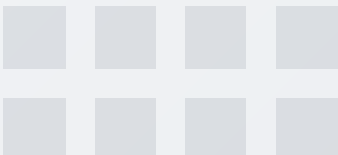


# Trend and Range Trading Strategies

*A Comprehensive Technical Analysis Guide*

Research Report

February 2026



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# 1. Introduction

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Technical analysis provides traders with systematic approaches to identify and capitalize on market opportunities. Among the most widely practiced methodologies are trend-trading and range-trading strategies. This report presents a comprehensive analysis of proven strategies within each category, drawing from established trading literature, academic research, and professional trading practices.

The fundamental principle underlying trend trading is the observation that markets tend to move in persistent directional movements rather than random walks. As noted by Investopedia, "The trend is your friend" remains one of the most enduring pieces of market wisdom<sup>[1]</sup>. Studies have documented that trend-following can produce positive returns across decades, with longer-term movements following directional patterns far beyond what random chance would allow.

Conversely, range trading operates on the principle of mean reversion—the tendency of prices to return to average levels after extreme moves. This approach capitalizes on the observation that markets spend significant time in consolidation phases, oscillating between established support and resistance levels<sup>[2]</sup>.

This report examines three proven strategies for each trading style, provides evidence from real sources, and offers recommendations based on simplicity, historical effectiveness, and robustness to market conditions.

## 2. Trend-Trading Strategies

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Trend trading seeks to capitalize on directional momentum without attempting to predict precise peaks and valleys. The following three strategies represent the most widely recognized and backtested approaches in professional trading.

### 2.1 Moving Average Crossover Strategy

#### Strategy Overview

The Moving Average Crossover strategy uses two moving averages of different periods to identify trend changes. When a shorter-term moving average crosses above a longer-term average, it signals potential upward momentum; conversely, a cross below signals potential downward momentum.

#### How It Works

The strategy employs two exponential moving averages (EMAs):

- **Fast MA:** Typically 20-period or 50-period EMA
- **Slow MA:** Typically 50-period or 200-period EMA

#### Entry Rules:

- **Long:** When the fast MA crosses above the slow MA, enter on the first pullback that holds above the fast MA
- **Short:** When the fast MA crosses below the slow MA, enter on the first rally that fails at the fast MA

#### Exit Rules:

- **Stop-Loss:** Below the recent swing low for longs, above the recent swing high for shorts
- **Target:** 2:1 risk-reward minimum, or trail with the fast MA

Evidence and Examples

According to research published on Day Trading Toolkit, a real example from early 2024 demonstrated this strategy's effectiveness with Apple (AAPL). The 20-period MA crossed above the 50-period MA on the daily chart at approximately \$175. Traders entering on the first pullback to \$177 (which held the 20-period MA) saw the stock rally to \$195 over the following weeks. With a stop at \$173, this represented a \$4 risk for an \$18 gain—a 4.5:1 reward-to-risk ratio<sup>[3]</sup>.

Rayner Teo from Trading with Rayner conducted extensive backtests on the 50/200 MA crossover across S&P 500, EUR/JPY, and US T-Bond markets from 2000-2018, using a 3 ATR trailing stop-loss and 1% risk per trade. The results demonstrated that this simple systematic approach can outperform buy-and-hold strategies in certain market conditions<sup>[4]</sup>.

Market Conditions and Timeframes

Table 1 Moving Average Crossover Performance Characteristics

Condition	Performance	Best Timeframes
Strong trending markets	Excellent	Daily, Weekly
Choppy/sideways markets	Poor (whipsaws)	Avoid
Early trend detection	Moderate (lagging)	4-hour, Daily

## Pros and Cons

Table 2 Moving Average Crossover: Pros and Cons

Advantages	Disadvantages
Simple to understand and execute	Lagging indicator—signals come after trends start
Works across all timeframes	Generates false signals in ranging markets
Removes emotion from trend identification	Can give back profits at trend reversals
Easy to backtest	Risk of large losses in volatile markets

## 2.2 Donchian Channel (Turtle Trading) Strategy

### Strategy Overview

The Donchian Channel strategy, famously used by the Turtle Traders in the 1980s, is a breakout-based trend-following system developed by Richard Dennis and William Eckhardt. The experiment proved that trading could be taught systematically, with the Turtles reportedly earning over \$100 million collectively.

### How It Works

The strategy uses two complementary breakout systems:

#### System 1 (Shorter-Term):

- **Entry:** Buy when price breaks above the 20-day high; sell short when price breaks below the 20-day low
- **Filter:** Skip the trade if the prior breakout (within 20 days) was profitable
- **Exit:** Exit longs on break below 10-day low; exit shorts on break above 10-day high

#### System 2 (Longer-Term):

- **Entry:** Buy when price breaks above the 55-day high; sell short when price breaks below the 55-day low
- **Filter:** No skip rule—take every breakout
- **Exit:** Exit longs on break below 20-day low; exit shorts on break above 20-day high

**Position Sizing:** Risk 1% of account equity per trade, adjusted by N (20-day ATR). The formula is:  $\text{Units} = (1\% \text{ of Account}) / (N \times \text{Dollar Value per Point})^{[5]}$ .

## Evidence and Examples

The original Turtle Trading experiment remains one of the most documented cases of systematic trend-following success. According to Altrady's analysis, the Turtles traded across 20-30 markets including commodities, currencies, bonds, and metals, demonstrating the strategy's versatility across asset classes<sup>[6]</sup>.

Key risk management rules included:

- Maximum 4 units in a single market
- Maximum 10 units in closely correlated markets
- Maximum 12 units in one direction across all markets
- Account drawdown rule: If account drops 10%, cut position sizes by 20%

## Market Conditions and Timeframes

Table 3 Donchian Channel Performance Characteristics

Condition	Performance	Best Markets
Strong breakout trends	Excellent	Commodities, Forex, Indices
Low volatility consolidation	Poor (whipsaws)	Avoid or reduce size
Diversified portfolio	Optimal	Multiple uncorrelated assets

## Pros and Cons

Table 4 Donchian Channel: Pros and Cons

Advantages	Disadvantages
Captures large trending moves	Many breakouts fail (fakeouts)
Systematic—removes emotion	Requires patience for entries
Volatility-based position sizing	Can experience significant drawdowns
Works across all markets	Pyramiding adds complexity

## 2.3 ADX-Based Trend Strength Strategy

### Strategy Overview

The Average Directional Index (ADX) measures trend strength without indicating direction. Developed by J. Welles Wilder Jr., this strategy filters trades based on the presence of a strong trend, significantly improving win rates by avoiding choppy market conditions.

### How It Works

The ADX system consists of three components:

- **ADX Line:** Measures trend strength (0-100 scale)
- **+DI (Positive Directional Indicator):** Measures upward movement strength
- **-DI (Negative Directional Indicator):** Measures downward movement strength

### ADX Interpretation:

- ADX < 20: Weak trend or range-bound market
- ADX 20-25: Trend developing

- ADX 25-50: Strong trend
- ADX > 50: Very strong trend

#### Entry Rules (ADX + EMA Strategy):

- Configure EMA to 28-period lookback, ADX to 14-period
- For longs: Price above 28 EMA, ADX crosses above 25, enter on pullback to EMA
- For shorts: Price below 28 EMA, ADX crosses above 25, enter on rally to EMA

#### Exit Rules:

- Stop-loss: Just beyond the EMA or at nearby swing point
- Take-profit: When ADX falls below 25 or at predetermined support/resistance

### Evidence and Examples

According to FXOpen's analysis, combining ADX with other indicators creates a powerful trading system. When ADX is above 25 and rising, it confirms trend strength. The slope of ADX is equally important—a rising ADX suggests strengthening trend conditions, while a falling ADX signals weakening momentum<sup>[7]</sup>.

AvaTrade's research emphasizes that ADX combined with MACD provides comprehensive analysis: "A bullish MACD crossover during strong ADX conditions (>30) increases confidence in an uptrend. Likewise, a bearish MACD crossover alongside high ADX suggests a powerful downward move"<sup>[8]</sup>.

### Market Conditions and Timeframes

Table 5 ADX Strategy Performance Characteristics

ADX Reading	Market State	Strategy
Below 20	Range-bound	Avoid trend trades; use range strategies
20-25	Trend developing	Prepare for breakout
25-50	Strong trend	Execute trend-following trades
Above 50	Very strong trend	Trend may be extended; watch for reversal

## Pros and Cons

Table 6 ADX Strategy: Pros and Cons

Advantages	Disadvantages
Filters out weak trends and choppy markets	Does not indicate trend direction
Quantifies trend strength objectively	Lagging indicator
Works with any trend-following system	Can produce false signals in low volatility
Excellent for market regime detection	Requires confirmation from other indicators

## 2.4 Recommended Trend Strategy

### Recommendation: Moving Average Crossover with ADX Filter

The Moving Average Crossover strategy is recommended as the best overall trend-trading approach for the following reasons:

- **Simplicity:** Easy to understand and execute, making it accessible to traders at all levels
- **Historical Effectiveness:** Decades of documented performance across multiple markets and timeframes
- **Robustness:** When combined with ADX filtering, it effectively avoids choppy market conditions
- **Risk Management:** Clear entry and exit rules facilitate disciplined position sizing

**Optimal Configuration:** Use 50/200 EMA crossover with  $ADX > 25$  filter on daily timeframe, with 2-3 ATR trailing stop-loss.

## 3. Range-Trading Strategies

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Range trading capitalizes on the market's tendency to oscillate between established support and resistance levels. These strategies perform best in sideways, consolidating markets where trend-following approaches typically fail.

### 3.1 Bollinger Bands Mean Reversion Strategy

#### Strategy Overview

Bollinger Bands consist of a 20-period simple moving average with upper and lower bands set at two standard deviations. This strategy identifies overbought and oversold conditions, entering trades when price extends beyond these bands and reverts toward the mean.

#### How It Works

##### Indicator Configuration:

- **Middle Band:** 20-period SMA
- **Upper Band:**  $\text{SMA} + (2 \times \text{standard deviation})$
- **Lower Band:**  $\text{SMA} - (2 \times \text{standard deviation})$

##### Entry Rules (with RSI Confirmation):

- **Long:** Price touches or moves below lower Bollinger Band AND RSI below 30
- **Short:** Price touches or moves above upper Bollinger Band AND RSI above 70
- **Volume Confirmation:** At least 50% above average daily volume

##### Exit Rules:

- **Take-profit:** When price returns to the middle band (20 SMA)
- **Stop-loss:** 1.5-2.0 ATR from entry or beyond the outer band

## Evidence and Examples

According to LuxAlgo's analysis, combining Bollinger Bands with RSI provides dual confirmation of extreme price levels. "If the price touches or moves above the upper Bollinger Band (commonly set at two standard deviations), it could indicate the asset is overbought—especially if the RSI is above 70. On the flip side, if the price falls below the lower Bollinger Band, it might signal the asset is oversold, particularly when the RSI drops below 30"<sup>[9]</sup>.

A TradingView strategy script by Krishna Peri demonstrates the approach: "Long entries trigger when RSI reaches oversold levels AND at least one bullish candle closes inside the lower Bollinger Band. Short entries trigger when RSI reaches overbought levels AND at least one bearish candle closes inside the upper Bollinger Band"<sup>[10]</sup>.

## Market Conditions and Timeframes

Table 7 Bollinger Bands Strategy Performance Characteristics

Condition	Performance	Best Timeframes
Sideways/range-bound markets	Excellent	1-hour, 4-hour, Daily
Low volatility (Band Squeeze)	Good (pre-breakout)	All timeframes
Strong trending markets	Poor (trend continuation)	Avoid

## Pros and Cons

Table 8 Bollinger Bands Strategy: Pros and Cons

Advantages	Disadvantages
Statistically grounded (95% of price within bands)	Performs poorly in strong trends
Self-adjusting to volatility	Can give false signals during band expansion
Clear entry and exit levels	Requires confirmation indicators
High win rate in proper conditions	Limited profit potential (to mean only)

## 3.2 Stochastic Oscillator Range Strategy

### Strategy Overview

The Stochastic Oscillator compares a security's closing price to its price range over a specific period. In range-bound markets, it excels at identifying overbought and oversold conditions, generating reversal signals at range extremes.

### How It Works

#### Indicator Configuration:

- %K Line:  $(\text{Current Close} - \text{Lowest Low}) / (\text{Highest High} - \text{Lowest Low}) \times 100$
- %D Line: 3-period SMA of %K
- Standard settings: 14, 3, 3 (slower for ranging markets)

#### Entry Rules:

- **Long:** %K crosses above 20 (from oversold) near support level
- **Short:** %K crosses below 80 (from overbought) near resistance level

- **Confirmation:** Crossover of %K and %D lines in the direction of trade

#### Exit Rules:

- Take-profit: Opposite side of the range
- Stop-loss: Beyond the support/resistance level that triggered entry

### Evidence and Examples

According to Forex.com's analysis, "In a ranging market, the stochastic oscillator behaves differently, moving more predictably between the extremes. When RSI approaches 70 or 30 within a range, it can signal potential reversal points, especially if those levels align with horizontal support or resistance"<sup>[11]</sup>.

LuxAlgo's research emphasizes the importance of settings: "In ranging markets, faster settings such as 5,3,3 are more useful because they respond better to short-term price movements. This sensitivity helps traders pinpoint potential turning points more quickly without sacrificing reliability"<sup>[12]</sup>.

A volatility-based range trading strategy using Stochastic Oscillator was documented with the following parameters: "When the Stochastic Oscillator falls below the oversold level (20), the strategy opens a long position; when it breaks through the overbought level (80), it opens a short position. Stop loss and take profit levels are set based on 2 times the ATR, with risk per trade limited to 1% of account equity"<sup>[13]</sup>.

### Market Conditions and Timeframes

Table 9 Stochastic Strategy Performance Characteristics

Condition	Performance	Settings
Clear range with defined S/R	Excellent	5,3,3 (fast)
Wide, loose range	Moderate	14,3,3 (standard)
Trending market	Poor (overbought/oversold)	(stays Avoid or use for pullback entries only)

## Pros and Cons

**Table 10 Stochastic Strategy: Pros and Cons**

Advantages	Disadvantages
Simple to interpret (0-100 scale)	Generates false signals in strong trends
Effective in range-bound markets	Can remain in extreme territory during trends
Early warning of momentum shifts	Susceptible to whipsaws in choppy markets
Complements other indicators well	Lagging indicator based on historical data

## 3.3 False Breakout (Fade) Strategy

### Strategy Overview

The False Breakout strategy, also known as "fading" breakouts, involves trading against the initial price movement after a breakout attempt fails. This strategy capitalizes on market psychology and stop-loss hunting behavior by institutional players.

### How It Works

#### Identification Criteria:

- Price briefly breaks above resistance or below support
- Breakout occurs on low volume or weak momentum
- Price quickly reverses back into the range
- Reversal candlestick pattern forms (pin bar, engulfing, doji)

#### Entry Rules:

- **Long (Fade Breakdown):** Enter when price breaks below support then reverses back above with confirmation candle

- **Short (Fade Breakout):** Enter when price breaks above resistance then reverses back below with confirmation candle
- **Confirmation:** RSI divergence or momentum divergence at the false break extreme

#### Exit Rules:

- Take-profit: Opposite side of the range
- Stop-loss: Beyond the false breakout extreme

## Evidence and Examples

According to LuxAlgo's research on false breakout strategies, "False breakouts can trick traders into losses, but they can also be turned into profitable opportunities. Key validation tools include momentum reversal detection, volume analysis, and multi-timeframe confirmation"<sup>[14]</sup>.

Morpher's analysis provides a concrete example: "The fade strategy involves trading against the initial price movement after a breakout. For instance, when Bitcoin broke below \$27,347 support but quickly reversed with a doji candle and sub-40 RSI, this confirmed a bullish buying opportunity. Entry would be at \$27,347 with stop-loss near the false breakout low of \$26,000"<sup>[15]</sup>.

PriceAction.com emphasizes patience: "The best way to be sure you don't get caught in a false-breakout from a trading range is to simply wait for price to close outside of the range for two days or more. If this happens, there's a good chance the range is finished and price is then going to start trending again"<sup>[16]</sup>.

## Market Conditions and Timeframes

**Table 11 False Breakout Strategy Performance Characteristics**

Condition	Performance	Key Indicators
Established range (2+ tests of S/R)	Excellent	Volume, RSI divergence
Range boundaries near key levels	Good	Round numbers, previous highs/lows
High volatility news events	Moderate (higher risk)	Wait for post-news consolidation

## Pros and Cons

Table 12 False Breakout Strategy: Pros and Cons

Advantages	Disadvantages
Excellent risk-reward ratios	Requires patience and quick execution
Trades with institutional flow	False breakouts can extend before reversing
High probability when confirmed	Stop-loss placement is critical
Can signal trend reversals early	Difficult to distinguish from valid breakouts

## 3.4 Recommended Range Strategy

### Recommendation: Bollinger Bands with RSI Confirmation

The Bollinger Bands Mean Reversion strategy is recommended as the best overall range-trading approach for the following reasons:

- **Statistical Foundation:** Based on standard deviation, providing objective entry criteria
- **Self-Adjusting:** Bands expand and contract with volatility, adapting to market conditions
- **High Win Rate:** In proper ranging conditions, mean reversion exhibits higher win rates than trend-following
- **Clear Risk Management:** Well-defined stop-loss levels beyond the bands

**Optimal Configuration:** Bollinger Bands (20, 2) with RSI (14) confirmation on 4-hour or daily timeframe. Enter when price touches outer band with RSI extreme; exit at middle band or opposite band.

# 4. Trend vs. Range Trading Comparison

Understanding when to apply trend versus range strategies is crucial for trading success. This section provides frameworks for identifying market conditions and adapting risk management accordingly.

## 4.1 Market Condition Identification

### Visual Identification Methods

Table 13 Trend vs. Range Market Characteristics

Characteristic	Trending Market	Range-Bound Market
Price Structure	Higher highs & higher lows (uptrend) Lower highs & lower lows (downtrend)	Swing highs and lows at similar levels
Breakouts	Valid breakouts with follow-through	False breakouts, price returns to range
Volatility (ATR)	Rising ATR	Low or declining ATR
Volume Pattern	Increasing on trend moves	Low or inconsistent volume
Moving Averages	Price away from MAs, MAs sloping	Price oscillating around MAs, flat MAs

### Indicator-Based Detection

#### ADX (Average Directional Index):

The ADX is the primary tool for distinguishing between trending and ranging markets. As documented by Forex Factory, "ADX provides trend strength values ranging between 0 and 100: Below 20 indicates a weak trend or range-bound market; above 50 indicates a strong trend"<sup>[17]</sup>.

**Table 14 ADX Market State Interpretation**

ADX Value	Market State	Recommended Strategy
Below 20	Weak trend / Range	Range trading, mean reversion
20-25	Trend developing	Prepare for breakout, mixed approach
25-50	Strong trend	Trend following, momentum
Above 50	Very strong trend	Trend following, watch for exhaustion

#### **Bollinger Bands Squeeze:**

According to FXMetaGold's analysis, "In a ranging market, Bollinger Bands often come closer together, creating a Band Squeeze. This compression indicates decreased volatility and price movement within a range"<sup>[18]</sup>.

#### **Multi-Timeframe Confirmation**

LuxAlgo's research emphasizes the importance of multi-timeframe analysis: "Cross-check signals across different timeframes for consistency. Align rejection signals across higher timeframes to confirm false breakout patterns"<sup>[19]</sup>.

## **4.2 Risk Management Tools**

#### **Position Sizing**

Volatility-based position sizing using ATR is essential for both trading styles. As documented by LinkedIn's analysis on advanced position sizing: "ATR measures real-time market movement and adjusts the stop distance dynamically so your trade gets enough room to breathe without exposing capital to unnecessary risk"<sup>[20]</sup>.

**Table 15 ATR-Based Position Sizing Guidelines**

Volatility Level (ATR)	Suggested Leverage	Position Size Example (1% Risk on \$100k)
Less than 1% of price	Up to 10:1	500 shares
1-2% of price	5:1	200 shares
2-3% of price	3:1	100 shares
Above 3% of price	1:1 or none	Minimal exposure

## Stop-Loss Strategies

### For Trend Trading:

- ATR-based trailing stops (2-3 ATR)
- Moving average trailing stops (price crosses below/above MA)
- Swing point stops (below recent higher low / above recent lower high)

### For Range Trading:

- Fixed stops beyond support/resistance levels
- Tighter stops (1-1.5 ATR) due to mean-reversion nature
- Time-based exits if mean reversion doesn't occur

## Risk-Reward Considerations

**Table 16 Risk-Reward Profile Comparison**

Aspect	Trend Trading	Range Trading
Typical Win Rate	30-40%	60-70%
Average Win/Loss Ratio	3:1 or higher	1:1 to 2:1
Holding Period	Days to weeks	Hours to days
Best R-Multiple Target	2R-4R	1R-2R

## Adapting to Market Regime Changes

The International Trading Institute emphasizes: "Volatility is a regime. When ranges expand, spreads widen, and correlations break, the same position size that felt conservative last month can become reckless overnight"<sup>[21]</sup>.

Key adaptation rules:

- Monitor ADX daily for trend strength changes
- Reduce position size by 20% when account drops 10%
- Switch strategies when ADX crosses above 25 (range to trend) or falls below 20 (trend to range)
- Use multiple timeframe analysis to confirm regime changes

## 5. Conclusion

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This report has examined proven trend-trading and range-trading strategies, providing evidence from professional sources and practical implementation guidelines.

### Key Findings

#### Trend-Trading Strategies:

1. **Moving Average Crossover:** Simple, effective across timeframes, but requires ADX filtering to avoid whipsaws
2. **Donchian Channel (Turtle Trading):** Systematic breakout approach with proven track record, best for diversified portfolios
3. **ADX-Based Strategy:** Excellent for filtering market conditions, works best as confirmation tool

#### Range-Trading Strategies:

1. **Bollinger Bands Mean Reversion:** Statistically grounded, self-adjusting to volatility, high win rate in proper conditions
2. **Stochastic Oscillator:** Simple interpretation, effective at range extremes, requires confirmation
3. **False Breakout (Fade):** Excellent risk-reward when confirmed, trades with institutional flow

### Final Recommendations

#### For Trend Trading

Use the **Moving Average Crossover (50/200 EMA) with ADX Filter**. This combination provides simplicity, historical robustness, and effective noise filtering. Configure with 2-3 ATR trailing stop-loss on daily timeframe for optimal results.

### For Range Trading

Use the **Bollinger Bands (20, 2) with RSI Confirmation**. This approach offers statistical foundation, self-adjusting parameters, and clear risk management rules. Best implemented on 4-hour or daily timeframes.

### Critical Success Factors

- **Market Identification:** Use ADX to distinguish between trending and ranging conditions before selecting a strategy
- **Risk Management:** Implement volatility-based position sizing using ATR to maintain consistent risk across all market conditions
- **Discipline:** Follow systematic rules without emotional intervention—the key lesson from the Turtle Trading experiment
- **Adaptation:** Be prepared to switch strategies when market conditions change, as confirmed by multi-timeframe analysis

Successful trading requires matching the strategy to the market environment. Trend trading excels when ADX exceeds 25, while range trading performs best when ADX remains below 20. By mastering both approaches and the tools to distinguish between market states, traders can maintain profitability across diverse market conditions.

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