



Brainy's articles on BullCharts

Price chart basics

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BC-03-050
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30 June 2009
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Introduction

In this article in Brainy's series on BullCharts (number BC-03-050) we take a look at some of the basic operations of the BullCharts charting software. It is primarily intended for the new BullCharts user who wants to understand how to get started with using BullCharts. Hence it is good for the new user to help get off to a good start. But it is also useful for experienced users because it contains a few of those things that can be regarded as very useful tips.

Note that in these articles there might be loose references to both *stocks* and *securities*. These two terms are used here interchangeably, remembering that the BullCharts database stores information for all of the listed Australian stocks.

Overview

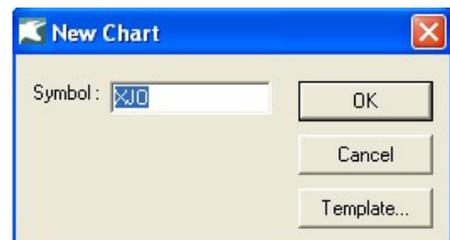
The BullCharts features and functions that are introduced in this article in Brainy's series include the following:

- How to create a new price chart.
- Change displayed security — With a price chart already displayed, how can you readily change to view a different stock?
- Let's explore the major time periods — Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly.
- Time axis — how to scroll left and right.
- Time axis — how to create more space to the right.
- Time axis — how to zoom in and out.
- Price axis options, including: linear versus log, auto-scale, click and drag.
- Price plot colour options for chart panes.

New price chart

With BullCharts running, there are a few ways to create a new price chart as follows:

- (a) From the menu, select: File > New > Chart. This will open the "New Chart" dialogue box where you can type in the stock code and hit the Enter key; or
- (b) Use the keyboard shortcut <Ctrl>+N (ie. the Ctrl key and the letter "n"); or
- (c) If you have the BullCharts Control Panel open (Security Manager), and if a list of stocks is displayed, you can double-click on a stock in the list, or right-click and choose "New chart" from the drop-down menu; or
- (d) You can use the Security toolbar (see figure at right). Click once in the Symbol field, and type the code then hit the Enter key. Note that the drop-down on this toolbar makes a list of recently viewed securities available (the number of securities in the list is set in the Tools > Preferences > General tab).



Using any of these options should create a new price chart, and display the share prices for the security using the *Default Template*, and the default *time* frame with default values for its *appearance*.

For more information on BullCharts templates and the *Default Template* see Brainy's article BC-09-200, "Templates". To adjust the initial time frame displayed on a new chart, see the menu option Tools > Preferences > Time (tab) — "Adjust data range on screen to xxx bars".



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Change displayed security

With a price chart already displayed, you can easily switch to another security as follows:

- (a) Hit the <F4> key, and type the security's code into the "Change Symbol" dialogue box; or
- (b) Left mouse click once anywhere on the current price chart (to make sure that this window pane is the currently "active" pane), then just type the new security code. As soon as you type the first letter the "Change Symbol" dialogue box will open up.

Note that if you don't know the code for the security that you want to display, you can quickly do a search for it using the BullCharts Quick Search feature (refer to Brainy's article BC-05-080, "Search for stock code", for more information).

Major time periods (Daily, Weekly, etc.)

If you are using BullCharts with the End-Of-Day data plan only (and not the Live data option), then you can view charts in any of the following periods: Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, Yearly.



Use the Chart Style toolbar to change the displayed time period. If this toolbar is not displayed, use the menu option: View > Toolbars, and check that the Chart Style toolbar option is ticked.

If you have the BullCharts Live Data option, then you will also have eight intraday time periods available, including: 1-minute, 2-minutes, 5-minutes, 10-minutes, 15-minutes, 30-minutes, Hourly, 2-hourly.

Time axis — scroll left and right

There are a couple of ways to scroll the chart sideways to view earlier data that is off the left of the screen, and to scroll back again.

- (a) Left-click on the chart and hold the mouse button, and "drag" the chart to the left or right; or
- (b) Left click the mouse once somewhere on the price chart to make sure it is the active pane, then use the mouse scroll wheel to scroll left and right; or
- (c) Use the keyboard left-arrow, and right-arrow, to scroll left and right respectively.
- (d) On the Chart Tools toolbar there are two buttons that will "Go to the Start" of the chart, and "Go to the End" of the chart (see figure at right).



Time axis — create more space to right

If you want to be able to extend your chart analysis out to the right of the price action, then you will need some blank space to the right of the chart. You can adjust the amount of space here as follows:

1. Right-click over the top of the horizontal time axis and choose "Time Axis Properties" from the drop-down menu.
2. Under the "Range" tab there is an option to enter a number for "Space to right of chart".
3. On the same dialogue box, note the other options, and other tabs.



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Time axis — Zoom in and out

By default, when you create a new price chart, or open an existing one, the amount of time shown across the horizontal time axis is dependent on the preference settings (menu option: Tools > Preferences > Time tab). With a price chart displayed, there are a number of ways to zoom the time axis in and out, as follows.

- The easiest way is to hold down the left-hand <Ctrl> key (with the little finger on your left hand), and operate the mouse scroll wheel (of course, only if the mouse has a scroll wheel). If nothing happens when you do this, try clicking the left-hand mouse button just once somewhere on the price chart to make sure it is the currently “active” pane; or
- Use the Zoom buttons on the Chart Tools toolbar (see figure at right). These will zoom in/out in increments. When you hover the mouse cursor over one of these buttons the informational tip that is displayed will tell you whether it zooms in or out, and that there is a shortcut key that you can use — either the + key or the – key (see next item); or
- Use the + or – keys on the keyboard's numeric keypad, provided you have “Num Lock” enabled.



- Another button on the same toolbar (the squiggly one) will “Fit the chart to the window”. That is, it will adjust the time scale to fit all data for the security into the one window (try it with a security that has a lot of data like BHP, or the XAO index).
- One more useful toolbar button on this toolbar (the very first one with the magnifying glass) will zoom in on the chart, on the specific area of the chart that you highlight. To do this, click once on this toolbar button, then left mouse click (and hold the button down) once on the chart at the intended start-date to view, and drag the mouse cursor across the area that you want zoomed, then release the mouse button at the intended end-date. The chart zooms in to cover only the time range that you have indicated. Having done this, the second toolbar button becomes active, and will reverse this Zoom option if you click it (it will actually remember a number of zoom steps, and can reverse several of them).



Price axis options — semi-log and click/drag

Since version 3.8.x of BullCharts, there have been some options for more control of the vertical price axis. Note the following:

- Semi-log chart (pre-existing feature) — The price (value) axis is typically shown in linear form. You can change this to a logarithmic scale as follows: Right-click on the price axis, and click on “Semi-log” from the drop-down option list. If you are not sure under which conditions you might want to do this, then ask around for information (it is very useful but not easy to explain in this article).
- The pre-existing “Auto-scale” feature has always allowed us to automatically scale the price axis as we zoom or scroll. To prevent automatic adjustment of the price axis, click this toolbar button to turn the feature off.
- Click-and-drag the price axis — With Auto-Scale turned on, you can adjust the price axis up and down (essentially this is “zooming” the price axis in and out). Click and hold the mouse cursor near the top of the price axis, and you can drag the price axis down the chart. Or, click and hold the mouse near the bottom of the price axis, and you can drag the price axis up.
- You can “reset” the price axis scale as follows: Right-click on the price axis, and click on “Reset scale to default” in the drop-down option list.





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Price plot colour options (for chart panes)

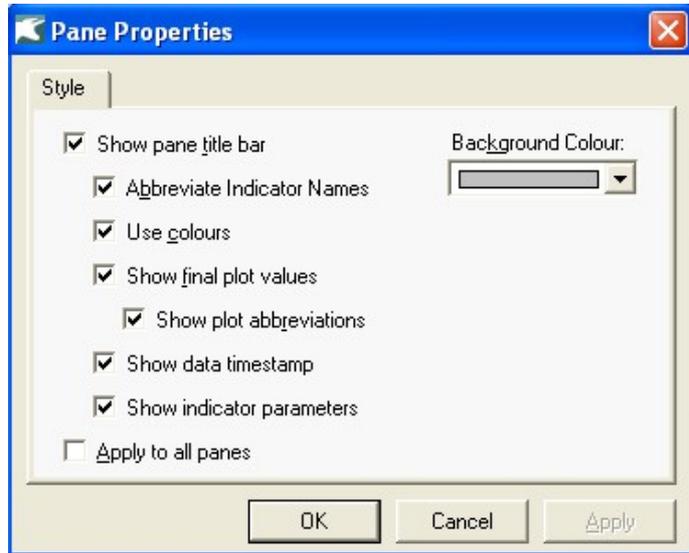
By default, the background of all the BullCharts price charts is white. Some people prefer to see a different colour background (like grey or black), with specific colours for the price plot itself.

Remember that the whole BullCharts window is comprised of one or more window “panes” — eg. the price plot pane, the Volume pane, one or more indicator panes, etc.

To change the background colour for each of these panes, simply right-click on the pane in question, and choose “Pane Properties” from the drop-down. Or you can choose the menu option: Format > Pane. See screen shot at right.

In the Pane Properties dialogue box, choose a different colour from the drop-down options for the “Background Colour”.

To save these changes for future price charts, you will need to save this as a Template. See Brainy's article BC-09-200, “Templates”.



To easily view some samples of different pane colours, refer to the supplied standard BullCharts templates. To do this you can click on each of the templates on the Templates Toolbar (if they are still there), or right-click on the price pane and choose “Apply Template” from the drop-down menu, then select the template to apply from the list of displayed files.

Summary

In this article in Brainy's series on BullCharts we have taken a look at the basic operations of BullCharts. Another useful tip is to remember that more details are always available in the BullCharts Help (in BullCharts, hit the <F1> key).



For more information on Share Trading, or Technical Analysis, or BullCharts, look for more of Brainy's articles, or the other resources, in **Brainy's Share Market Toolbox**: www.robertbrain.com

Your own notes and comments:

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