

Financial Mathematics

MATH 5870/6870¹
Fall 2021

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Last updated on
September 2, 2021

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¹Based on Robert L. McDonald's *Derivatives Markets*, 3rd Ed, Pearson, 2013.

Chapter 11. Binomial Option Pricing: Selected Topics

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§ 11.1 Understanding Early Exercise

§ 11.2 Understanding risk-neutral pricing

§ 11.3 The Binomial tree and lognormality

§ 11.4 Problems

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Options may be rationally exercised prior to expiration

By exercising, the option holder

- ▶ Receives the stock and thus receives dividends
- ▶ Pays the strike price prior to expiration (this has an interest cost)
- ▶ Loses the insurance implicit in the call against the possibility that the stock price will be less than the strike price at expiration

If **volatility is zero**, the value of insurance is zero. Then, it is optimal to defer exercise as long as interest savings on the strike exceed dividends lost

$$rK > \delta S$$



$$\text{It is optimal to exercise} \iff S > \frac{rK}{\delta}$$

E.g. When $r = \delta$ and $\sigma = 0$, any in-the-money option should be exercised immediately.

When **volatility is positive**, the implicit insurance has value that varies with time to expiration.

FIGURE 11.1

Early-exercise boundaries for volatilities of 10%, 30%, and 50% for a 5-year American call option. In all cases, $K = \$100$, $r = 5\%$, and $\delta = 5\%$.

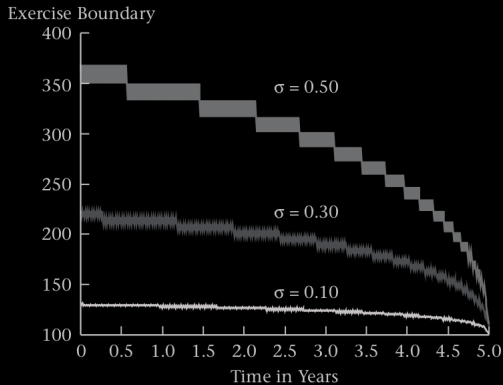
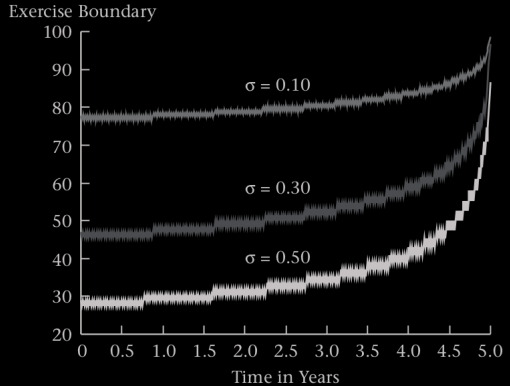


FIGURE 11.2

Early-exercise boundaries for volatilities of 10%, 30%, and 50% for a 5-year American put option. In all cases, $K = \$100$, $r = 5\%$, and $\delta = 5\%$.



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Risk-Neutral Probability

Recall the binomial option pricing formula:

$$C = \Delta S + B = e^{-rh} \left[p^* C_u + (1 - p^*) C_d \right]$$

$$p^* = \frac{e^{(r-\delta)h} - d}{u - d} \quad \sim \quad \text{risk-neutral probability that the stock will go up}$$

$$p^* = \frac{e^{(r-\delta)h} - d}{u - d} \quad \Longleftrightarrow \quad p^* u S e^{\delta h} + (1 - p^*) d S e^{\delta h} = e^{rh} S$$

Two offers:

- (a) \$1000 cash
- (b) \$2000 or \$0 cash with probability $1/2$ for each

Both offers have the same expected return,
while (b) bears risk and (a) does not.

A risk-averse investor prefers (a).

A risk-neutral investor is indifferent between a sure thing and a risky bet with an expected payoff equal to the value of the sure thing. Hence, he/she prefers equally to (a) and (b).

The option pricing formula can be said to price options
as if investors are risk-neutral

Note that we are not assuming that investors are actually risk-neutral, and that risky assets are actually expected to earn the risk-free rate of return.

Pricing an option using real probability

- ▶ Suppose that the continuously compounded expected return on the stock is α and that the stock does not pay dividends.
- ▶ If p is the true probability of the stock going up, p must be consistent with u , d and α

$$puS + (1 - p)dS = e^{\alpha h}S$$

- ▶ Solving for p gives us

$$p = \frac{e^{\alpha h} - d}{u - d}$$

- ▶ For p to be a probability, we have to have $u \geq e^{\alpha h} \geq d$.
- ▶ Using this p , the actual expected payoff to the option one period is

$$pC_u + (1 - p)C_d = \frac{e^{\alpha h} - d}{u - d}C_u + \frac{u - e^{\alpha h}}{u - d}C_d.$$

At what rate do we discount this expected payoff?

$$pC_u + (1 - p)C_d = \frac{e^{\alpha h} - d}{u - d}C_u + \frac{u - e^{\alpha h}}{u - d}C_d$$

It is not correct to discount the option at the expected return on the stock, α , because the option is equivalent to a leveraged investment in the stock and hence is riskier than the stock

At what rate do we discount this expected payoff?

$$pC_u + (1 - p)C_d = \frac{e^{\alpha h} - d}{u - d} C_u + \frac{u - e^{\alpha h}}{u - d} C_d$$

- ▶ Denote the appropriate per-period discount rate for the option as γ
- ▶ Since an option is equivalent to holding a portfolio consisting of Δ shares of stock and B bonds, the expected return on this portfolio is

$$e^{\gamma h} = \frac{S\Delta}{S\Delta + B} e^{\alpha h} + \frac{B}{S\Delta + B} e^{rh}$$

- ▶ Hence, the discounted at this appropriate discount rate, the price for the option should be

$$C = e^{-\gamma h} \left[\frac{e^{\alpha h} - d}{u - d} C_u + \frac{u - e^{\alpha h}}{u - d} C_d \right]$$

- ▶ By setting $\alpha = r$, one obtains the simplest pricing procedure.
- ▶ This gives an alternative way to compute the option price, instead of $\Delta S + B$.

One can use either

$$C = \Delta S + B$$

or

$$C = e^{-\gamma h} \left[\frac{e^{\alpha h} - d}{u - d} C_u + \frac{u - e^{\alpha h}}{u - d} C_d \right]$$

to compute the option price

- **First equation** is more efficient
- For the **second one**, in order to compute γ , one needs to compute Δ and B first and then obtains γ via

$$e^{\gamma h} = \frac{S\Delta}{S\Delta + B} e^{\alpha h} + \frac{B}{S\Delta + B} e^{rh}$$

Interested students should check out two examples on p. 328 – 330 using the second formula.

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The usefulness of the binomial pricing model hinges on
the binomial tree providing
a reasonable representation of
the stock price distribution

The binomial tree approximates a lognormal distribution

Random Walk

- Let Y_i be a sequence of i.i.d. random variables, each following

$$Y_i = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{with probability } 1/2 \\ -1 & \text{with probability } 1/2 \end{cases}$$

- Random walk Z_n is defined to be

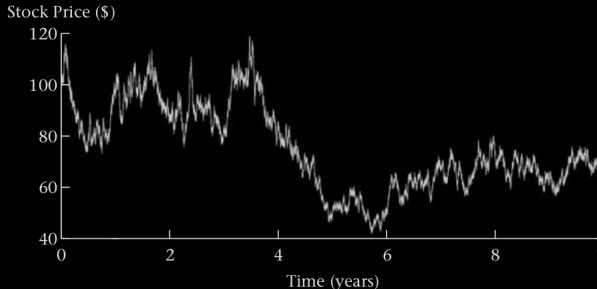
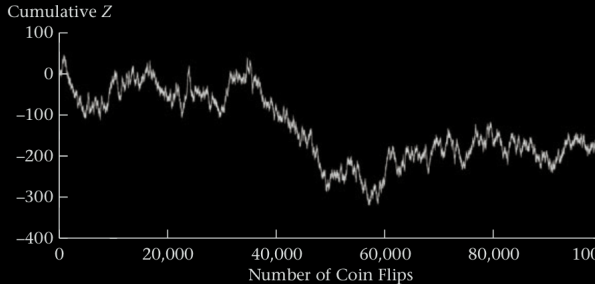
$$Z_n = \sum_{i=1}^n Y_i.$$

- From the walk Z_n , one can also retrieve the values of Y_n

$$Y_n = Z_n - Z_{n-1}$$

FIGURE 11.5

In the top panel is an illustration of a random walk, where the counter, Z , increases by 1 when a fair coin flip comes up heads, and decreases by 1 with tails. In the bottom panel is a particular path through a 10,000-step binomial tree, where the up and down moves are the same as in the top panel. Assumes $S_0 = \$100$, $r = 6\%$, $\sigma = 30\%$, $T = 10$ years, and $h = 0.0001$.



Modelling Stock prices as a random walk

The idea that asset prices should follow a random walk was articulated in Samuelson (1965)

In efficient markets, an asset price should reflect all available information. In response to new information the price is equally likely to move up or down, as with the coin flip.

The price after a period of time is the initial price plus the cumulative up and down movements due to informational surprises

Modelling Stock prices as a random walk

– Issues and Binomial Model

If by chance we get enough cumulative down movements, the stock price will become negative

The stock, on average, should have a positive return. The random walk model taken literally does not permit this

The magnitude of the move (\$1) should depend upon how quickly the coin flips occur and the level of the stock price

The **binomial model** is a variant of the random walk model that solves all of these problems at once:

$$S_{t+h} = S_t e^{(r-\delta)h \pm \sigma h},$$

which says, instead of the prices jumping like a random walk, the compound rate follows a random walk.

Lognormality of the binomial model

The binomial tree approximates a lognormal distribution, which is commonly used to model stock prices

The lognormal distribution is the probability distribution that arises from the assumption that continuously compounded returns on the stock are normally distributed

With the lognormal distribution, the stock price is positive, and the distribution is skewed to the right, that is, there is a chance that extremely high stock prices will occur

FIGURE 11.6

Construction of a binomial tree depicting stock price paths, along with risk-neutral probabilities of reaching the various terminal prices.

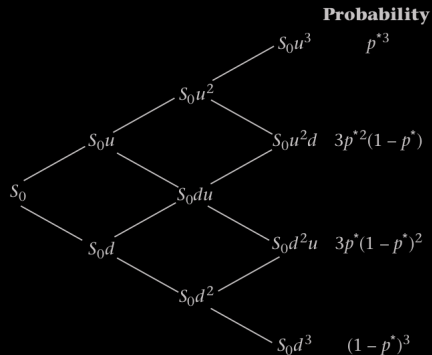
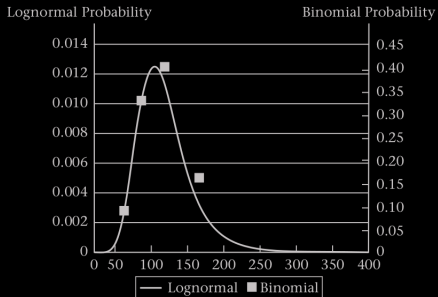
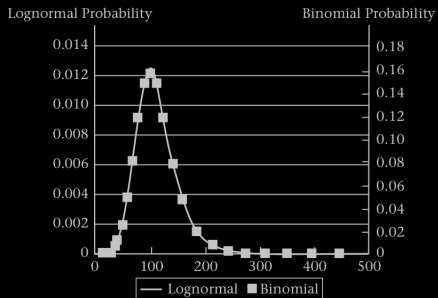


FIGURE 11.7

Comparison of lognormal distribution with three-period binomial approximation.

**FIGURE 11.8**

Comparison of lognormal distribution with 25-period binomial approximation.



Alternative Binomial trees

Binomial
Tree

$$u = e^{(r-\delta)h + \sigma\sqrt{h}}$$

$$d = e^{(r-\delta)h - \sigma\sqrt{h}}$$

Cox-Ross-Rubinstein
binomial tree

$$u = e^{+\sigma\sqrt{h}}$$

$$d = e^{-\sigma\sqrt{h}}$$

Lognormal
tree

$$u = e^{(r-\delta-0.5\delta^2)h + \sigma\sqrt{h}}$$

$$d = e^{(r-\delta-0.5\delta^2)h - \sigma\sqrt{h}}$$

-
- Even though the values of u and d are different, the ratio, which measures volatility, remains the same:

$$u/d = e^{2\sigma\sqrt{h}}.$$

- Once u and d are determined, the rest computations for option price remain the same.
- All three methods of constructing a binomial tree yield different option prices for finite n , but they approach the same price as $n \rightarrow \infty$.

Is the Binomial model realistic?

The binomial model is a form of the random walk model, adapted to modeling stock prices. The lognormal random walk model in this section assumes among other things, that

Volatility is constant

“Large” stock price movements do not occur

Returns are independent over time

All of these assumptions appear to be violated in the data

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Problems: 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.4, 11.5, 11.6, 11.17, 11.18,

Due Date: TBA