Point and figure charts for newbies

Bruce D. Crawford
Investment Forum
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
at George Mason University

July 20, 2022

Disclaimer

- I am not licensed or qualified to provide investment advice. Consider your own situation carefully and consult with a properly licensed and accredited professional before making or disposing of any investments involving real money.
- Charts from the Member's area of StockCharts.com are used by permission.

Disclosure

I currently hold a long position in HUM

Contents

- Introduction
- How do I recognize a point and figure (P&F) chart in a lineup?
- What the heck are P&F charts good for anyway?
- How do I match the chart time frame and other settings to my trading objectives?
- How do I spot changes in price trends on an individual stock?

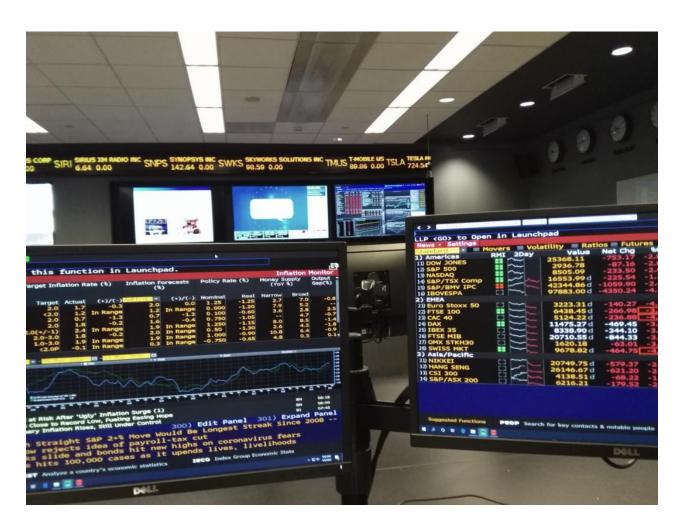
Contents (cont'd)

- Is now the right time to be in the market?
- Can I use the charts to anticipate the price direction of commodities?
- Can I use point and figure charts to evaluate a stock's relative strength?
- Should I lighten up my portfolio or go all in?
- This is interesting, but isn't this all old school?

Contents (cont'd)

- I've been keeping my charts manually. How do I adjust my chart for a stock split?
- I'm interested in learning more. Are books, videos and online resources available?

Introduction

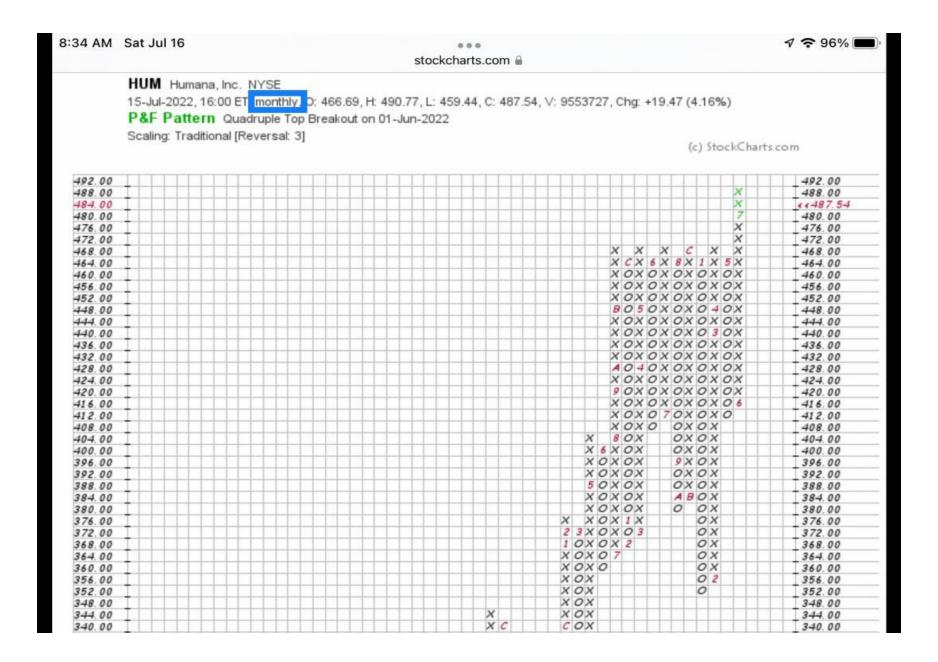


Point and figure (P&F) charts are just another tool in your toolbox for answering questions that come to mind during the course of the day. Photo by author.

How do I recognize a point and figure (P&F) chart in a lineup?



Image source: stockcharts.com (emphasis added)

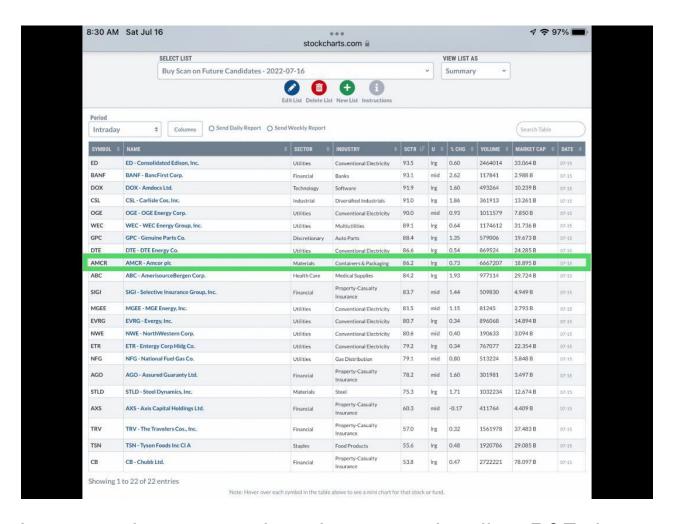


One of the biggest mistakes that newbies make is not selecting the proper scaling to answer the question at hand! Image source: stockcharts.com (emphasis added)



This is a candlestick price chart of the same stock! Image source: stockcharts.com

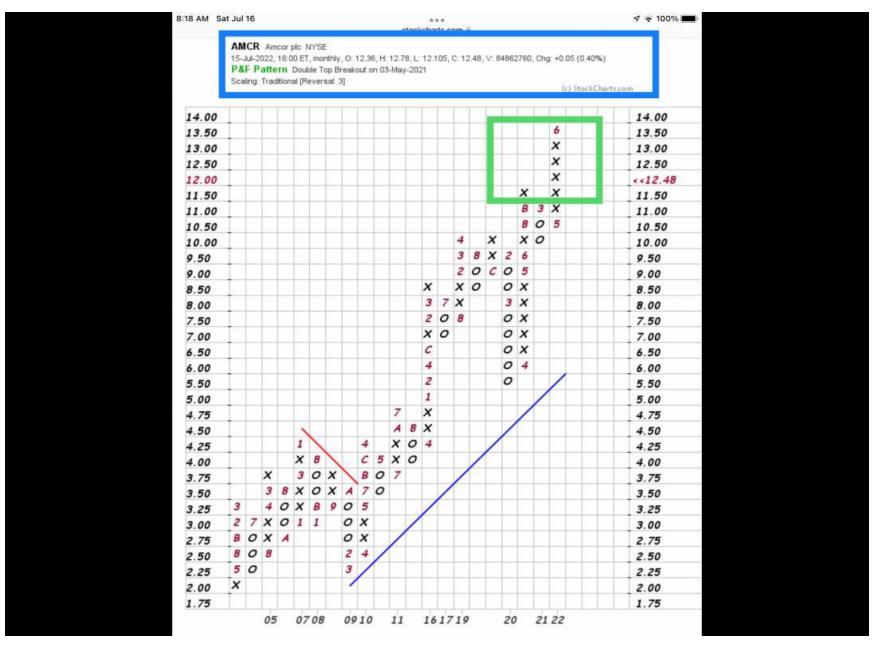
What the heck are P&F charts good for anyway?



Let's say you have several stocks on your buy list. P&F charts can help you decide which one to buy first if you have limited cash. Image source: stockcharts.com (emphasis added)

Symbo	()(a)	Last	TSnD	TSnW	▲ T
MCO	(9 ©	281.61	8.0	-26.0	-1.0
FMC	(9	100.91	-25.0	-5.0	5.0
ED	0	93.40	10.0	37.0	8.0
ETR	®	110.12	-25.0	-4.0	12.0
AXS	®	51.87	-6.0	-1.0	15.0
MO	®	41.99	-26.0	-5.0	15.0
MGEE	0	77.58	10.0	-5.0	16.0
AFL	®	54.31	-24.0	-10.0	17.0
AGO	0	54.64	-22.0	-5.0	17.0
CINF	®	112.38	-24.0	-6.0	17.0
MGRC	® ©	77.04	-24.0	A (15.0)	18.0
ALL	®	122.40	+2:0	-5.0	1019.0
BANE	0	90,56	-2.0	39,0	19.0
MET	600	59.03	-23.0	-9.0	19.0
ADP	®	214.13	8.0	-10.0	20.0
AMCR		12.48	7.0	11.0	20.0
CB	® ©	184.19	-24.0	-5.0	20.0
CSL	® ©	255.01	6.0	98.0	20.0

My preliminary research has shown that AMCR has been on a daily "buy" signal for 7 days, a weekly "buy" signal for 11 weeks and a monthly "buy" signal for 20 months. Can I get additional confirmation from the P&F chart? Image source: Custom study plug-in for thinkorswim



I trade using monthly charts. The green box shows that a point and figure "buy" signal occurred in May. "5" represents May and "6" represents June. Image source: stockcharts.com (emphasis added)

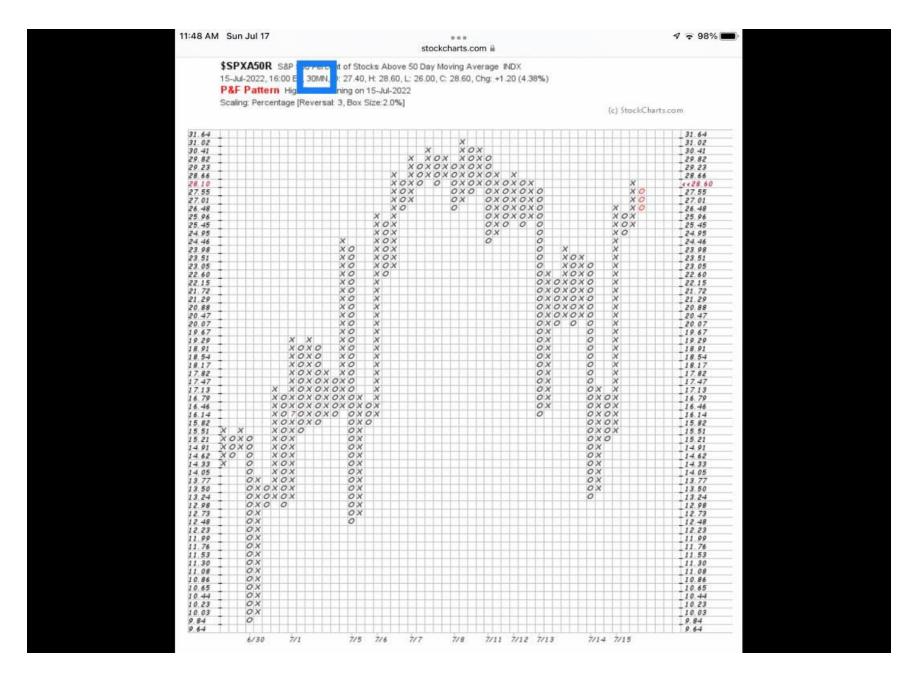


For comparison, here's a candlestick chart of the same stock. Image source: stockcharts.com

Is now the right time to be in the market?



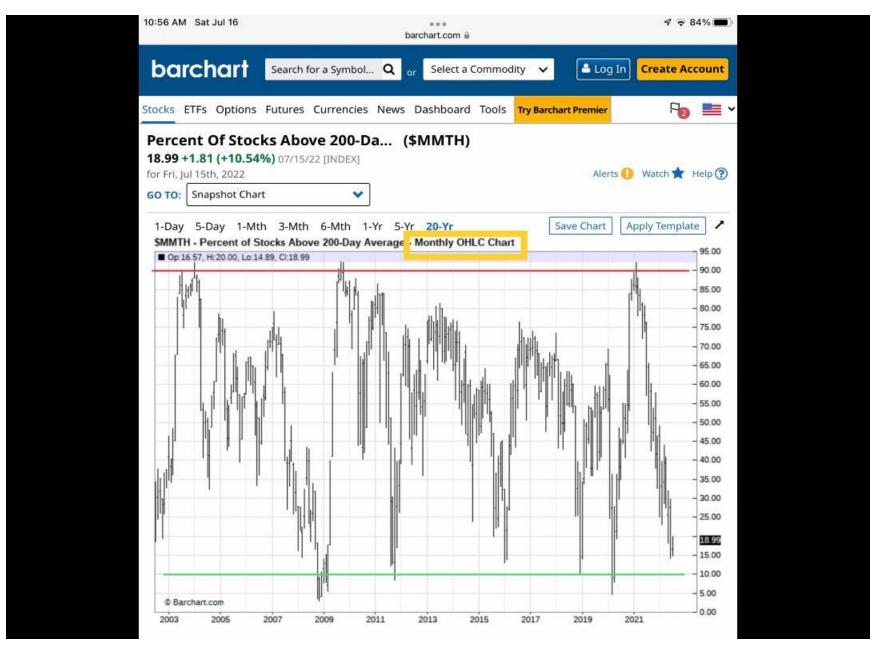
There's no point checking this chart every day...a new bar is added once a week. Image source: barchart.com (emphasis added)



Here I'm using 30 minute charts to get a more current reading on the percentage of stocks trading above their 50 day moving average. Image source: stockcharts.com (emphasis added)



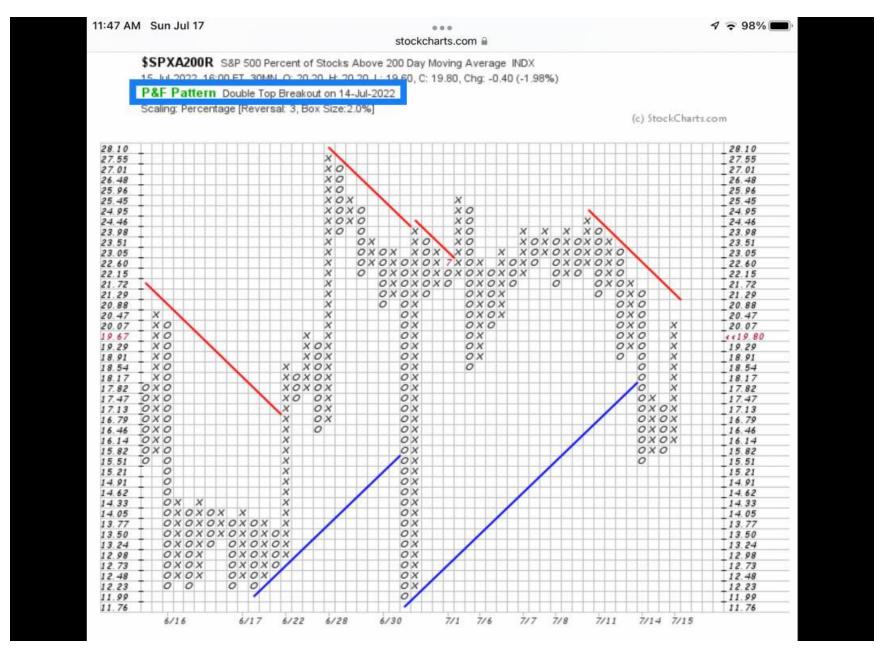
If you are not skilled at reading P&F charts, just read the annotation provided. Note that I am using percentage scaling on these charts. Image source: stockcharts.com (emphasis added)



I usually look for times when the green line is hit to buy the market and times when the red line is hit to sell. This chart is only updated monthly! Image source: barchart.com (emphasis added)



Again I am using 30 minute charts to monitor the percentage of stocks above their 200 day moving average. Image source: stockcharts.com (emphasis added)



Again note that I am using percentage scaling on the vertical axis. Image source: stockcharts.com (emphasis added)

Can I use the charts to evaluate commodity prices?

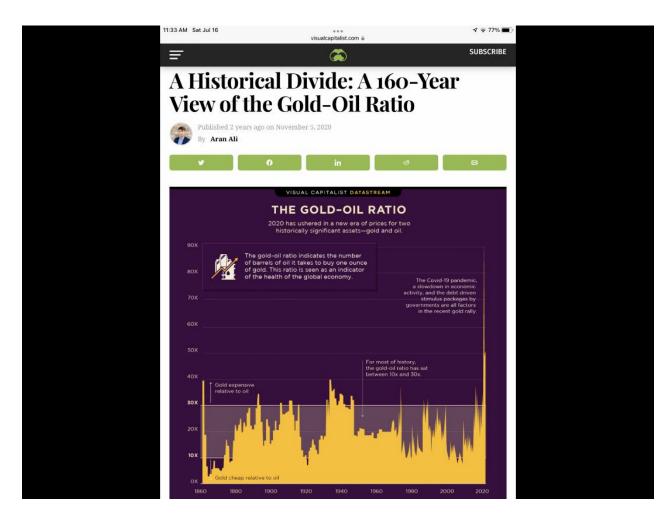
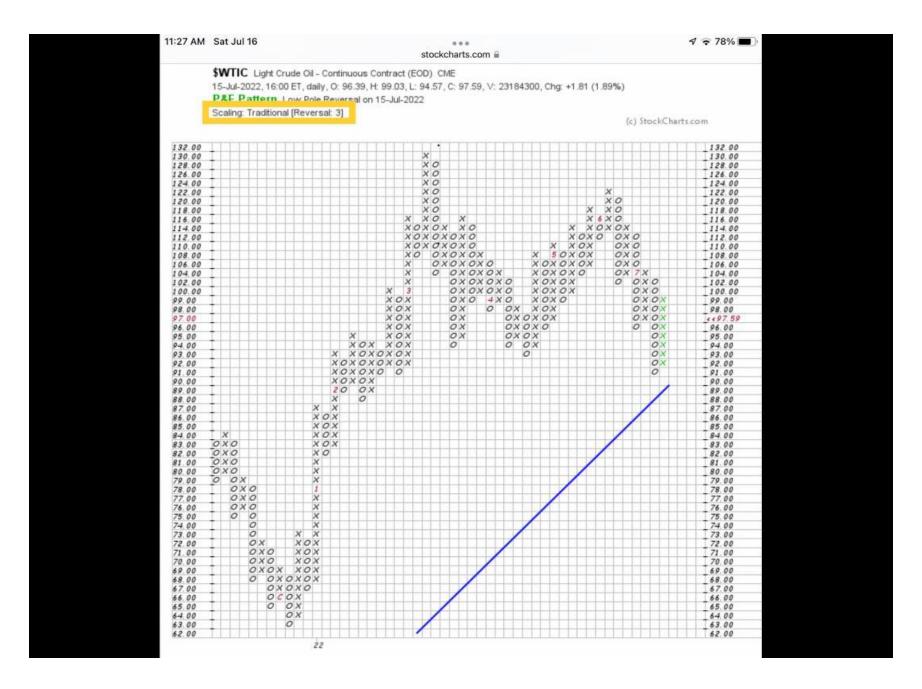


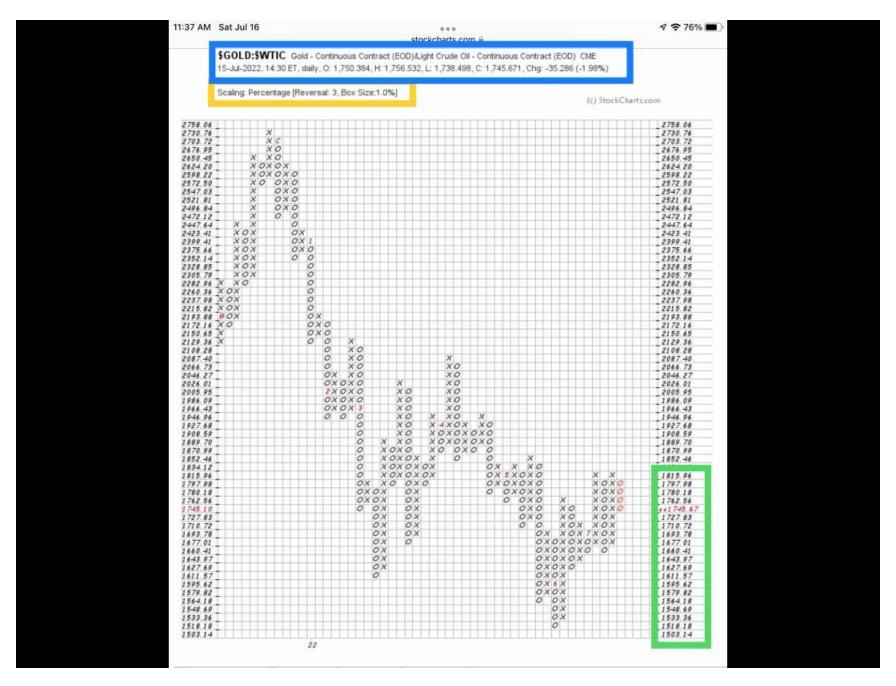
Image source: visualcapitalist.com



We're back on a price chart now so we use traditional scaling on the vertical axis to monitor the price of gold. It's dropping. Image source: stockcharts.com (emphasis added)



By contrast, the price of oil is rising. Image source: stockcharts.com (emphasis added)

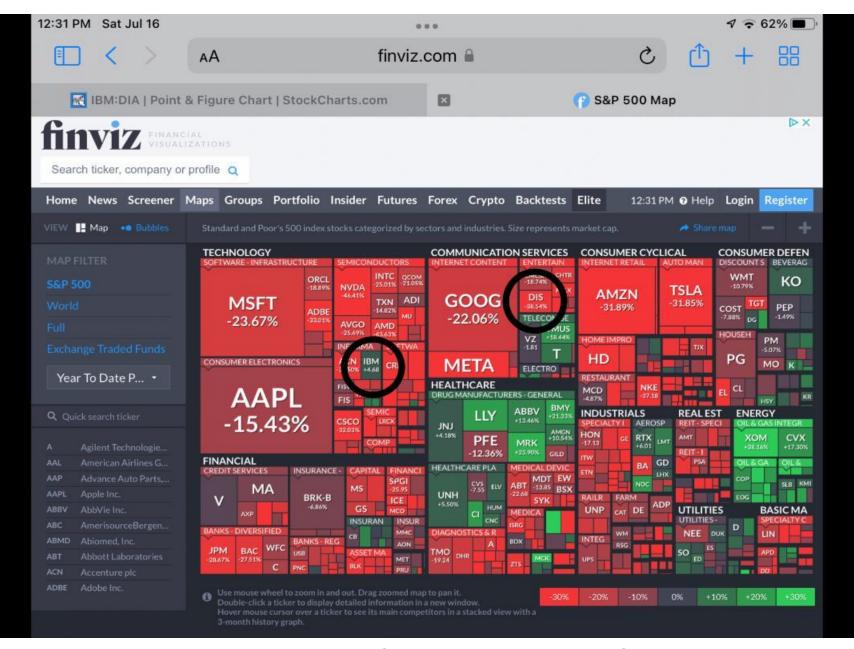


Here's the current read on the gold/oil ratio. It's at 17.45 which is in the normal long-term range of 15-18. You might use this chart if one commodity was out of whack to anticipate how far the other might adjust!

Can I use point and figure charts to evaluate a stock's relative strength?



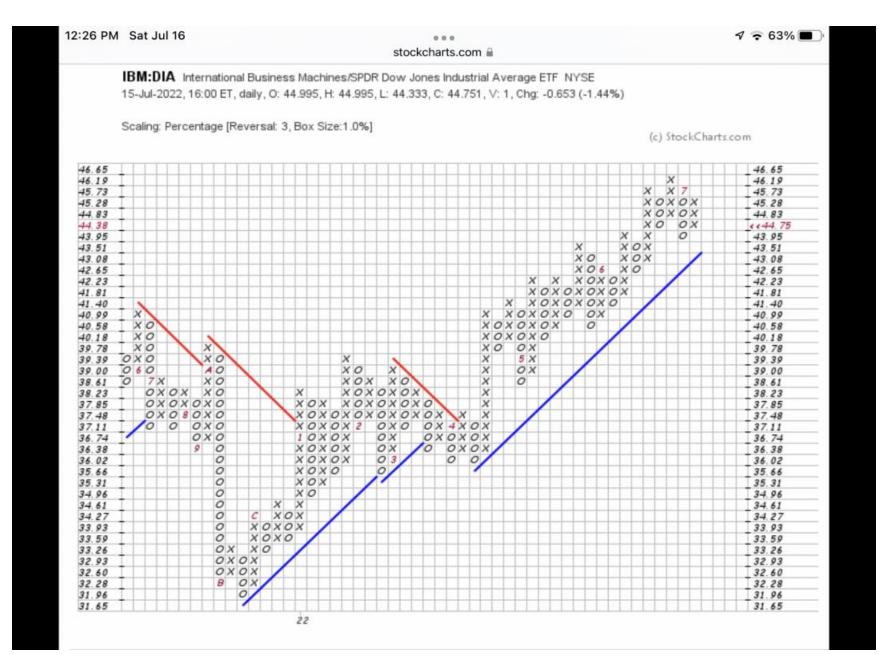
How have the Dow components performed so far this year? Are trends in play? Image source: State Street Global Advisors (DIA ETF holdings) [Downloaded 7/17/22] (emphasis added)



The FinViz market carpet for the S&P500 shows that DIS has a negative return year-to-date and IBM has a positive one. Let's explore further! Image source: finviz.com (emphasis added)

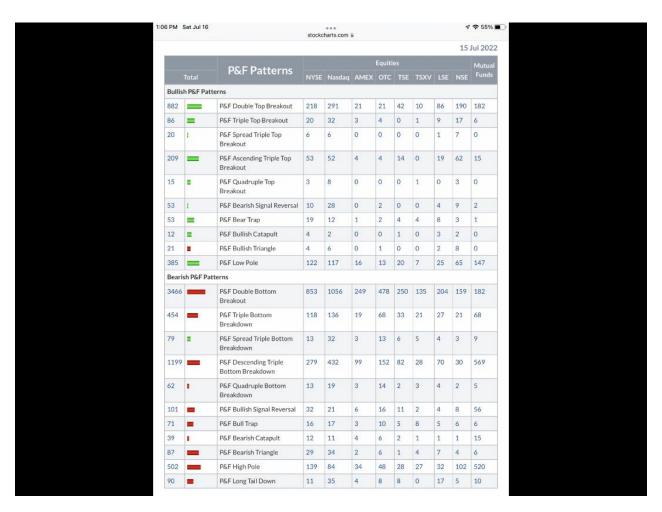


DIS has fallen relative to the Dow Jones Industrial Average (using the ETF proxy DIA) since the beginning of the year. The red line indicates resistance on the P&F chart. Image source: stockcharts.com

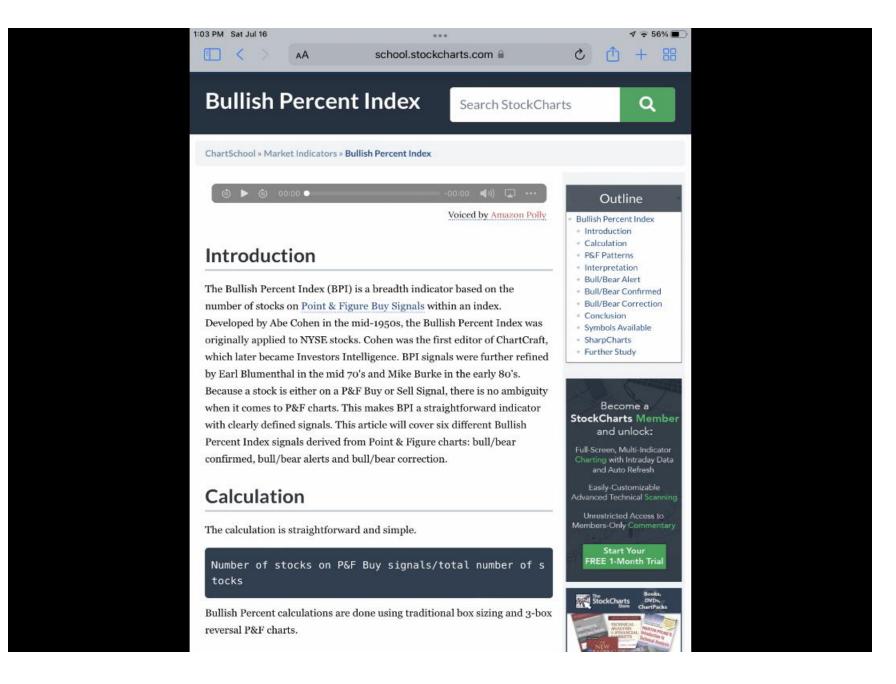


By contrast, IBM has risen relative to the DIA since the beginning of the year. The blue line indicates support on the P&F chart. Note percentage scaling. Image source: stockcharts.com

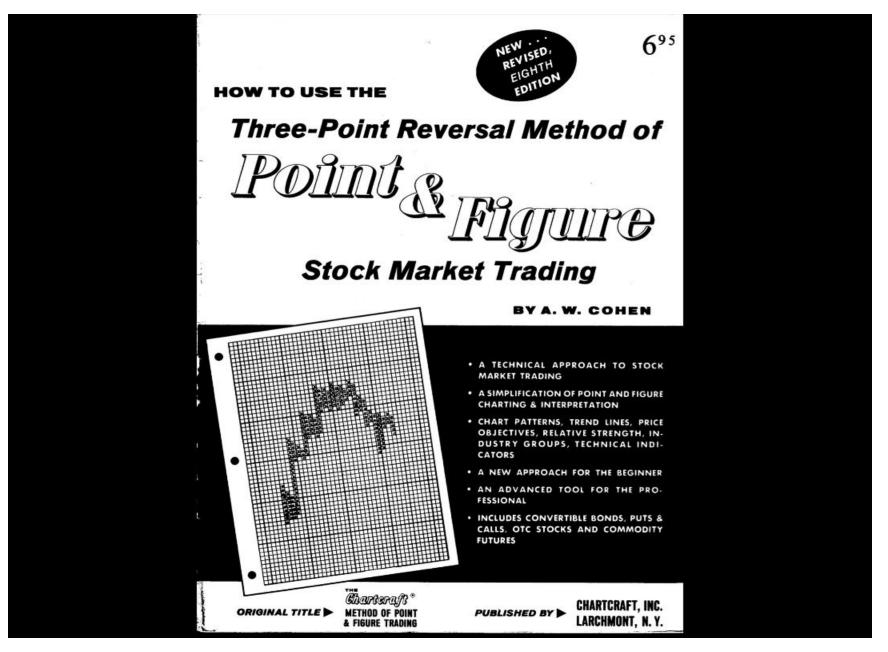
Should I lighten up my portfolio or go all in?



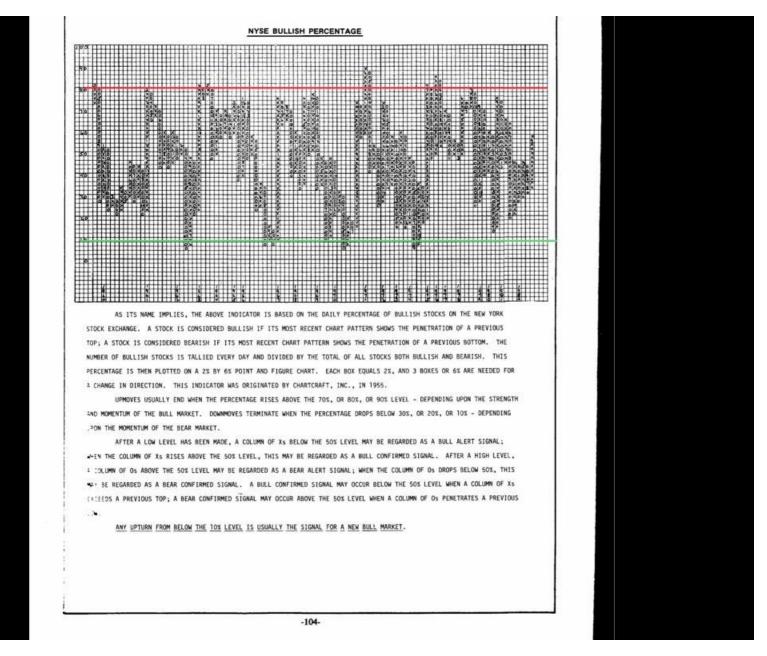
Automatic P&F pattern recognition scans can give us some data which can aid us in helping to answer this question! Image source: stockcharts.com



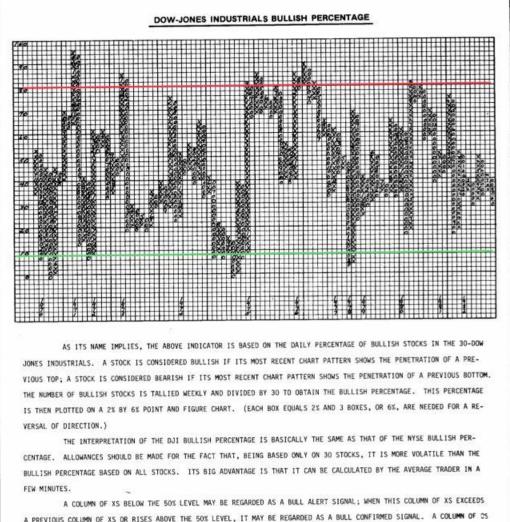
Info on the bullish percent index from "Chart School," an educational section on stockcharts.com (portion shown)



Old timers may remember these Chartcraft books. Let's look at what Cohen says to get an idea about where to set our high- and low-values for possible bullish percent decision points.



For the NYSE, reasonable levels look like 10 for a really low bullish percent and 80 for a really high one. Image source: Cohen (1984), p. 104 (emphasis added).

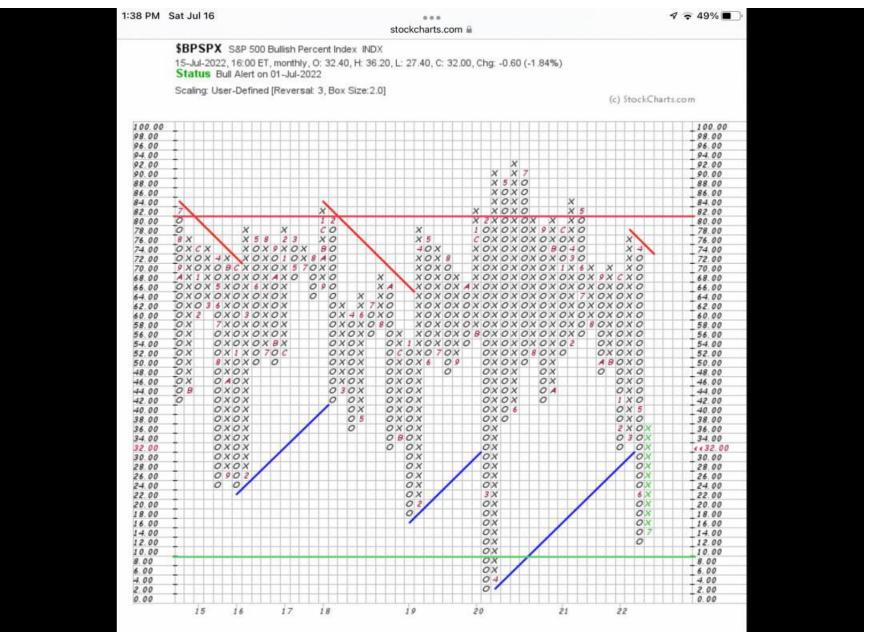


A PREVIOUS COLUMN OF XS OR RISES ABOVE THE 50% LEVEL, IT MAY BE REGARDED AS A BULL CONFIRMED SIGNAL. A COLUMN OF CS
ABOVE THE 50% LEVEL MAY BE REGARDED AS A BEAR ALERT SIGNAL; WHEN THIS COLUMN OF OS PENETRATES A PREVIOUS COLUMN OF
OS OR DECLINES BELOW THE 50% LEVEL, IT MAY BE REGARDED AS A BEAR CONFIRMED SIGNAL.

A BEAR MARKET BOTTOM USUALLY FINDS THE DJI BULLISH PERCENTAGE BELOW 10%. A BULL MARKET TOP USUALLY FINDS
THE DJI BULLISH PERCENTAGE ABOVE 70%.

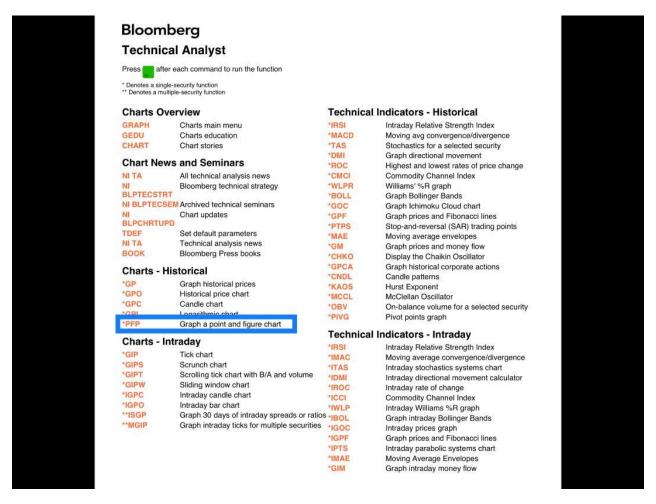
-105-

Similarly for the Dow, 10 and 80 look like reasonable values. Image source: Cohen (1984), p. 105 (emphasis added).

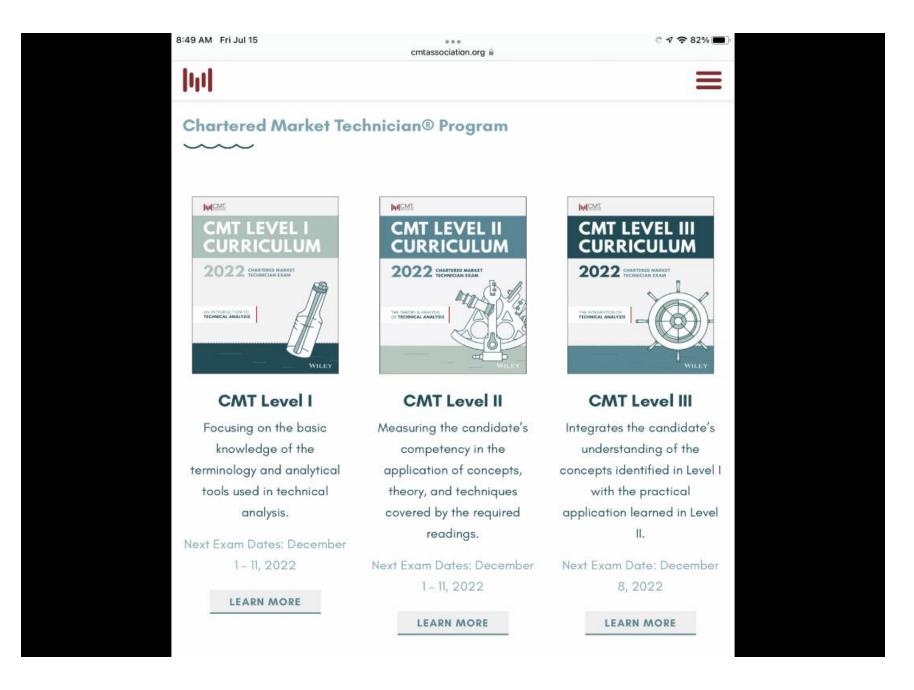


I drew in the horizontal lines at 10 & 80 on the Bullish Percent Index based upon our previous analysis. In retrospect, the beginning of 2020 would have been a great time to buy the market. Image source: Stockcharts.com (emphasis added)

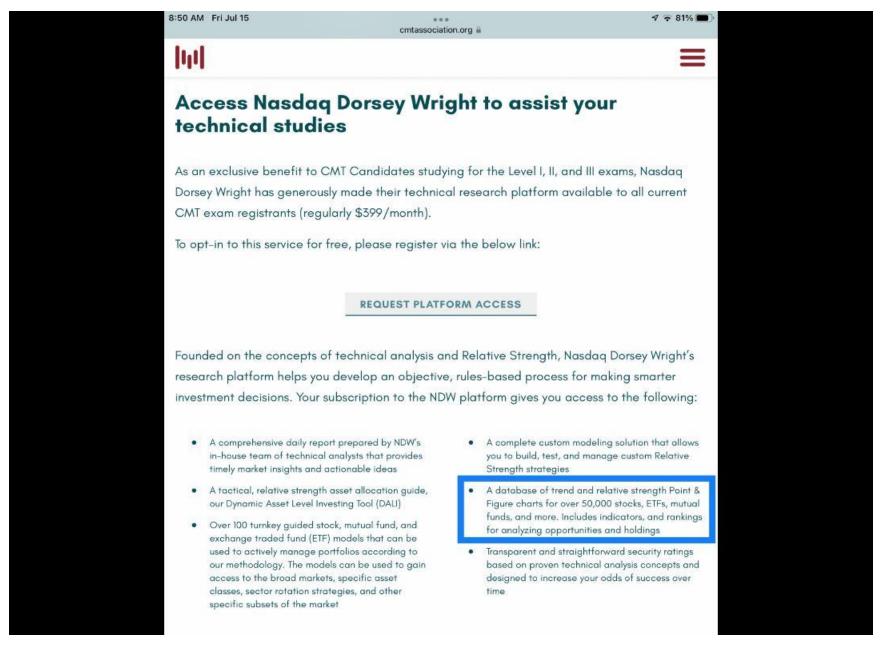
This is interesting, but isn't this all old school?



Although P&F charts are available on the Bloomberg Terminal, I prefer using them on StockCharts.com Image source: Bloomberg (emphasis added)



A mastery of point and figure charts is still required for the Chartered Market Technician credential.



Nasdaq Dorsey Wright provides subscription point and figure support for aspiring CMT candidates.

Image source: cmtassociation.org (emphasis added)



DORSEY WRIGHT FOCUS FIVE INDEX DWANQFF

INDEX DESCRIPTION

The Dorsey Wright Focus Five Index is designed to track the performance of five sector- and industry-based exchange-traded funds from the First Trust Portfolios product line that demonstrate powerful Relative Strength characteristics.

SECURITY ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Eligibility criteria

A security must be an Exchange-Traded Fund (ETF) sponsored by First Trust Portfolios that is designed to target a specific sector or industry group or that has a significant overweight toward a particular sector or industry group. Security eligibility is determined at the sole discretion of Nasdaq Dorsey Wright (NDW), the Index Provider.

P&F charting is still being used to create some Nasdaq indices. Image source: Nasdaq

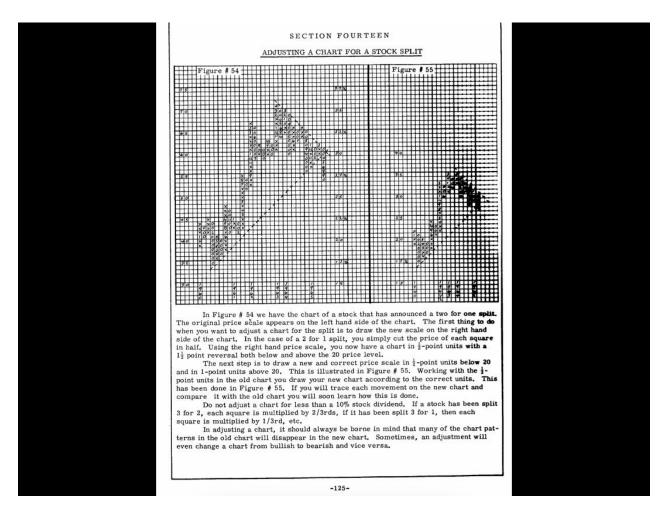


DORSEY WRIGHT TECHNICAL LEADERS INDEX FAMILY METHODOLOGY

July 2021

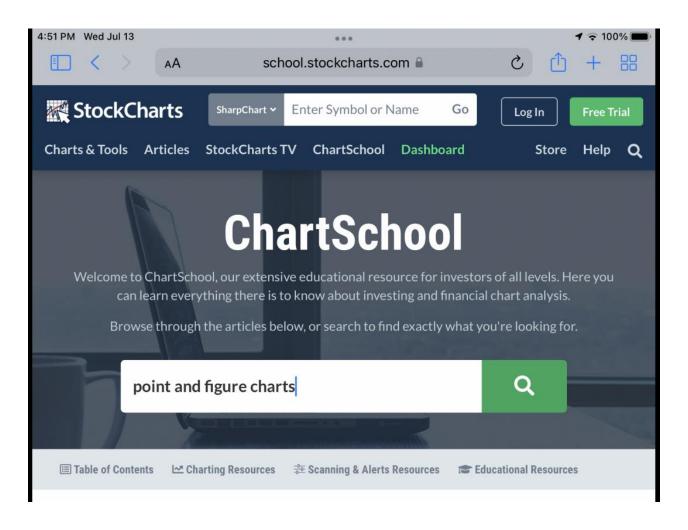
Learn more about how select Nasdaq indices use P&F techniques! Image source: Nasdaq

How do I adjust my chart for a stock split?

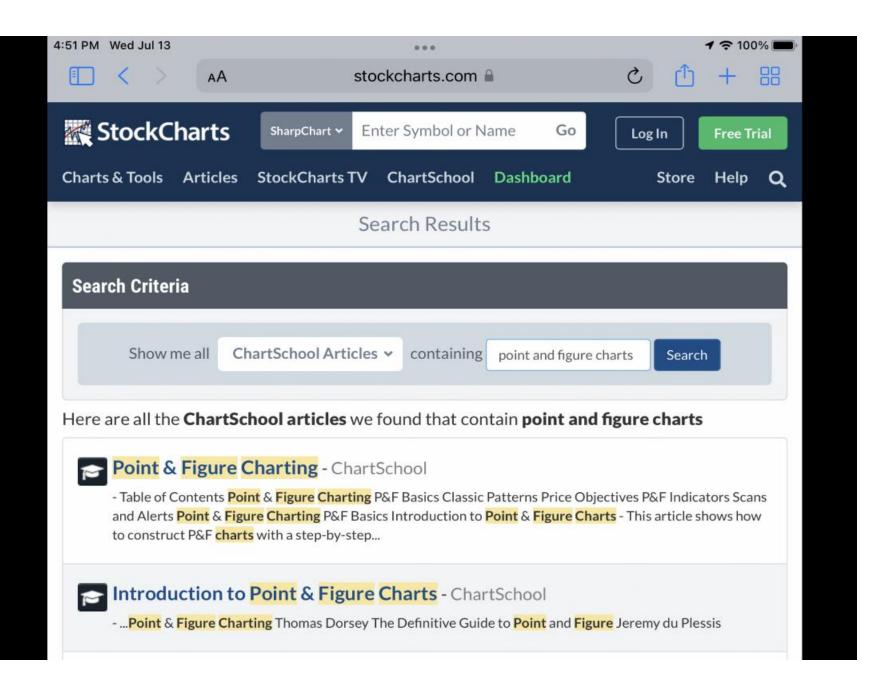


Today's software does this automatically. It was a real pain in the butt to do this when we used graph paper to draw in our X's and O's manually! Image source: Cohen (1984), p. 125

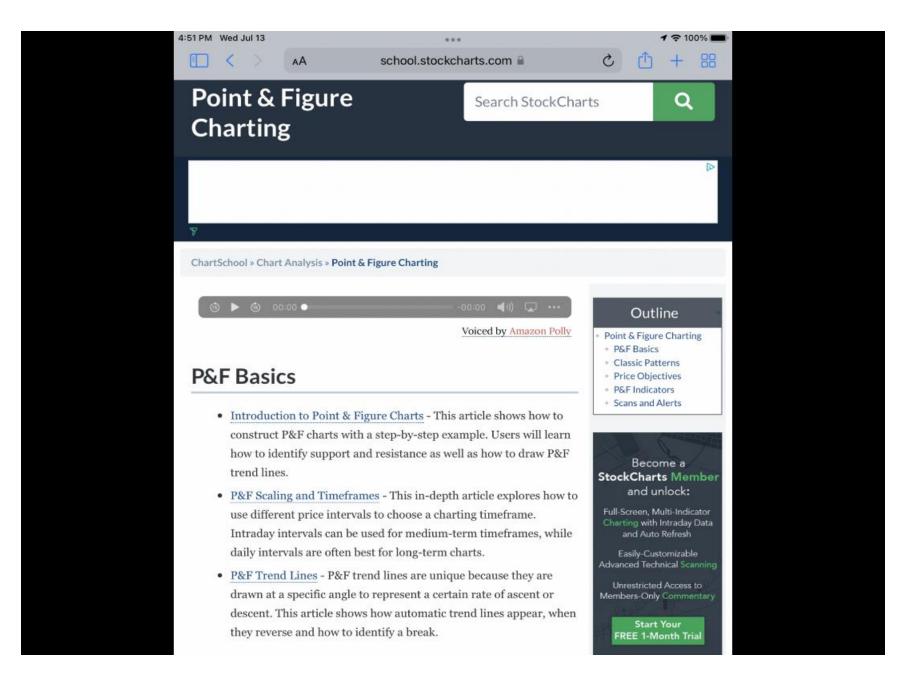
What additional resources are available?



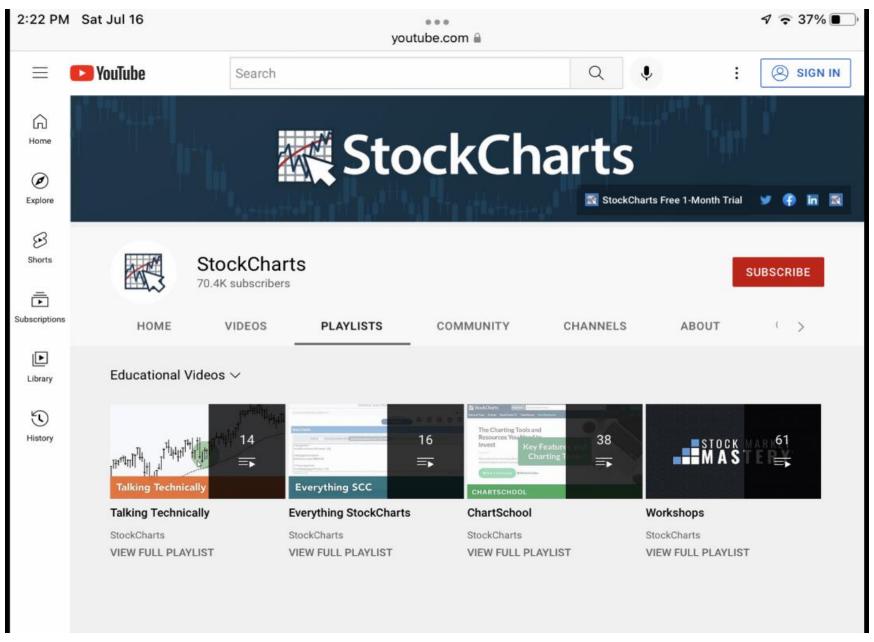
A great place to get info is from ChartSchool on StockCharts.com



You'll notice that I can read this stuff without being logged in!

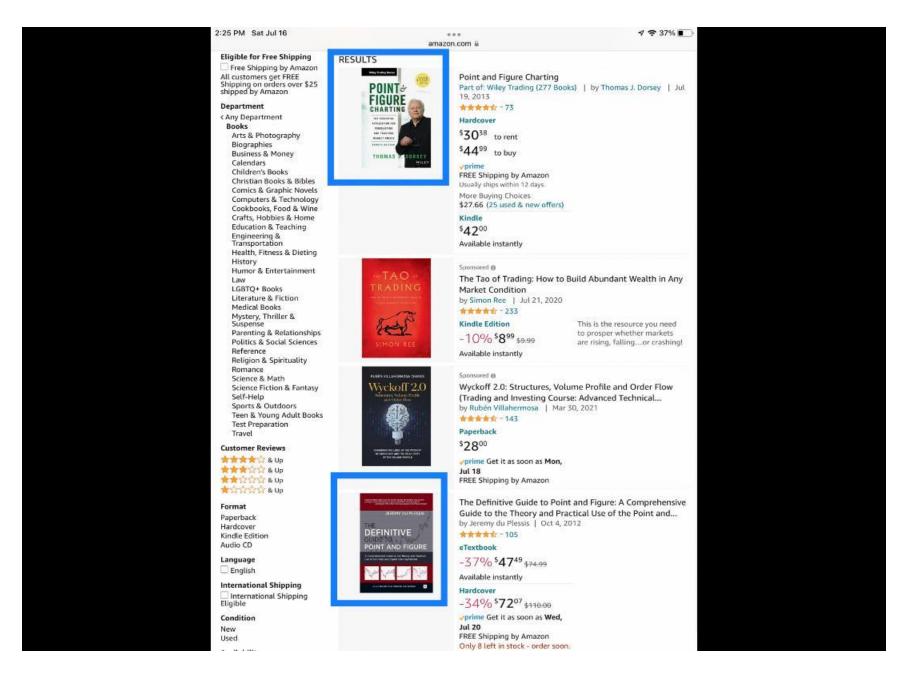


In fact, ChartSchool has info on just about any technical analysis topic you can think of related to trading and investing.



StockCharts also has a YouTube channel with includes several videos related to point and figure charting.

Image source: YouTube



Books by Dorsey and du Plessis are also worth reading for those who really want to understand P&F charting.

Image source: amazon.com [Downloaded 7/16/22] (emphasis added)

Questions?



Image source: University of Delaware