

Future Trader

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Introduction

Future trader is my first game for the Psion Siena, it was written on the Siena for the Siena and is my first foray into programming, so it isn't as pretty as it might be. It was programmed as more of a learning exercise than anything else. Needless to say I hope you enjoy it.

Future Trader is a game based (very loosely) round the Futures Market that we hear so much about, Nick Leeson and Barings Bank etc. - all lost great sums of money trading in futures, but the potential exists to gain great sums as well. This game is based around a trading scenario, you start with a certain outlay of capital. You can buy or sell contracts in futures commodities and hopefully make millions or at least thousands.

Overview of Futures

You can skip this bit if you just want to know how to play. But for the novice a quick overview of how to make money is in order.

The basic principle behind making huge amounts of money is the fact that you purchase a *deposit* in a commodity not that actual commodity. For instance you can hold a stake in 40000 lbs worth of Hogs for a fraction of the price they would cost to own.

Gearing is what futures is all about. Say you buy a contract worth \$10 with a deposit of \$1, the price then rises to \$15, you would then get your deposit back (\$1) plus an extra \$5 - a profit of some 500%!!!. Of course it could go the other way and you could lose \$5.

And that is how to make money on the futures market.

Remember, you can buy contracts and sell contracts in commodities. This may sound confusing as you may think you cannot sell something you don't already own., but remember this is a *futures* market. You are trading in the future, so you are promising to sell (or buy) something in the future, you don't actually have to own the commodity.

The basic principle is: if you think the market price is going to rise, buy a contract now, then when the price increases you can end your contract (theoretically selling it back) and make a profit of the difference between the price you bought it at and the price you sold it at.

If you think the market will drop then sell the contract now and in the future buy it back (end the contract) for a lower price. Your profit will be the difference between the price you sold it at and the price you bought it back at.

e.g You buy a contract in Hogs, the current price is \$1.50
 Later the price rises to \$1.75

You decide to sell (end) the contract.
Your profit is \$10,000

$$\begin{array}{r} 40000 \times 1.75 \text{ (market price)} \\ - 40000 \times 1.50 \text{ (price you bought at)} \\ \hline 10000 \end{array}$$

Installing

1. Simply copy the file FUTURE.OPA into your \APP directory on your Psion.
2. From the main system screen, choose the APPS menu and INSTALL
3. Select the file Future.OPA
4. An icon will appear and you can use it as you would any other program.

Playing the Game

On entering the game, you will be prompted for your name, the game you wish to play and the level.

Game: You can choose a short game (20 turns) , a medium length game (40 turns) and a long game (80 turns).

Level: You can choose between Green Trader, Investor (the default) and Futures Guru.

The level is quite important as it defines how much initial capital you get and also the speed at which the game plays.

Green Trader (easiest)	\$7500	One turn = 1 Minute
Investor (default)	\$5000	One turn = 20 seconds
Futures Guru (hardest)	\$3500	One turn = 10 seconds

The game as you have no doubt gathered is played in real time, and the speed at which each turn (or week) moves is defined by the level you have selected.

The Objective

Simple! Make as much money as possible and attain the rank of Futures Trader which is a profit of \$25000 or more.

The Screen Layout

The game is played from three main screens and is controlled by various hotkeys, all listed in a status bar at the bottom of the screen. There is also a menu, but only to restart and exit the game and get version and hi score information.

The Main Screen

This screen is the initial one that will be displayed. It shows your Current Capital (Cash), your Total Worth (how much you are worth) and your current profit.

There are two graphs which plot your worth and cash over time as well as a summary of the broker fees.

The broker fees are what you will be charged for carrying out certain actions, such as buying, selling and ending contracts.

You can use the following keys:

C	switch to the commodity screen
P	switch to the portfolio screen
N	force the game onto the next week (negating the wait specified by your level)

The Commodity Screen

This is a key screen. There is a graph of the currently selected commodity, showing its value over time. You can also see its current price, the size of the contract and what the commodity is quoted in (e.g. \$/ton) . Listed next to the commodity is the cost of buying a deposit in one contract.

You can use the following keys from this screen:

Cursor left	Go back one commodity
Cursor Right	Go forward one commodity
Cursor Down (TAB)	Select a commodity from a list.
B	Buy one contract in the current commodity, (called Going Long)
S	Sell one contract in the current commodity, (called Going Short)
T	Show various statistics on the graph. The first press shows the MEAN value for the commodity, the second press will show the TREND or Best Fit for the commodity. This is useful for seeing which way the market is moving.
P	Go to the Portfolio screen
M	Go to the Main Screen
N	Force the game onto the next week

Whenever you Buy or Sell a commodity you must have enough Cash (or capital) to make the trade. The trade will cost you the broker fee for buying or selling plus the deposit for the current commodity.

The Portfolio Screen

This screen shows your current portfolio of contracts. It lists the commodity the contract is in, the current market value, the value at which you made the contract. Whether or not the contract is long or short (i.e. a buy or sell contract). How much profit or loss (if any) you have made, and also the price of the deposit.

From this screen you can use the following keys:

Cursor left	Go back one contract
Cursor Right	Go forward one contract
Cursor Down (TAB)	Select a contract from a list.
E	End the current contract
S	Obtain a summary of all your contracts in a list.
C	Switch to the Commodity Screen
M	Switch to the Main Screen
N	Force the game onto the next week.

When you end a contract, you will receive the deposit back, minus the broker fee, plus the profit (the loss) you have made on that contract.

In summary mode, the current contract is the one in **BOLD** face.

The Hi Score Screen

Get to this screen using the menu. You will be defaulted to the screen of hi-scores for your current game and level. If you wish to look at other games or levels simply switch using the G and L keys.

The keys you can use are:

G	Look at a different game
L	Look at a different level
X	Exit this screen

Note that the MENU key does not work from this screen.

The Tips

Occasionally you will receive a news bulletin from the NYSE, Trump or Harvey-Jones reports. These will give you valuable advice in which commodities to invest in. Sometimes they get it wrong, and sometimes they get it right, occasionally their marketing influence will cause the commodity to move according to their predictions. Take notice of them and you will do well in your investing.

Conclusion

I hope you enjoy this game, maybe you will, maybe you won't. Anyway it was fun writing it and learning about OPL.

This program is mailware. Which I have just invented. Basically if you like it or hate it, have some suggestions or have found a bug, please let me know. Even if you just download it and install it, please let me know, I would love to find out how many people are interested in this kind of thing.

Cheers,

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