FREE EBOOK

The Trading Process Reading List

A hundred years of ideas behind a decade of public calls

Ivan Labrie · 7/23/26

Why this list exists

Every week someone asks me what to read to learn trading, and every list I could point them to has the same problem: fifty titles, no order, no argument. Nobody reads fifty books. What you actually need is the lineage: which ideas came first, which evidence backs them, and which order gets you from zero to a working process.

I've been publishing timestamped calls on TradingView for about ten years. The method behind them wasn't invented by me from scratch. It sits on a hundred years of traders and about forty years of academic evidence, and once you see the chain, each book earns its place instead of being one more cover on a pile.

This is that chain, with my notes on what each piece is for. Read the core shelf in order. Go deeper by theme when a topic hooks you. Skip the rest without guilt.

The oldest idea: buy the breakout from the box

Start in 1923. Edwin Lefevre's *Reminiscences of a Stock Operator* is Jesse Livermore's thinking in novel form, and buried in the war stories is the concept everything else refines: pivotal points. Livermore waited for price to leave a zone where it had spent real time, and he got interested exactly where most people got bored.

Richard Donchian turned that instinct into rules in the 1950s and ran the first managed futures fund on them. Then Nicolas Darvas, a professional dancer trading by telegram while touring, wrote *How I Made $2,000,000 in the Stock Market* in 1960 and gave the idea its cleanest form: the box. A defined consolidation range, a breakout entry, a stop under the box, add on success. Sixty-five years later the box is still the skeleton of structural trading: a range the market built, an entry where it leaves, a stop where the structure fails.

William O'Neil industrialized base-and-breakout patterns for stocks in the 1980s. And then Richard Dennis and William Eckhardt settled the most important argument in this whole literature: whether trading can be taught at all. Dennis bet that it could, recruited people with no experience, gave them mechanical breakout rules with fractional risk sizing, and the Turtles made fortunes. Curtis Faith's *Way of the Turtle* is the inside account. If you take one thing from this section, take that: a sound process is teachable. Talent is mostly the discipline to run it.

The evidence: this isn't folklore

For decades all of the above was practitioner lore. Then the academics checked. Moskowitz, Ooi and Pedersen published "Time Series Momentum" in 2012 and found persistent trend profits across dozens of futures markets. Hurst, Ooi and Pedersen followed with "A Century of Evidence on Trend-Following Investing," extending the result back to 1880, across every asset class they could get data for.

Why this matters to you practically: any single market gives you too few independent trades to prove much on your own. When your method belongs to a family with a century of documented results across everything from grains to currencies, you are not resting your confidence on your own small sample. That is what lets you keep executing through a losing stretch without abandoning the process, which is where most traders actually fail.

Timeframes are traders, not chart settings

Here is the least intuitive idea on this list, and the one that changes how you read charts fastest. It comes from James Dalton's *Markets in Profile*: a timeframe is not a setting on your chart. It is a distinct group of traders, with its own views, its own size, and its own horizon for acting. The scalper, the swing trader, and the institution rebalancing once a quarter are different populations of money, and price is the auction where they meet.

Once you see it that way, the daily, weekly and monthly charts stop being three opinions you must force into agreement. They are different groups of participants showing their hand, and they are allowed to disagree, because they are different people. A daily turn against a heavy monthly is not a contradiction to resolve. It is shorter-horizon money moving first, and it tells you what kind of trade is on offer: an early, asymmetric one rather than a confirmed one. The question that makes confusing charts legible is always the same: which group of participants is in control of this auction right now, and which one is about to act.

Risk: the part that keeps you alive

Position sizing has a first-principles answer, and it starts with a Bell Labs paper from 1956. Kelly showed there is a mathematically optimal fraction of your capital to risk given your edge. Every serious practitioner since, starting with Ed Thorp, has traded well below that optimum, because the penalty for overestimating your edge is ruin and the penalty for underestimating it is merely slower growth. That asymmetry is why professionals risk a small fixed fraction per trade and size positions by volatility, so a loss is a data point and never an event.

Van Tharp's *Trade Your Way to Financial Freedom* is the practitioner version of this whole section, and the one book here I'd call mandatory before risking real money.

Regime: when not to play

Some market states should not be traded at all. Meb Faber's 2007 paper showed that even a crude trend filter, applied patiently, cuts the catastrophic left tail out of long-term results. The deeper literature on regime switching says the same thing in harder math: markets move between states, and a strategy tuned for one state bleeds in another.

The practical discipline is one-sided participation. Classify the regime, trade with it, and sit out entirely when you can't classify it or when it is hostile to your method. Whole categories of losing trades disappear this way. Knowing when not to trade is not a personality trait. It is an output of the process.

The discretionary school: judgment on top of structure

Everything above can sound mechanical. The best traders I know, and the tradition I actually come from, layer judgment on top of structure. George Soros's *The Alchemy of Finance* is the founding text: position first with defined risk, then let incoming data prove or disprove the thesis piece by piece. Invest, then investigate. It is the opposite of predicting once and defending the call forever, which is the single most expensive habit in markets.

This school is where I live. The structural framework I read charts with is Tim West's Time@Mode, where time spent at a price defines the levels that matter, and judgment built over years does the rest. Tim has traded it that way for decades, and so have I.

Jack Schwager's *Market Wizards* interviews are the best survey of how differently great traders operate while agreeing on the same fundamentals: defined risk, process over prediction, and ruthless honesty about being wrong. Mark Douglas's *Trading in the Zone* and Annie Duke's *Thinking in Bets* cover the mental side properly: judging your decisions separately from your outcomes, which is the only way to review a losing trade and learn something true from it.

The core shelf, in reading order

1. **Lefevre, *Reminiscences of a Stock Operator* (1923).** The origin. Public domain, and linked free below.
2. **Darvas, *How I Made $2,000,000 in the Stock Market* (1960).** The box: structure, entry, stop, add.
3. **Faith, *Way of the Turtle* (2007).** Proof the process is teachable.
4. **Schwager, *Market Wizards* (1989).** The range of what works, and what all of it shares.

5. **Tharp, *Trade Your Way to Financial Freedom* (2007).** Expectancy and sizing. Mandatory.
6. **Douglas, *Trading in the Zone* (2000).** Consistency as a skill you build, not a mood you find.
7. **Duke, *Thinking in Bets* (2018).** Decisions versus outcomes.
8. **Dalton, *Markets in Profile* (2007).** Timeframes are groups of traders, and price is the auction where they meet.
9. **Soros, *The Alchemy of Finance* (1987).** Dense, and worth it. Skim the theory chapters, study the real-time experiment.

Going deeper, by theme

- **Breakouts and boxes:** Livermore, *How to Trade in Stocks* (1940); O'Neil, *How to Make Money in Stocks* (1988); Dennis and Eckhardt's original Turtle rules, free online; Covel, *The Complete TurtleTrader* (2007).
- **Trend and momentum, the evidence:** Moskowitz, Ooi and Pedersen, "Time Series Momentum" (2012); Hurst, Ooi and Pedersen, "A Century of Evidence on Trend-Following Investing" (2017); Levine and Pedersen, "Which Trend Is Your Friend?" (2016); Covel, *Trend Following* (5th ed., 2017). The papers are free on SSRN.
- **Auction theory and market profile:** Dalton, Jones and Dalton, *Mind Over Markets* (1990); Dalton, *Markets in Profile* (2007).
- **Position sizing:** Kelly's 1956 paper; MacLean, Thorp and Ziemba, *The Kelly Capital Growth Investment Criterion* (2011); Thorp, *A Man for All Markets* (2017); Elder, *Trading for a Living* (1993).
- **Regime and tactical:** Faber, "A Quantitative Approach to Tactical Asset Allocation" (2007); Antonacci, *Dual Momentum Investing* (2014); Ilmanen, *Expected Returns* (2011).
- **More interviews:** Schwager, *Hedge Fund Market Wizards* (2012).

Where I fit in this, and what I offer

I trade the discretionary school on top of the structural one: Time@Mode structure, graded setups, fixed-fractional risk, and a public, timestamped record of the calls on TradingView going back about a decade. These are the books I actually hand people when they ask, because they are the ones that held up after a decade of trading for real.

If you want to see the process live rather than in books:

- **Free:** my Substack carries the weekly briefs and receipts, and my TradingView profile carries the timestamped record and free indicators. Start there.
- **Laboratory Notes ($29/mo)** and **Laboratory ($89/mo):** the Discord tiers, from

market notes up to real-time levels and the live desks. Crypto accepted.
- **The Trading Process Course:** a 40-hour 1-on-1 program where I teach you this entire process end to end, on your markets and your real trades, until you run it without me. Application only, because I take few students and only those I can actually move.

Everything links from ivanlabrie.netlify.app. If you read the core shelf and work through it honestly, you will be ahead of most people trading today. If you want it installed faster and checked by someone who lives it, you know where to find me.

Not financial advice, just the desk read. Ivan Labrie · client desk note.