

The Stock Market Game™



Sticky Tickers (Which Coca-Cola is the Real Thing?)

One of the most frequent questions SMG teachers ask in The SMG Program is how to help students identify the correct Ticker Symbols for the companies whose stocks the students wish to purchase.

Ticker Symbols are the 1-5 letter symbols used by the investment industry to identify companies being traded on the three major exchanges, as well as mutual funds, options, etc. In the SMG, only common and preferred stocks on the three major exchanges, NYSE, AMEX, and NASDAQ, can be traded (along with select Mutual Funds), so it is important to develop an easy way for the students to locate the appropriate tickers. If they enter a ticker the SMG won't allow, they will see an error message on their screen, but may become confused.

In print material, newspapers frequently list only "newspaper abbreviations" of stocks. These are phonetically-friendly abbreviations that enable most readers to figure out the name of the company as they review yesterday's trading activity. The Wall Street Journal lists both the Ticker Symbol and the newspaper abbreviation. The WSJ would serve as a good cross-reference for classrooms receiving our purchasing newspapers as part of The SMG Program.

The bigger problem is that many parent companies have multiple listings, creating a dilemma for students as they try to figure out which symbol is the stock in which they want to invest. ***The question becomes, "Which Coca-Cola is the Real Thing?"***

Within the SMG portfolio, there are a variety of places to look up the ticker symbols, including *Investor Research* and the "Ticker Lookup" feature on the *Enter a Trade* page of the portfolios. The "Help" screens available from those portfolio pages will help the students learn how to maneuver around in their ticker lookup and stock research.

In addition to research directly through the portfolio, a very effective way to find the correct ticker symbol is to use the NASDAQ site, accessible from the "Outside Links" icon on the SMG portfolio's team Welcome screen or at <http://www.nasdaq.com>. The Nasdaq site is very good for researching any stock, regardless of the exchange on which it is listed.

The following page can be copied and distributed to students, so they can learn how to identify the correct ticker symbol for the stock in which they wish to invest.

Walk through the following exercise to learn how to tell “which Coca-Cola is the real thing”:

- From the team’s Welcome Screen, click the link at the bottom of the page, “Outside Links”. From there, click on the Nasdaq Stock Market link – or simply open a second copy of the browser and go directly to: <http://www.nasdaq.com> .
- On the Nasdaq home page, click the link *Symbol Look-up* just below the grid where “Get Up To 10 Quotes” appears.
- On the next screen, below the section called “Symbol Look-Up,” type “Coca-Cola” in the box provided, then press “Go.”
- **HINT:** Sometimes a slightly different spelling of a company name will yield entirely different results. Typing “Coca Cola” without the hyphen will not get to the company that produces the beverage we drink!
- The next screen shows several possible symbols for the various Coca-Cola companies, but notice that only two of them are common stock, and are traded on the NYSE – both are criteria for the SMG. None of the options are listed on the Nasdaq or Amex – the only other exchanges available in The SMG.
- Write down the two possible tickers—KO and CCE. Close that screen.
- Into the blue “Get Up to 10 Quotes” box, type each of those symbols in a different box, then press “Summary Quote”.
- The next screen lists a lot of market information about one of the tickers entered into a blue box. Change to the other ticker by selecting the drop-down box in the middle of the top line under the words “Summary Quote” and clicking on the other ticker.
- Look at the Share Volume of each stock. Since Coca-Cola is a very popular company, it will probably have higher Share Volume – the greater activity. This would indeed be the real thing!
- **HINT:** The Nasdaq site often provides links to the company’s homepage through the company name. If so, visit that company’s homepage to learn more, and to confirm that the correct ticker has been identified.

Teacher: There are some cases where the differences in trading volumes are slight, making the choice less obvious, so the students may need to perform further research on each of the stocks. The “Summary Quote” choice not only gives numerical values and data, but offers Company News to help the students learn more about the company represented by the ticker. Your students will find options for charts and company financials from the “Summary Quote” drop-down box.