

## SMG NATIONAL HELP DESK

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The following are questions that are frequently received by the National Help Desk from coordinators, having forwarded them from advisors in their own programs. This is not a definitive list but is designed to cover many of the common questions so coordinators will be able to answer teacher questions more quickly and accurately.

*1. I can't seem to log on to the SMG website. What is wrong?*

The person asking the question has not provided enough information to answer this question. He/she should explain how far they got in the process and exactly what happened, including the text of any error message they may have received. The importance of learning this information is to determine if the problem is local (computer or server) or something that may be systemwide. A quick test is to try to duplicate the error yourself. If the problem is systemwide, it is probably already being worked on. If local, the user may need to update the browser being used or be sure the school allows access to our particular URL—either way, the questioner needs to contact a local tech person for assistance. The document named **Troubleshooting** has more details on how we can help the local tech people. It can be found in the Teacher Support Center and in this section of SMG Corner.

If the logon problem is related to a team ID or password, be sure the advisor understands these are case sensitive and that the ID uses underscores, not hyphens. Again, try to duplicate the error before responding. Since you have access to the passwords, be sure a team has not changed its password since it was originally issued, especially if you do not allow teachers to access the teams' passwords.

*2. Please add PDQ to the database.*

This cannot be handled without supplying the Help Desk with a team ID. Before checking on a particular missing security, it is important to see the exact message the team received when attempting to trade the security. Often there are other reasons why a security could not be purchased, sometimes because a team used the incorrect ticker. It is helpful to supply any extra information to the Help Desk related to any research the team, advisor, or coordinator may have done first to determine if it is a valid security that is regularly trading on a US exchange and does not fall under categories listed in **Rules of the Game #2** that are not allowed to be traded in the SMG (see also **FAQ #6**, below). Providing such information will expedite receiving a response from the Help Desk. If it is an allowable security, the database administrator can add the security so that it can be traded the next day. Remember that due to **Rules of the Game #14**, we cannot backdate transactions on securities that had to be added to the database.

*3. Team FIE\_55\_ZZ802 has three stocks in their portfolio they never bought, POP, BUZZ, and UGH. According to the Transaction Notes page, these stocks were*

*purchased at 23:25 on Feb. 22, so obviously someone stole their password and made the trades. Will you please remove them from this portfolio?*

Unfortunately, the answer to this question is that securities can only appear in a portfolio when someone with the team ID and its password (which is used to confirm trades) enters a trade. We cannot possibly take the team's word as to what happened, so when responding, it is a good opportunity to stress the importance of keeping passwords secure and developing trust among the team members. A good lesson to teach is that one should never write one's PIN on the back of one's ATM card. Suggest that it is a good idea for a team to change the password to something they can easily remember so it won't need to be written down. The Help Desk cannot serve as judge and jury to discern which of such situations are legitimate and take the time to correct trades for the many requests that are received each semester. Other such human errors we cannot correct are duplicate trades or buy trades that were intended to be sells, etc.

There is another situation where a new security might appear in a portfolio, which is covered in the **FAQ #4**, below.

4. *Team FIE\_55\_ZZ321 has 500 shares of WHA in their portfolio and the teams says they never bought it. It is not showing up in the Transaction Notes either. Can you remove this stock?*

Most likely, the new symbol appears because of some corporate action, e.g., a takeover, spin-off, merger, stock dividend, etc. A quick look at the Transaction History page might reveal a clue with the code used when the security was added. It might also be related to a ticker change or a change in the exchange on which a stock is traded. Teachers should first encourage the students do some research on the stock (or one that has simultaneously disappeared from their portfolio) to learn what took place. If research turns up no further information, contact the Help Desk who can look into the situation.

5. *Team FIE\_55\_ZZ456 bought 500 shares of OOPS yesterday and got the wrong price. The stock closed at \$24 per share but the portfolio says they paid \$24.48 per share. Can you fix this?*

This is one of the most common questions that coordinators and the Help Desk receive in the early weeks of the game. Point out to the teacher that the actual price paid will appear on the Transaction History page, and to have the students read the Help screen for the Account Holdings page to learn what is meant by NET COST PER SHARE. Quite simply, the net cost includes the 2% commission, but it is a good opportunity to show the teachers and students that many of their questions can be answered on the Help Screens.

6. *Team FIE\_55\_ZZ55 is trying to buy Crispy Critters Class A stock and have tried entering it as CC/A, CCA, CC.A, and CC-A, but nothing works. It is listed on the NYSE and is actively trading. Why can't they buy this stock?*

In the SMG, the class A and B stocks and any others that require special characters in their tickers (some preferred stocks, OTC, and "pink sheet" securities) cannot be traded. This is because the SMG uses more than one price database and most use different

characters for such stocks. What could happen is that a team could buy the stock, but the price feed supplying to prices in the overnight processing may have a different character so it cannot be priced. Please note that many of the most popular Class A and B stocks can be found on the list of blocked stocks, which can be found on the Enter A Trade portfolio page. Refer to **Rules of the Game #2** when responding to these questions.

7. *Team FIE\_55\_ZZ747 has 500 shares of PST and have tried to sell it numerous times and keep getting the message “not enough position.” How can they sell this stock?*

For starters, a team should not keep trying trades “numerous” times before checking a bit further to determine what might cause this message. Quite frequently, such teams have so many attempted trades on the Transaction Notes page that they may not even realize they had already sold this stock, perhaps earlier the same day. The team should make a copy of the Trans Notes page and highlight in color all trades related to a given stock and walk through them in order, paying careful attention to the times of the trades and the outcomes. Basically, the message “not enough position” means that a team is trying to sell more shares than they presently own.

Another situation can occur if a team gets this message on the Transaction Notes page and that is when a stock was removed because of a corporate action. In this case, the stock will not appear in Account Holdings and there will be an entry in Transaction History related to this action.

8. *Team FIE\_55\_ZZ841 sold 1000 shares of SPLT yesterday and today the portfolio shows 2000 shares in Account Holdings. How did this happen?*

An unusual situation has occurred. The team decided to sell their 1000 shares on the same day a 3:2 split occurred. In that night’s processing, the sale went through and the additional 2000 shares were added. Also, be aware that sometimes when a split occurs, the price and the additional shares do not occur in the same processing, so when questions arise regarding this, please wait another day to see if it has been corrected. Please ask the team not to trade this stock until the matter is resolved.

9. *Team FIE\_55\_ZZ302 wants to buy FAB, which is on the market today for the first time (IPO, initial public offering). They get the message its price is zero. We are getting a price quote for FAB, so why can’t they buy it?*

In the SMG, IPO’s can never be purchased on the same day they are first offered since they were not in the database from the previous night’s processing. The ticker may be in the database today but will pick up the price as zero, yesterday’s closing price, which is the price the system uses to determine if a team can afford to buy a particular stock. Please wait an additional market day before contacting the Help Desk about IPOs.

10. *Team FIE\_55\_ZZ148 bought 200 shares of HUH on 2/23. On 3/15 they tried to sell it and get the message “ticker not found.” How can they sell this stock?*

Because more than one database is used to process transactions, it is possible the stock was in the database that allowed a team to buy it but is not in the database used to sell the

stock. It is sometimes possible there was a ticker symbol change in the interim that did not get added to one of the databases. Either way, this is a situation where the Help Desk needs to be contacted. Be sure to tell the team not to attempt any other trades with this stock while it is being investigated (this is also true for any other problems that need to be referred to the Help Desk). Once the symbol has been added to the database, the Help Desk can manually enter the trade for the price the team would have received the first time they attempted to sell the stock. Please note that if the stock is on the list of blocked stocks, it may be temporary until a corporate action has been completed. Suggest that the team do some research to determine if the stock is undergoing a corporate action and, if so, be sure the team understands that once the action has been completed, the stock will be unblocked.

*11. Team FIE\_55\_ZZ2 bought 100 shares of STUK yesterday after the markets closed. They decided to cancel the trade and the Pending Transaction page is showing “accepted” in the description and there is no place to put their password. Why can’t they cancel this trade?*

If this team is playing in an intraday region, they never have the option to cancel pending transactions. If in a end-of-day region, there is a period of time after the markets close (4-8 pm Eastern time) during which CANCEL option is not available, but the team has until the markets close on the next market day to cancel after-hours trades. Please see the document **Anatomy of an SMG Trade** for additional information.

*12. Team FIE\_55\_ZZ302 in an intraday region tried to buy SQAT yesterday and put a price limit of \$32.50 on the transaction. The price dropped to \$31.75 during the day, so why didn’t the purchase go through?*

A price limit is NOT a standing order that will kick in when a price reaches a certain price. Price limits are only good for a transaction at the exact time they are being priced (closing prices for end-of-day regions; in real-time regions, the price at exact time a trade is placed if during trading hours or the next market day’s opening prices if placed after hours). Teams in real-time regions should be discouraged from using price limits (except for extremely volatile stocks or if trades are being conducted after hours), since they are able to get a quote with only a 15-20 minute delay.

*13. Team FIE\_55\_ZZ100 soared to first place in the second week of the game and is ahead by \$50,000. When I checked the portfolio, most of the gain is showing for only one of their stocks, ROG, of which they own 10,000 shares. Might this be one of those “rogue” stocks you mention that we should not be allowed to trade?*

The easiest way to check on a particular stock is to look at its price history or view a chart of the price history. Such listings should also list splits or dividends so you can determine if an error was made when extra shares were given for a split. A quick look at company news might account for a legitimate surge in price. If the stock is simply on the rise and you are not using the **Maximum Equity Rule**, consider activating it in order to prevent this sort of situation, which can cause other teams to lose interest early in the session. If, however, it appears the stock is not being actively traded or is trading on another exchange besides the NYSE, Amex or Nasdaq, or any other situation that appears

to be out of the ordinary, be sure to contact the Help Desk, citing both the team ID and stock in question. If you cannot find the price the team was given on a chart or historical list (both available on the Yahoo Finance site), please contact the Help Desk as price discrepancies can sometimes exist for stocks that trade infrequently. The “Seven Day Rule” was designed to reduce such occurrences—it states that a team cannot purchase a security that has not traded within seven market days (see **Rules of the Game #2**).

*14. Team FIE\_55\_ZZ606 bought a stock a month ago and it is now showing with a zero price. What has happened?*

Occasionally a stock’s price will be listed as zero because it is in the process of undergoing some sort of corporate action and has been blocked from trading temporarily until the action can be completed. Please contact the Help Desk with such questions to be sure stocks undergoing corporate actions will receive the most recent closing prices and not adversely affect total equity..

*15. Why are certain stocks listed as being blocked and our team FIE\_55\_ZZ482 is unable to sell the stock?*

There are a variety of reasons that certain stocks are blocked. Some are blocked permanently because of confusing ticker issues or because they trade infrequently enough that we cannot get correct pricing on them. Others may be blocked temporarily because of certain corporate actions that are underway. Class A and B stocks, as well as many preferred stocks are blocked due to inconsistencies in the different databases used in pricing and processing SMG portfolios. See **Rules of the Game #2** and **FAQ #10**).

*16. How is interest calculated? Similarly, how is Maximum Equity calculated?*

Please see **Rules of the Game #1** for the calculation for interest. The **Hot Tip** at the bottom of the Help Screen for the Transaction Notes page has the calculation for figuring Maximum Equity.

*17. Team FIE\_55\_ZZ68 has a short position and should have received a dividend. Instead, it appears the amount of the dividend was actually subtracted from their cash balance. Please correct this mistake.*

Unfortunately, and this is one reason that short selling is very risky, various activities relating to the security in a short position will mirror those on a long position. In other words, the amount of a dividend will be removed, not added. Other corporate actions may also adversely affect a short position. Teams must perform careful research before short selling to avoid running into such situations.

*18. How are dividends handled in the SMG?*

Please see the separate document in this section of SMG Corner called **Dividends** for more detailed information.

*19. Team FIE\_55\_ZZ885 bought 100 shares of RIP three weeks ago. Three days ago they bought 200 more shares. All 300 shares are lumped together—why?*

This is a good example of a question that can be quickly answered by checking a relevant Help Screen, this time on the Account Holdings page. The **Hot Tip** in item #3 explains how the average cost per share is calculated.

*20. My teams are unable to make trades even though there is still one more processing as our session ends today. Why cannot they trade today?*

Teachers should be aware that teams in end-of-day regions cannot trade after the markets close on the Thursday before the Friday ending date, and teams in real-time regions cannot trade after the markets close on the final day of the session. This is because trades made in these circumstances will receive the closing prices for Friday so they will see no gain or loss and simply be out the price of the 2% commission. In fact, teams should be encouraged to not trade during the final few days of a session unless they feel they will make more than a 2% profit.

*21. Team FIE\_55\_ZZ105 holds both a short position and a long position on ZIP, which went through an acquisition by GAL on February 12. Both positions are still listed in Account Holdings and there is no entry in Transaction Notes.*

When the system processing a corporate action, a team holding both long and short positions on the same stock are canceled out to zero shares. For this reason, teams should be discouraged from holding both short and long positions on the same security. When the Help Desk is notified about such a situation, there is no alternative but to manually remove both positions from the portfolio, often resulting in a loss.

*22. Team FIE\_55\_ZZ222 held a stock EXC, which experienced a ticker change last week. It showed up as EXC.OLD in Account Holdings, then showed up the next day with the new ticker, FIN. In Account Holdings, it is now listed with 100% unrealized gain and the letters INF also appear. Likewise, there is a similar entry on the Gains & Losses page. What does this mean?*

A team should compare the dollar amounts shown on both pages (Account Holdings and Gains & Losses) to learn the true current gain or loss on a particular stock. On the Help Screens for both pages, there is an explanation of this situation. However, in some cases, there may not be a corresponding entry on the G&L page, which means that the team must look back to the original transaction on the Transaction History page to see the original cost of the stock in order to compare it with the current value. In any case, a team can check the total equity on the Account Summary page for various dates surrounding the corporate action to find that it did not affect total equity. If it seems to have affected total equity, please contact the Help Desk, who can research the issue.