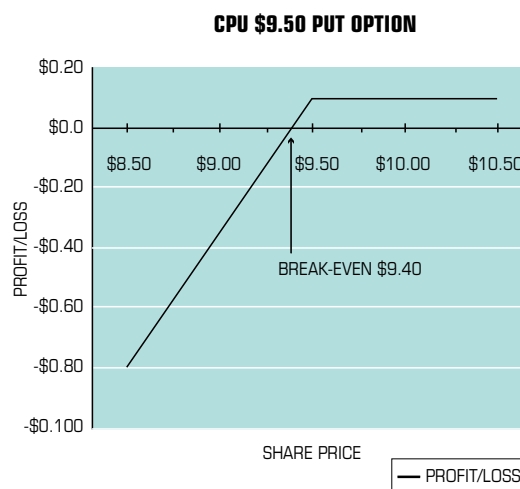
Using the example of buying a 3 month BlueScope Steel Ltd (BSL) \$2.50 put for 20 cents.



The diagram shows that the most the put option taker can lose is the premium paid. The further the share price falls below the break-even point of \$2.30, the larger the investor's potential profit. The break-even point for the put option taker is the exercise price less the premium paid. The maximum profit is the exercise price less the premium paid.

### Put option writer

Using the example of selling a 1 month CPU \$9.50 put for 10 cents.



The diagram shows that the put option writer has profit potential limited to the premium received (\$100). Once the share price falls below \$9.50 the put writer's profits begin to erode. This becomes a loss after the share price falls below \$9.40. The break-even price of \$9.40 is the exercise price less the premium received, and the potential loss is limited only by a fall in the share price to zero.

These four pay-off diagrams are the basis for more advanced option strategies. By combining these positions, more elaborate and complex strategies can be created.

## Summary

### CALL OPTION TAKER

Characteristics	Characteristics
Pays premium	Receives premium
Right to exercise and buy the shares	Obligation to sell shares if exercised
Benefits from rising volatility	Benefits from time decay
Profits from price rising	Profits from price falling or remaining neutral
Limited losses, potentially unlimited gain	Potentially unlimited losses, limited gain
Can SELL before expiry to close out	Can buy back before expiry or before assignment to close out

### CALL OPTION WRITER

### PUT OPTION TAKER

Characteristics	Characteristics
Pays premium	Receives premium
Right to exercise and sell shares	Obligation to buy shares if exercised
Benefits from rising volatility	Benefits from time decay
Profits from price falling	Profits from price rising or remaining neutral
Limited losses, potentially unlimited gain	Losses only limited to the share price falling to zero limited gain
Can SELL before expiry to close out	Can buy back before expiry or before assignment to close out

### PUT OPTION WRITER

In this booklet we discuss, in general terms, the risks associated with particular option strategies. It should be remembered that the risk associated with a particular strategy can change over time and in light of market circumstances. Furthermore if you vary the strategy, for example by adding or removing options from your initial position, this can have a dramatic impact on the risk profile of the total position. It could increase your risk, or reduce it. You should give serious consideration to these matters before varying your strategy, and also seek the advice of your broker.

# Risks of options trading

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Options are not suitable for all investors. In light of the risks associated with trading options, you should use them only if you are confident that you understand them and the risks. Before you invest, you should carefully assess your experience, investment objectives, financial resources and all other relevant considerations, and consult your broker.

## Market risks

The market value of options is affected by a range of factors (see the section 'Option pricing fundamentals'). They may fall in price or become worthless on or before expiry. Changes in the price of the underlying may result in changes to the price of an option, but the change can sometimes be in a different direction or of a different magnitude to the change in the price of the underlying.

## Options are a wasting asset

Options have an expiry date and therefore a limited life. An option's time value erodes over its life and this accelerates as an option nears expiry. It is important to assess whether the options selected have sufficient time to expiry for your view to be realised.

## Effect of 'Leverage' or 'Gearing'

The initial outlay of capital may be small relative to the total contract value with the result that options transactions are 'leveraged' or 'geared'. A relatively small market movement may have a proportionately larger impact on the value of the contract. This may work against you as well as for you. The use of leverage can lead to large losses as well as large gains.

## Options writers face potentially unlimited losses

Writing (selling) options may entail considerably greater risk than taking options. The premium received by the writer (seller) is fixed and limited, however the writer may incur losses greater than that amount. The writer who does not own the underlying shares or does not have offsetting positions potentially faces unlimited losses.

## Additional margin calls

You may sustain a total loss of margin funds deposited with your broker in relation to your positions. Your liability in relation to a written option contract is not limited to the amount of the margin paid. If the market moves against your position or margins are increased, you may be called upon to pay substantial additional funds on short notice to maintain your position, or upon settlement. If you fail to comply with a request from your broker for additional funds within the time prescribed, they may close out your position and you will be liable for any loss that might result.

## Liquidity risk

Market makers play an important role in the liquidity of the options market. However, their obligations to provide quotes are not unqualified and your ability to trade out of a strategy may depend on your being able to obtain a quote from a market maker. The scope of the obligation of market makers is described on page 31.

## Liquidity and pricing relationships

Market conditions (for example, lack of liquidity) may increase the risk of loss by making it difficult to effect transactions or close out existing positions.

Normal pricing relationships may not exist in certain circumstances, for example, in periods of high buying or selling pressure, high market volatility or lack of liquidity in the underlying security.

## Orderly market powers

ASX and ASX Clear have broad powers under the ASX Operating Rules to take action in the interests of maintaining fair and orderly markets or of providing services in a fair and effective way. These powers include the ability to suspend trading, impose position limits or exercise limits and terminate open contracts. In some circumstances, this may affect your positions. Similarly, regulatory authorities such as ASIC may give directions to ASX or ASX Clear, for example to suspend dealings in products.

## Trading disputes

You should be aware that all options transactions on ASX are subject to the rules, procedures, and practices of ASX and ASX Clear, and the ASIC Market Integrity Rules. Under the ASX Operating Rules, certain trading disputes between ASX Market Participants (for example errors involving traded prices that do not bear a relationship to fair market or intrinsic value) may lead to ASX cancelling or amending a trade. In these situations the client's consent is not required for the cancellation of a trade.

## Trading Facilities

As with all trading facilities and systems, there is the possibility of temporary disruption to, or failure of the systems used in ASX's options market, which may result in your order not being executed according to your instructions or not being executed at all. Your ability to recover certain losses may be subject to limits on liability imposed by the system provider, ASX, ASX Clear or your broker.

# You and your broker

This information relates to the relationship between you and your broker (or as they are called, ASX Market Participant) when trading and settling exchange traded options.

## 1. Your relationship with your broker

Brokers offer both trading and clearing services or they can specialise, with some parts of the trading and settlement process contracted to other brokers.

The different services a broker may offer in trading and settling options are as follows:

- Offer both trading and clearing services.
- Offer only trading services. If so, the broker will execute transactions but will not provide clearing services.
- Offer only clearing services. If so, the broker will settle transactions but will not offer trading services.
- Offer purely advisory or execution services. If so, the broker will not offer clearing or trading services but will only provide advice to clients. They will use another broker to perform these functions.

## 2. The paperwork: Client Agreement forms

If you are trading through a broker (which offers both trading and clearing services) you will only have to sign one Client Agreement form with that broker. If the broker does not offer both trading and clearing services then you may have to sign more than one Agreement.

A trading broker (which is not also a clearing broker) uses a clearing broker to clear its option trades. You don't have to use the trading broker's clearing broker.

## The Client Agreement is a legal contract setting out the terms on which the broker(s) will act for you.

If you use an advice or execution only broker, you must still sign a Client Agreement with a trading broker and a clearing broker.

It is important that you read the Client Agreement carefully before signing it, and retain a copy of the agreement.

ASX does not prescribe a set Client Agreement, however the ASIC Market Integrity Rules specify minimum terms which the Client Agreement must contain. Brokers may have other terms provided they are not inconsistent with the minimum terms.

### The involvement of ASX Clear Pty Limited (ASX Clear)

It is important to understand that options registered with the ASX Clear Pty Limited (ASX Clear) are contracts between clearing brokers and ASX Clear (on a principal to principal basis). ASX Clear does not have any contractual relationship with you.

More about the role of ASX Clear is detailed below.

### Fees and commissions

ASX does not prescribe the rate of brokerage which brokers may charge. Clients should discuss these rates and how they will be administered directly with their broker(s) prior to signing the Client Agreement(s). ASX and ASX Clear have standard fees (e.g. for trading and exercise), which can be checked by calling ASX or your broker, or referring to [www.asx.com.au/options](http://www.asx.com.au/options) (under Costs in the "Trading Information" section).

### **Confirmations (previously called contract notes) and monthly reports**

The trading broker is under a legal obligation to provide you with a confirmation. In practice, the trading broker may arrange for the clearing broker to provide a confirmation to you on behalf of the trading broker. A confirmation must contain information about the trade and the client including (but not limited to):

- the client's details
- the option series traded
- the trade details
- brokerage and fees
- which broker traded
- which broker cleared the trade (if the trading broker is not also the clearer).

You should ensure the details contained in each confirmation are correct and immediately discuss any inaccuracies with your broker.

At the end of each month if you have open positions you will receive a statement listing your positions. Again, it is important that you carefully check these documents and immediately raise any inaccuracies with your broker.

### **Failing to pay your broker**

If you fail to pay your broker, they may have the right to close out contracts opened for you.

Accordingly, it is important that you understand the settlement and margin requirements set out in the Client Agreement(s) before commencing trading.

## **3. Instructing a broker to trade options**

### **Your investment objectives**

Trading brokers are required to understand their client's financial situation in order to assess whether a particular investment (such as options) is suitable for that particular client's situation. The trading broker's adviser will ask you certain questions relating to your financial position and your investment objectives when dealing with you for the first time. The adviser will rely on the information you provide when advising you.

### **Accredited Derivatives Advisers**

You can place an order through any adviser, however under the ASIC Market Integrity Rules, only those individuals who are Accredited Derivatives Advisers can advise retail investors about what orders to place.

### **What does "Opening" and "Closing" a transaction mean?**

When you first buy (or sell) options it is called an opening transaction. If you then sell (or buy) options to cancel existing bought (or sold) open positions, it is called a closing transaction.

For example, if you have just opened an account with ABC Stockbroking Limited and instruct ABC Stockbroking to sell 10 one month Newcrest Mining Limited (NCM) calls with a strike price of \$30.00, this is called an opening transaction. If, after one week, you decide you do not wish to remain exposed to having to sell 10,000 NCM underlying shares, you would instruct ABC Stockbroking to buy the 10 NCM one month \$30.00 call options as a closing transaction.

It is important that you tell your broker whether you are entering into an options transaction to open or to close.

Once the transaction has been registered, and is entered to close, the initial open contract is cancelled and you have no further rights or obligations arising from these NCM call option contracts (on either the buy or sell sides).

**If receiving investment or trading advice about options, you should ensure that the individual from whom you are receiving such advice is accredited.**



### Exercising options

If you wish to exercise rather than close out taken (bought) open contracts you will need to notify your broker of exactly which option contract(s) you want to exercise. The broker will advise you of the latest time it will accept an instruction to exercise contracts in order for them to be exercised that day (T).

Where an exercise instruction is given, ASX Clear will randomly select a writer (seller) in that series of options and on the following day will notify that writer that their written (sold) position has been exercised (i.e. T+1).

### Settlement of underlying securities on exercise

Payment for, and the delivery of, underlying securities, on exercise of an open contract are undertaken by the clearing broker. The clearing broker has the legal obligation to provide the confirmation for the settlement of the underlying securities following an exercise. The securities transaction resulting from exercise of an option takes place three business days after exercise (T+3).

### Cash or collateral to cover margins

The broker's dealings with ASX Clear are as principal. In other words, ASX Clear's relationship is with the buying and selling broker of an option contract, and not with the end buyer and seller of the contract. The broker is liable for meeting payment, settlement and margin obligations to ASX Clear.

Brokers require option investors to provide money or property to enable the broker to manage the risks associated with the client's dealings in options. Client money and property must be dealt with in accordance with the Corporations Act, the ASIC Market Integrity Rules, the ASX Clear Operating Rules and the Client Agreement.

The broker is generally obliged to hold money on trust, but this does not include money paid to reimburse the broker for payments it has made to ASX Clear in respect of dealings for the client.

The broker may lodge CHESS securities held in the client's name with ASX Clear as collateral for margin obligations relating to options trades for the client. Where this occurs, the securities are held by ASX Clear as a "third party security". ASX Clear is not entitled to use the security to cover the broker's obligations to ASX Clear relating to dealings for other clients or the broker's own dealing. Margining is discussed in more detail on page 15.

## 4. Role of Market Makers

Market makers play an important role in the options market. They provide liquidity, and assist in the price discovery process, so that traders and investors are more easily able to price and value options. Market makers are not required to provide quotes in all series, or at all times, and as such there can be no guarantee that all series will have prices displayed.

In fact the ability of market makers to provide quotes can be impacted at times by a variety of factors including, company announcements, liquidity in the underlying stock and its options, price volatility in the stock and its options and trading system limitations. While these events may occur infrequently traders and investors should have a contingency plan to deal with an absence of quotes.

Market makers are incentivised with lower fees based on their quoting performance. This quoting performance is measured over the course of a calendar month (not daily).

Market makers can choose to have the following approaches:

- make a market on a continuous basis only
- make a market in response to quote requests only
- make a market both on a continuous basis and in response to quote requests.

### Continuous Markets

Market makers who choose to make a market on a continuous basis should provide orders continuously for certain percentages of time in a designated number of series per underlying security.

Each order must be for at least the minimum quantity, and at or within the designated maximum spread requirements.

### Quote requests

Market makers who choose to make a market in response to quote requests should provide orders on request for certain percentages of the time for designated series for the minimum designated quantity and within the maximum designated spread.

### Maximum spreads

Each security over which exchange traded options are traded has a category designated by ASX.

The category of the security determines:

- the maximum spread (the difference between the bid and offer prices) the designated market maker(s) may quote when making a market
- the minimum number of contracts for which the market maker must quote a price.

Full details of current ASX options market making requirements are published on the ASX website, [www.asx.com.au](http://www.asx.com.au).

## 5. ASX Clear Pty Limited (ASX Clear)

ASX Clear is a wholly owned subsidiary of ASX. It undertakes the registration and clearing of all options traded on ASX's options market. The points below are some of the key aspects of ASX Clear.

### Novation

Through a process called "novation" ASX Clear becomes the counter-party to both the buying and selling brokers of an option contract. That is, ASX Clear becomes the buyer for each sold option and the seller for each bought option. For example: ABC Stockbroking places an order to sell 10 one month ANZ \$15.00 call options and XYZ Stockbroking agrees to buy them. On registration of the trade with ASX Clear the original buy and sell trade (called a market contract) is "novated" and replaced by two new contracts (called open contracts) whereby ASX Clear becomes the counterparty buyer against the selling broker and correspondingly, becomes the counterparty seller against the buying broker. This means that the buying and the selling brokers only deal with ASX Clear in the settlement of the open contract and neither broker has to rely on the other to perform under the original market contract.

### Adjustments to options series

In certain circumstances where the capital structure or value of the underlying securities over which options exist is changed, ASX may make adjustments to the contract specifications of a class of options.

Adjustments are discussed on page 8 of this booklet.

### Position and exercise limits

ASX reserves the right to limit the number of options in a series or class which may be registered with ASX Clear and may also restrict the exercise of open contracts in a class. Both of these limits may be applied in relation to one or more accounts or accounts generally.

### National Guarantee Fund

In certain circumstances you may have a claim against the National Guarantee Fund (NGF). The NGF is administered by the Securities Exchanges Guarantee Corporation Limited and is governed by the Corporations Act and Regulations. The NGF provides you with some protection in the specific circumstances set out in the legislation:

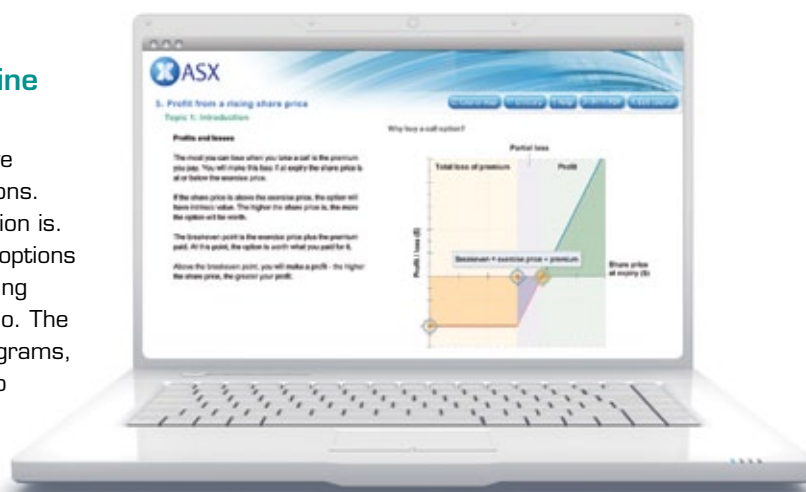
1. if a stock option is exercised, the NGF may provide compensation in certain circumstances if the resulting trades are not completed and
2. if you have entrusted property to your broker in the course of dealing in options, and the broker later becomes insolvent, you may claim on the NGF for any property which has not been returned to you or which has otherwise not been dealt with in accordance with the broker's obligations.

Further information on these potential NGF protections can be found at [www.segc.com.au](http://www.segc.com.au)

# Options online courses

## Comprehensive free online options courses


ASX offers a very comprehensive series of online courses on options. Learn the basics of what an option is. Understand the strategies that options can be used for including - earning income and protecting a portfolio. The courses are interactive with diagrams, activities and plenty of quizzes to practice your understanding.



You can access these options online courses any time. Visit [www.asx.com.au/classes](http://www.asx.com.au/classes)

Our online courses help you to understand the ins and outs of options

33



### 5. Profit from a rising share price

Topic 3: Which call should I buy?

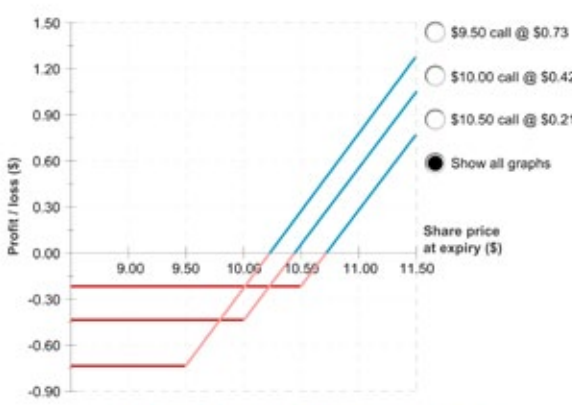
The factors to consider include:

- What must the share price be at expiry for you to break even?
  - The breakeven point = exercise price + premium.
- How much are you paying for the option?

Generally, the lower the exercise price, the lower the breakeven point, and so the smaller the share price rise required for you to make a profit.

However, the lower the exercise price, the more expensive the option - and so the more you stand to lose if the share price falls.

The bought call



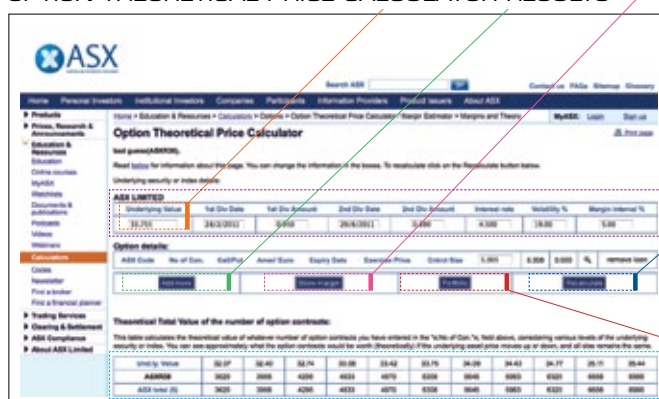
Select a radio button to reveal its corresponding graph.

## Option calculators

The ASX website has a range of tools and calculators that you can explore and use as you become more confident with options trading. You can use the tools to draw options payoff diagrams, to calculate theoretical prices and estimate margins.

- **Underlying value**  
Delayed price of underlying share or index plus initial pricing assumptions.
- **Add more options**  
Multiple series can be displayed.
- **Show margin**  
Use this feature to show margin estimates.

## OPTION THEORETICAL PRICE CALCULATOR RESULTS



- **Volatility assumptions**

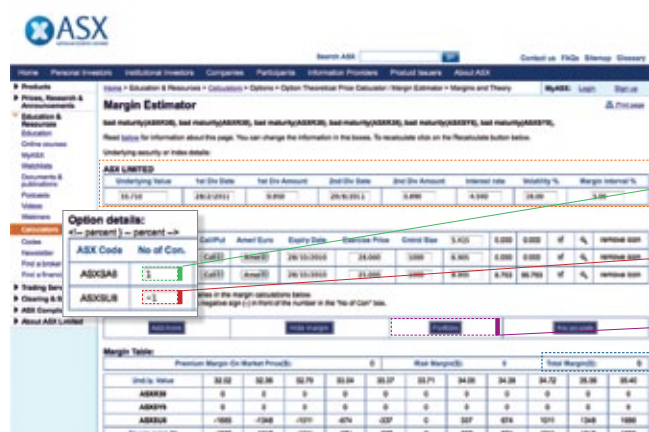
These assumptions can be changed to reflect your market view.
- **Recalculate**

Changing your assumptions will affect the fair value calculation.
- **Portfolio**

Multiple series over different stocks or indices can be displayed.
- **Theoretical total value**

Option fair values shown for different underlying prices.

### MARGIN ESTIMATOR RESULTS



- **Volatility assumptions**

These assumptions can be changed to reflect your market view.
- **Bought option**
- **Sold option**
- **Portfolio**

Combined calculation for multiple option series and underlying stocks/index.
- **Net margin estimate**

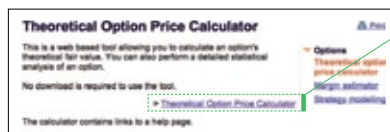
## Getting to the calculators

All ASX calculators can be found by visiting  
[www.asx.com.au/calculators](http://www.asx.com.au/calculators)



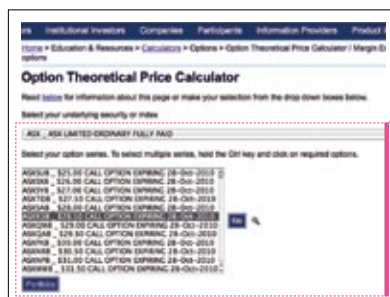
### Step 1: Choose calculator

From the ASX calculators & tools page select the theoretical option price calculator



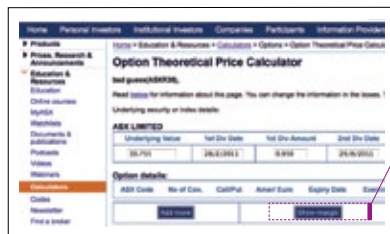
### Step 2: Theoretical option price calculator

Click the calculator link



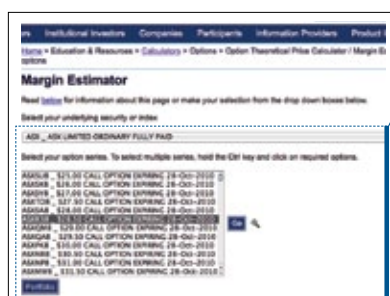
### Step 3: Theoretical option price calculator

Choose the stock/index code then the option series you want to price.



### Step 4: Margin estimator option

Click the *show margin* button to switch to the margin estimator.



### Step 5: Margin estimator

Choose the stock/index code you want followed by the option series

### Detailed help section

Scroll to the bottom of the theoretical option price calculator or margin estimator screen for help



# Option prices

## List of options and their prices

The ASX website has a complete list of the ETOs available over a particular stock. You can check prices and essential trading information.

### SEARCH SCREEN

The screenshot shows the ASX website's search interface. The 'Detailed search - prices, announcements and charts' section is active. Under 'Option prices', there are several search criteria: 'All Months' (with a dropdown arrow), 'Puts and calls' (with radio buttons for 'Both Call and Put Options', 'Call Options only', and 'Put Options only'), 'or type in a 5-letter ASX Code' (with a dropdown arrow), 'or type in a 5-letter Futures Options Code' (with a dropdown arrow), and 'or type in the beginning of a company name' (with a dropdown arrow). Each of these search criteria is highlighted with a colored circle and a line pointing to an explanatory text block on the right.

#### Expiry month

You can choose a particular expiry month.

#### Puts and calls

You can choose puts, calls or both.

#### Direct option search

Use this search box if you know exactly which option series you are searching for.

#### Company search

Use this search box if you do not know the company code.

### SEARCH RESULTS SCREEN

The screenshot shows the ASX website's search results for options. The 'Option prices' section is active. It displays a table of options with columns: Code, Last, Bid, Offer, Open, High, Low, Volume, Call/Put, and Margin Price. The table lists various options for different companies and expiry dates. The table is highlighted with a green circle and a line pointing to an explanatory text block on the right.

Code	Last	Bid	Offer	Open	High	Low	Volume	Call/Put	Margin Price
ASX122	28.10.2010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	15	0.010	0.010
ASX123	28.10.2010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	9	0.010	0.010
ASX124	28.10.2010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	9	0.010	0.010
ASX125	28.10.2010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	9	0.010	0.010
ASX126	28.10.2010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	9	0.010	0.010
ASX127	28.10.2010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	9	0.010	0.010
ASX128	28.10.2010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	9	0.010	0.010
ASX129	28.10.2010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	9	0.010	0.010
ASX130	28.10.2010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	9	0.010	0.010
ASX131	28.10.2010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	9	0.010	0.010
ASX132	28.10.2010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	9	0.010	0.010
ASX133	28.10.2010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	9	0.010	0.010
ASX134	28.10.2010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	9	0.010	0.010
ASX135	28.10.2010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	9	0.010	0.010
ASX136	28.10.2010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	9	0.010	0.010
ASX137	28.10.2010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	9	0.010	0.010
ASX138	28.10.2010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	9	0.010	0.010
ASX139	28.10.2010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	9	0.010	0.010
ASX140	28.10.2010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	9	0.010	0.010

#### Expiry months

Expiry months are sorted with the nearest month first.

#### At the money

Most trading usually happens in the 'at the money' series.

#### Contract specifications

Click on the link for the key features of that option series.

#### Series listing

Series are listed in order of exercise price.

# Glossary of terms

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**Adjustment to options contract**

adjustments are made when certain events occur that may affect the value of the underlying securities. Examples of adjustments include changing the number of shares per contract and/or the exercise price of options in the event of a new issue or a reorganisation of capital by the issuer of the underlying securities.

**American style**

type of option contract which allows the holder to exercise at any time up to and including the expiry day

**Annualised return**

the return or profit, expressed on an annual basis, the writer of the option contract receives for buying the shares and writing that particular option.

**Assignment**

the random allocation of an exercise obligation to a writer. This is carried out by ASX Clear.

**At-the-money**

when the price of the underlying security equals the exercise price of the option.

**ASX Clear Pty Limited (ASX Clear)**

a wholly owned subsidiary of ASX.

**Buy and write**

the simultaneous purchase of shares and sale of an equivalent number of call option contracts.

**Call option**

an option contract that entitles the taker (buyer) to buy a fixed number of the underlying securities (usually 1,000) at a stated price on or before a fixed expiry day.

**Category 1**

More liquid option classes with an expiry cycle listing the nearest rolling 6 months followed by March quarterly expiry cycle months (total of 4 quarterly contract months listed at any one time).

**Category 2**

Less liquid option classes with an expiry cycle listing the nearest rolling 3 months followed by March quarterly expiry cycle months (total of 4 quarters listed at any one time).

**CHESS**

Clearing House Electronic Sub-register System which provides the central register for the clearing and settlement of CHESS approved financial products, the transfer of securities and the registration of transfers.

**Class of options**

all option contracts covering the same underlying security.

**ASX Clearing Participant**

means an entity that has been admitted as a Participant under the ASX Clear Operating Rules.

**Closing purchase**

a transaction in which a party who has previously written (sold) an option liquidates the position as a writer by "taking" an option in the same series as the option previously written.

**Closing out**

a transaction in which a party who had previously taken (purchased) an option, liquidates the position as a taker by "writing" an option in the same series as the option previously taken or vice versa for a sold position.

**Delta**

the rate of change of option premium due to a change in price of the underlying securities.

**Derivative**

an instrument which derives its value from the value of an underlying instrument (such as shares, share price indices, fixed interest securities, commodities, currencies, etc). Options are a type of derivative.

**Designated Trading Representative (DTR)**

is a staff member of a Trading Participant (that is, a broker that has trading permission in respect of one or more products) who is authorised by ASX to access trading systems.

**European style**

type of option contract which allows the holder to exercise only on the expiry day

**Exercise price**

the amount of money which must be paid by the taker (in the case of a call option) or the writer (in the case of a put option) for the transfer of each of the underlying securities upon exercise of the option.

**Expiry day**

the date on which all unexercised options in a particular series expire.

**Fair value**

the theoretical value generated using an options pricing model.

**Hedge**

a transaction which reduces or offsets the risk of a current holding. For example, a put option may act as a hedge for a current holding in the underlying instrument.

**Implied volatility**

a measure of volatility implied by the current market price of an option.

**In-the-money**

an option with intrinsic value.

**Intrinsic value**

the difference between the market value of the underlying securities and the exercise price of the option. It represents the advantage the taker has over the current market price if the option is exercised. Intrinsic value cannot be less than zero.

**Long term option**

an option with a term to expiry of two or three years from the date the series was first listed.

**Margin**

an amount calculated by ASX Clear to cover the obligations arising from option contracts.

**Market maker**

option traders with obligations to provide market liquidity by making bids and offers for nominated option series.

**Multiplier**

is used when considering index options. The strike price and premium of an index option are usually expressed as points. A multiplier is then applied to give a figure in dollars and cents. For example, the multiplier may be \$10 per point, meaning that to buy an index option with a premium of 100 points, an investor would pay \$1,000.

**Open interest**

the number of outstanding contracts in a particular class or series existing in the option market. Also called the "open position".

**Opening purchase**

a transaction in which a party becomes the taker of an option.

**Opening sale**

a transaction in which a party becomes the writer of an option.

**Out-of-the-money**

a call option if the market price of underlying securities is below the exercise price of the option; a put option is out-of-the-money if the market price of the underlying securities is above the exercise price of the options.

**Premium**

the amount payable by the taker to the writer for entering the option. It is determined through the trading process and represents current market value.

**Put option**

an option contract that entitles the taker (buyer) to sell a fixed number of underlying securities (usually 1,000) at a stated price on or before a fixed expiry day.

**Random selection**

the method by which an exercise of an option is allocated to a writer in that series of options.

**Series of options**

all contracts of the same class and type having the same expiry day.

**Spot month option**

an option with a term to expiry of around four weeks from the date the series was first listed.

**Taker**

the buyer of an option contract.

**Time value**

the amount investors are willing to pay for the possibility that they could make a profit from their option position. It is influenced by time to expiry, dividends, interest rates, volatility and market expectations.

**Underlying securities**

the shares or other securities subject to purchase or sale upon exercise of the option.

**Volatility**

a measure of the expected amount of fluctuation in the price of the particular securities.

**Writer**

the seller of an option contract.



# Option contract specifications

<b>Name</b>	<b>ASX Equity Options</b>
<b>Underlying security</b>	Any share approved by ASX under Guidelines for Listing Equity Options
<b>Security code</b>	The first three characters will be the ASX code eg. BHP, the fourth and fifth character and sixth character (if required) will designate the expiry month and series
<b>Contract size</b>	Usually 1,000 shares per contract. This may be adjusted for rights, bonus issues and other capital adjustment events
<b>Tick size</b>	\$0.001 per share = \$1.00 (contract size 1000 shares) for premium below 1 cent. \$0.005 per share = \$5.00 (contract size 1000 shares) for premium of 1 cent or more.
<b>Exercise style</b>	Usually American, ie. exercisable on or before the expiry date
<b>Exercise price</b>	Varies for each stock
<b>Type</b>	Call and put options
<b>Contract months</b>	As detailed in the ASX expiry calendars
<b>Expiry date</b>	Thursday before last Friday of the settlement month. This may change due to public holidays
<b>Trading hours</b>	Normal trading 10.00am to 4.20pm (Sydney time). Late trading 4.20pm to 5.00pm and overseas trading in accordance with the ASX Operating Rules
<b>Settlement</b>	Physical delivery of underlying security

<b>Contract name</b>	<b>Index options</b>
<b>Underlying index</b>	Various indices including the S&P/ASX200 (XJO)
<b>Security code</b>	The first three characters will be the ASX code, eg. XJO, the fourth and fifth character and sixth character (if required) will designate the expiry month and series
<b>Index multiplier</b>	\$10. Each index point is equal to \$10
<b>Tick size</b>	Quoted as 1 index point
<b>Exercise style</b>	European, ie. exerciseable only on expiry day
<b>Exercise interval</b>	25 Index points
<b>Type</b>	Call and put options
<b>Contract months</b>	First 2 serial months and March quarterly expiry cycle up to 6 quarters ahead
<b>Last trading</b>	Expiry day
<b>Expiry day</b>	12.00pm on the third Thursday of the contract month
<b>Trading hours</b>	6.00am to 5.00pm and 5.30pm to 8.00pm (Sydney time)
<b>Settlement</b>	Cash settled against the Opening Index Price Calculation (OPIC) as calculated on expiry day

## Further information

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For ASX explanatory booklets on options, please phone 131 279, or download the booklets from the ASX website [www.asx.com.au/options](http://www.asx.com.au/options)

### Online Classes

Online options classes include interactive exercises that will aid your learning and a quiz at the end of each section to show your progress.

### Webinars

Online seminars and recordings of past sessions to aid your learning.

### Website

[www.asx.com.au/options](http://www.asx.com.au/options)

### Email

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