Modelling Financial Derivatives with Mathematica

Mathematical Models and Benchmark Algorithms

WILLIAM T. SHAW Quantitative Analysis Group Nomura International plc, London and Balliol College, Oxford



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for Susan Mary Wallace [1946–1997] and Sarah-Jane

Contents

Prefac	p. p	age vi
1	Advanced Tools for Rocket Science	1
2	An Introduction to Mathematica	12
3	Mathematical Finance Preliminaries	68
4	Mathematical Preliminaries	85
5	Log and Power Contracts	127
6	Binary Options and the Normal Distribution	136
7	Vanilla European Calls and Puts	151
8	Barrier Options - a Case Study in Rapid Development	167
9	Analytical Models of Lookbacks	189
10	Vanilla Asian Options - Analytical Methods	200
11	Vanilla American Options - Analytical Methods	215
12	Double Barrier, Compound, Quanto Options and Other Exotics	237
13	The Discipline of the Greeks and Overview of Finite-Difference Schemes	258
14	Finite-Difference Schemes for the Diffusion Equation with Smooth Initial Conditions	266
15	Finite-Difference Schemes for the Black-Scholes Equation with Non-smooth Payoff Initial	
	Conditions	279
16	SOR and PSOR Schemes for the Three-Time-Level Douglas Scheme and Application to	
	American Options	306
17	Linear Programming Alternatives to PSOR and Regression	331
18	Traditional and Supersymmetric Trees	344
19	Tree Implementation in Mathematica and Basic Tree Pathology	363
20	Turbo-charged Trees with the Mathematica Compiler	387
21	Monte Carlo and Wozniakowski Sampling	400
22	Basic Applications of Monte Carlo	420
23	Monte Carlo Simulation of Basket Options	437
24	Getting Jumpy over Dividends	454
25	Simple Deterministic and Stochastic Interest-Rate Models	470
26	Building Yield Curves from Market Data	482
27	Simple Interest Rate Options	504
28	Modelling Volatility by Elasticity	515
Index		534

Preface

This text has a number of aims. The first is to show how *Mathematica* (version 3 in particular), can be used as a derivatives modelling tool. Second, it presents a complete if concise development of the mathematical approach to the valuation and hedging of a large class of derivative securities. Third, although the basic mathematical development is oriented towards dynamic hedging and partial differential equations, this book aims to present a balanced approach to algorithm development, in which analytical, finite-difference, tree and Monte Carlo methods are each applied in the appropriate context, without any forced adherence to any particular method. Fourth, it is intended that this text collects together and highlights many of the mathematical pathologies that exist in derivatives modelling problems. This last point is all too frequently ignored, so a discussion here may be appropriate.

Financial analysts use often-complex mathematical models to guide their decisions when trading derivative financial instruments. However, derivative securities are capable of exhibiting some diverse forms of mathematical pathology that confound our intuition and play havoc with standard or even state-of-theart algorithms. The potential traps fall into two categories. The first category contains problems arising from the complexity of some models, leading to their being seriously error-prone in their implementation, even if not intrinsically flawed. The second category contains algorithms that are intrinsically flawed. Let's take a look at some problems in each category.

An obvious example of a type-one problem relates to the computation of hedge parameters, or "Greeks." These are the partial derivatives of the option value with respect to the underlying price and other variables such as time and interest rates. For all but the simplest vanilla options, the pen-and-paper computation of such entities is very complex and therefore error-prone, leading to the potential of errors in coding. The estimation of such quantities by purely numerical methods (differencing) leads to other types of problems associated with inaccuracies in the estimate of the analytical derivative. Such difficulties can often be eliminated in one swoop with the *Mathematica* system, which is able to compute the symbolic derivatives – and hence the hedge parameters – exactly by analytical differentiation of the option-pricing formula.

A more subtle type-one difficulty relates to the computation of implied volatility, which is a favourite parameter of traders. Implied volatility makes sense only for the simplest vanilla options. In other cases, the implied volatility may be unstable, double-valued, or triple-valued, or may even possess infinitely many values. The implementation must check that the price is a strictly increasing or a strictly decreasing function of volatility; otherwise, nonsense can and will be obtained for the implied volatility. In *Mathematica* the graphical tools can be used to test this very quickly.

Some quite well-known algorithms are intrinsically flawed. Problems which we might identify as a type-two issue can be found in the following models.

- (i) Binomial models
- (ii) Implicit finite-difference models
- (iii) Monte Carlo simulation models

These are essentially numerical methods, and this book looks in detail at them in comparison with exact solutions for known cases. This is straightforward in a system such as *Mathematica*, where complex, exact solutions can be expressed exactly and worked out to any degree of precision. As numerical methods, they involve an essential discretization of time and other relevant variables such as the underlying asset price. A common theme is what happens when the time-step is taken to be large, which is very tempting in an implementation in order to obtain results quickly.

For example, several of the standard binomial models suffer from the well-known difficulty that as the time-step becomes large, the probabilities associated with the underlying tree model may become negative, which is manifest nonsense. In other types of models, the asset prices can become negative. Both of these effects are well known. What appears not to be understood is that the reason for these difficulties has a common root in the fact that tree models are typically underspecified from a mathematical point of view. A number of constraints can be written down that should apply to a tree. The solution of a full set can be quite hard, so in practice the authors of tree models have worked with a subset and made up one or more missing conditions in order to solve for the tree structure. This leads to the problems with negative probabilities, the solution of a full set of tree constraints is a straightforward matter – and in fact leads to a model where neither the up-and-down tree probabilities nor the asset price can become negative. Other problems with trees, discovered by others in relation to barrier and cap effects, are also discussed.

One of the most surprising and deeply rooted difficulties relates to the use of implicit finite-difference schemes. In principle, these allow a larger numerical time-step to be used than in treelike models and are becoming increasingly popular. When properly used, they combine accuracy with efficiency. There is, however, a major difficulty with them that appears not to have fully migrated in its appreciation from the academic numerical analysis community to the market practitioners. When the initial conditions for the associated partial differential equation (in financial terms, the option payoff) are nice and smooth (in loose terms, continuous with continuous slopes), one can get away with almost any implicit finitedifference scheme. This is emphatically not the case in option-pricing problems, where the payoffs are typically non-smooth and frequently discontinuous. Such "glitches" in the payoff will propagate through the solution, and while they do not necessarily cause a large error in the option value, they can cause significant errors in the Greeks such as Delta, Gamma, and Theta. This will occur with some of the most common schemes in current use for larger time-steps. It can be avoided only with a certain subset of implicit schemes. Which subset works and which does not is in fact well known to the numerical analysis community. In the text this is made crystal clear by comparison with some exact solutions; and the good, but infrequently used, schemes are contrasted with the bad, but widely used, schemes.

Monte Carlo simulation is a popular method for the valuation of options that are European in style but path-dependent. The manner in which simulated solutions converge to the correct answer is investigated for some cases where the exact solution is known. This reveals several difficulties with such numerical simulation methods, and in particular the very slow convergence associated with certain classes of options. We give suggestions for control variates in a number of useful cases but highlight the difference between getting the variance down – but possibly converging to the wrong answer – and getting the right answer.

However, it would be wrong to assume that the purpose of writing this book was merely to discuss what can go wrong! The illumination of pathology is only one of the abilities of *Mathematica*. For example, in addition to being able to do calculus, *Mathematica* has other advantages over traditional modelling environments such as spreadsheets and C/C++. For example, the presence of a vast library of special functions, coupled with the ability to do differentiation and integration, means that novel, exact solutions can be implemented with ease. A beautiful example of this is the exact solution for the Asian option with arithmetic averaging, which requires that one invert the Laplace transform of a hypergeometric function. This requires just a few lines in *Mathematica* and can be directly differentiated to obtain the Greeks. Other areas in which *Mathematica* can be fruitfully applied include novel analytical techniques for double-Barrier options and accurate analytical approximations for American options.

How the Text is Organized

This book is divided into six groups of chapters. The first group establishes the preliminaries in terms of the use of *Mathematica*, the basics of stochastic calculus and the derivation of partial differential equations, and the basic technique for solving the Black-Scholes PDE family. The next group of chapters explores a wide variety of analytical models, from simple vanilla options, through a range of by-now standard "exotics", and also develops more complex analytical models for Asian and American options. Next we take a long hard look at the finite-difference models, including the standard approaches and also novel methods with much better numerical characteristics. This block makes particularly good use of the new features of *Mathematica* 3.0, and it is shown how to use the *Mathematica* compiler to build numerical solutions of the PDEs in an efficient manner.

The fourth group of chapters explores the fundamentals and implementation aspects of binomial and trinomial tree models, using *Mathematica* both to define new tree models, and to implement traditional and novel tree models using the compiler. Group five looks in detail at Monte Carlo simulation and applications in particular to path-dependent and Basket options. Finally we take a brief look at some simpler interest-rate models and related non-log-normal equity models.

Some History

The origins of this text are diverse. Many years ago I began running courses for modelling professionals under the auspices of my consulting firm, Oxford System Solutions. Inspired by Ross Miller's work in The Mathematica Journal, I began to look at developing a programme tailored to financial applications, and gave it to several London financial organizations. This course focused largely on the analytical aspects - the limited compilation features of version 2.X of Mathematica did not then allow complex numerical models to be developed in an efficient fashion. Later, when employed as a consultant to Nomura Research Institute Europe Ltd., the question of how to carefully test the integrity of the models then being employed by Nomura arose. Although the existing models had been developed and tested with considerable care, I proposed that a systematic sweep through all the existing models be done, using Mathematica to independently build all the models, using the basic published mathematical research as a starting point. Furthermore, with one eye on the features of the then forthcoming Mathematica 3.0, I realized that one could begin to use *Mathematica* to perform detailed numerical computation, so that the project need not be limited to the simpler models admitting exact solutions. The project scope was then expanded not just to include the existing in-house models, but to explore numerous other models in the literature, with a view to assessing the desirability of their implementation. That extended project led to this text, and continues move to forward now that I am on the staff of Nomura International plc, and involved in the specification, prototyping and testing of a wide range of derivative models.

Technology Aspects

ix

The chapters of this book exist in their entirety as a collection of *Mathematica* 3 Notebooks. All chapter material, including *Mathematica* code, text, graphics and typeset mathematical material, is native to *Mathematica* 3. The front- and end-matter (this preface, contents and index etc.) were prepared in LaTeX using Textures 1.8. The book was produced in final form on Power Macintoshes, in the form of an 8500/120 upgraded with a 266 MHz G3, and a further G3/266, with Notebooks being printed to disk as PostScript files, which were then used by the publisher to produce the final printed version. Timing results are based on the G3/266, running *Mathematica* 3.0.0, which in general is slightly faster on average than a Pentium II at 300 MHz running NT4 (if you are a Windows user make sure that you are using *Mathematica* 3.01 or later, because that version is fully Pentium optimized, and note that NT is significantly more efficient that '95). The timings should therefore be typical of desktop computers in production at the intended publication date of mid-1998. The printed version made use of a few features of the 3.1 or 3.5 system with regard to page layout only. The kernel code is targeted at *Mathematica* 3, though most of the non-compiled material is V2.X friendly. Work in progress in the numerical optimization of future versions of *Mathematica* may modify some of the conclusions regarding numerical efficiency issues.

Accuracy and Errors

In a project of this size and scope it is impossible to guarantee the absolute correctness of all the material and its implementation. I have made significant efforts to check the models contained herein against basic research results and other model implementations, but can make no guarantees regarding these implementations. I have prepared this material both for its educational value, and to provide a set of implementations of valuation models for comparison with other systems. This material should emphatically not be used in isolation for pricing and hedging in real-world applications (see the disclaimer also). Note also that some of the algorithms are highly experimental. Furthermore, it should be noted that all results printed here are those obtained on Apple Power Macintosh systems. A substantial number of the calculations (but not necessarily all) have been re-run on Intel Pentium systems running Microsoft Windows 95 and NT4, and on various UNIX systems from SUN, and have been found to give identical results. However, the author cannot guarantee complete hardware independence. Wolfram Research Inc. make their own best efforts to ensure that the *Mathematica* system operates in a consistent fashion, but there are inevitable minor differences, usually when machine-precision arithmetic is employed.

Stylistic Issues

The coding contained herein is for the most part based on my own efforts, except as explicitly acknowledged within the text. My efforts have focused on accuracy and speed, and I have deemed elegance and compactness to be secondary to transparency of function. In financial applications, for checking purposes, transparency of function is critical, and I hope the code contained here is legible and easy to understand and check. I make no apologies for allegedly ugly code! All that matters to me is getting an accurate answer and getting it efficiently.

Typesetting Issues

Mathematica 3.0 and later versions have a variety of styles for the display of Mathematica code and mathematical equations. Except in the early tutorial chapters of this book, where consistency has been

the goal in order to avoid confusing the reader, I have been fairly liberal in switching between styles, where it appears to be useful to select a particular style for displaying material. Most *Mathematica* input uses the old version 2.X input form that is pure text, but occasionally, in order, for example, to make it easier to compare input with published research, I have converted input cells to "Standard Form" so that they look more like ordinary mathematics. Similarly, most of the output is in Standard Form, but occasionally it has been converted to "Traditional Form" so that it looks *exactly* like ordinary mathematical notation. Some of the Traditional Form outputs have in addition been typeset as numbered equations. Where there is mathematical material without any related *Mathematica* input or output it is almost all Traditional Form, usually created from Input Form, styled as numbered equations.

One notational point needs to be made here. Mathematica 3 Traditional Form uses a partially doublestruck font for symbols such as i and e, and for the d in dS in integrals. I have avoided using this when creating my own equations, e.g. in the stochastic calculus material, but equations that are converted Mathematica output use the default typefaces employed by the software system. Typographical purists may dislike this notation, but I have tried to avoid editing Mathematica-created output wherever possible, in order that "what you see is what *Mathematica* made" or, as we shall remark quickly in the text to remind the reader that something strange and unfamiliar may be about to appear: "WYSIWMAMA".

One decision on presentation was to suppress all the "In" and "Out" numbered statements. This has the benefit of tidyness, but also has the potential for confusion as to what is input and what is output. In the printed form, I have used indentation on most of the outputs to try to indicate their character, but if there is any confusion as to the types or styles of cells, this can be resolved by reference to the electronic form.

Conventions

There are may different issues of convention that plague this subject. For example, how shold Delta be quoted? We could quote the raw partial derivative; the same expressed as a percentage; the same expressed in terms of a one per cent change in the underlying, and so on. The following are the rules, except as explicitly stated in the text:

- All variables are in natural units:
 - the interest-rate and continuous dividend yield are continuously compounded, and expressed in absolute terms, i.e., an interest-rate of 10 per cent continuously compounded corresponds to r = 0.10;
 - the time is in years;
 - the volatility is in absolute annual terms, and will normally (but not always) be a number less than unity, so that $\sigma = 0.25$ corresponds to 25 per cent annualized volatility;
- All Greeks are based on the raw partial derivatives with respect to absolute quantities in natural units, so that, e.g.,
 - Delta corresponds to the instantaneous rate of change of option value with respect to the underlying price, with the latter expressed in currency terms – for a vanilla Call Delta lies between zero and one;
 - Rho is rate of change with respect to absolute continuously compounded interest rates;
 - Vega is rate of change with respect to absolute volatility;
 - Theta is rate of change with respect to time in years.

These are most convenient for the mathematical description, as it means there are very few occurences of factors of 100, 365, 1/365 and so on. In making comparisons with your own on-desk systems, this may require various conversion factors to be applied. Note that if you have numerical differencing algorithms in place, you may have made a choice to calculate actual changes rather than rates of change.

Feedback

Comments are actively sought on this material, especially if material errors are discovered. I also wish to hear about how things could have been done better, particularly with regard to speed and/or accuracy. I am not representing this text as necessarily the best way of implementing models in *Mathematica*, and have not doubt that many others will be able to improve on the material here.

Feedback to: william.shaw@nomura.co.uk

All trademarks are acknowledged.

Acknowledgements

I have to begin this list by apologizing to anyone I leave out. Over the past few years, I have had numerous discussions with many colleagues inside and outside Nomura regarding the use of Mathematica in both financial and non-financial applications, and I am not going to be able to remember everybody! I will therefore keep this list short. Within the Quantitative Analysis Group in London, my special thanks go to Reza Ghassemieh for his unflagging support throughout the project and to Roger Wilson for helping to solve numerous implementation problems. In the derivatives team, I have to acknowledge the infinite patience of David Kelly, Ben Mohamed and Dominic Pang, for their diverse contributions in the various testing and prototyping phases of the project. Marta Garcia has consistently brought me down to earth with reminders of the complex real world of convertibles and of the limitations of mathematics (and mathematicians). A special thanks goes to James Hutton, for many useful discussions on general points, and for making available early copies of the research on LP methods. Numerous members of the Risk Management teams have provided valuable feedback on model test reports that formed the basis for early drafts of this work. Valuable comments on draft chapters at various stages of development have been received from colleagues inside and outside Nomura, including: Martin Baxter, Ian Buckley, Asif Khan, Jason Tigg, Rachel Pownall, Hideki Shimamoto and my anonymous reviewers. My relatively recent education in finance has benefited from countless discussions with other colleagues at Nomura, and Nick Knight and Allison Southey deserve a special mention, along with numerous past and present members of the equity and strategy teams.

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With regard to the book production aspects, David Tranah and the Cambridge University Press team displayed chronic enthusiasm and tolerance.

While this book was being edited for final production, I learnt of the sudden death of my eldest sister Susan. This book is dedicated to her memory and to my niece Sarah-Jane.

Index

Note: this is not a comprehensive index of *Mathematica* commands built in to *Mathematica* – see *The Mathematica Book* also.

=. 22 ==, 22 := and = compared, 56 ; and output suppression, 35 /. and temporary substitution, 40 ? and getting help, 48 # and pure functions, 53 algebra, commands for, 36 algorithm risk, 2 affine bond models, 474 American options, analytical approximations for puts, 218, 222 analytical model for calls, 229 boundary conditions for puts, 216 finite-difference models for, 306 linear programming approach, 331 package for, 233 approximate numbers, 20 Asian options, payoff types, 201 analytical models in Mathematica, 202-214 arithmetic, continuous and approximate, 203 arithmetic, continuous and exact, 206 control variates for, 432 geometric, continuous and exact, 201 geometric, discrete and exact, 201 Laplace transforms and, 206 Monte Carlo simulation of, 422, 427 as you like it options, 254 barrier options, derivation of formulae, 112 and implied volatility, 8 double, 237

Greeks for, 170-182 Mathematica model of, 168-188 basket options, analysis of two-asset case, 446, arithmetic, defined, 437 arithmetic log-normal model, analysis, 451 arithmetic log-normal model implementation, 443 geometric, as control variate, 441 random sampling for, 438 spread variant, 446 binary options, derivation of solution, 111 Greeks for, 138 hedging issues, 140 Mathematica model of, 137 Black model of interest rate options, and Vasicek world bond options, 508 generalities, 505 swaptions in, 506 Black-Scholes formula, and implied volatility, 6 for calls and puts, 112 implemenation in Mathematica, 152 Black-Scholes PDE, CEV form, 517 derivation. 70 FD numerical solution in Mathematica, 279 for composite option, 73 for convertible bonds, 71, 122 for general foreign underlying, 73 for path-dependency, 81 for quanto option, 79 European solution from given payoff, 107 reduction to diffusion equation, 91

similarity solutions of, 94 simple solutions of, 85 steady-state solutions of, 89 binomial. and finite-difference, 263 trees, see trees bonds. log-linear pricing models, 474 PDE with known interest rates, 471 price in Cox-Ingersoll-Ross world, 477 price in Hull-White world, 479 price in Vasciek world, 476 related to yield curve, 472 boostrapping, for yield curve, 495 brackets, 16 C & C++, issues with, 4calculus. functions for, 41 and Greeks, 3 call options. CEV pricing of, 520-527 derivation of solution, 112 Greeks for, 154 implied volatility for, 159 Mathematica model of, 152 with barriers, 170, 174 cells, opening and closing, 15 CEV models, approximate option formulae, 524 call option valuation in, 520-527 defined, 516 diffusion equation analogue, 519 fast evaluation, 522 Green's function for, 519 PDE for, 517 put option valuation in, 530 relation to Cox-Ingersoll-Ross model, 516 skew in, 527

chooser options, 254 clearing definitions, 33 Clear, 33 Coefficient, 40 Collect. 39 compilation, Compile and explicit FD methods, 268 Compile and PSOR, 309 Compile and SOR, 308 Compile and trees, 388-398 Compile and tridiagonal solver, 270 complex numbers, 46 composite options, 79 compound options, 243 constant elasticity of variance, see CEV control variates. for Asian options, 432 for basket, 441 convertible bonds, PDE for, 71 coupons, basic management, 122 Cox-Ross-Rubenstein, see trees covariance. Mathematica implementation, 438 multivariate simulation and, 450 role in basket modelling, 451 Cox-Ingersoll-Ross interest rate model. bond option price in, 513 bond price in, 477 distribution properties, 509-513 random walk defined, 473 relationship to CEV model, 516 Crank-Nicholson, numerical scheme defined, 262 solution of diffusion equation, 273 solution of Black-Scholes PDE for Put. 287 problems with Greeks for European options, 294-295 D, differentiation operator, 41 data, controlling large data sets, 35 interpolating, 483 list structures for, 27 delta. defined, 81 linked to rho. 83 diffusion equation,

and method of images, 99 CEV variant, 519 derived for convertible bonds. 122 derived from Black-Scholes equation, 91 Green's function for, 95 solution given initial conditions, 98 dilution and warrants, 252 discount factors, in practical yield curve construction, 490 theory of, 472 dividends, analytical models for, 457, 464 discrete, and jump-conditions, 122 discrete, in Black-Scholes PDE, 122 discrete, in Monte Carlo analysis, 455 effective price model for, 457 double barrier options, 237 Douglas, applied to American options, 308-330 applied to diffusion equation, 275 two time level scheme defined, 262 three time level scheme defined, 280 three time level applied to European Put, 295 behaviour of Greeks for European options, 301-304 DSolve, symbolic ODE solver, 44 editing, 15 efficiency, see compilation exact numbers, 20 Expand, 36 European options, derivation of general formulae, 107-117 binaries, 137 calls, puts, 151 package for, 162 exchange options, 255 exotic options, miscellaneous, 237-257 see also barrier, binary, Asian options Factor, 36

Fit. fitting functions to data, 25 as potential tool for yield curves, 482 non-linear extension of, 486 FindRoot, numerical solver, 26 finite-differences. and American options, 306 and trees. 263 applied to European Put, 281 Crank-Nicholson, see Crank-Nicholson Douglas, see Douglas explicit applied in Mathematica, 267 problems with two time-level schemes, 264, 293-295 schemes for the diffusion equation, 261 theta-method, 262 Flatten, 31 Fold. 33 FoldList. 33 forward rates, 499 front end, introduced, 12 functions, building your own, 52 controlling operation of, 49 in pure form, 53 Options in, 49 recursive definition, 55 gamma. defined, 81 and Black-Scholes PDE, 82 link to vega, 82 graphics introduced, 17 using, see plotting Greeks, defined, 81 identities linking, 82 problems in FD models, 258, 294-295 for American options in FD scheme, 315, 321, 326 Green's function, for CEV diffusion equation, 519 for diffusion equation, 95 transforms of. 96 heat equation, see diffusion equation hedging, dymanic, 69 help, on function definitions, 49 Hull-White interest rate model,

NSolve, numerical solver, 26

Carlo, SOR, PSOR,

NDSolve, NSolve,

object oriented programming, 4

NIntegrate etc.

applied to two-asset options,

finite-differences, trees, Monte

NIntegrate,

defined, 43

447

numerical methods, see

bond price in, 479 random walk defined, 473 images, method of, and diffusion equation, 99 barrier option details, 112 impedance boundary condition and diffusion equation, 103 financial analogue of, 117 implied volatility, CEV analysis, 527 issues with. 5 for calls, puts, 159 input, 12 Input Form, 16 integration, symbolic, 41 numerical, 43 interest rate models, Black. 506-508 Black-Derman-Toy, 474 Black-Karasinski, 474 bond pricing in, 474 Cox-Ingersoll-Ross, 473, 477, 509, 513, 516 Ho-Lee. 473 Hull-White, 473, 479 one-factor model families, 473 options, generalities, 504 options, in the Black world, 505 Rendleman-Bartter, 473 swaption pricing, 506 Vasicek, 473, 508 Integrate, 41 interpolation, 483 iteration. 33 Itô's lemma, 69 Jarrow-Rudd, see trees jump conditions, for discrete dividends, 122 implementation in finite-differences, 458 kernel. introduced, 12 quitting, 16 knock-in/out options, see barrier options ladder option, definition and model. 197 Laplace transforms, and Asian options, 206 and double barriers, 238 package for, 96

Limit, taking limits, 43 lists. introduced, 27 one-dimensional, 27 functions acting on, 28 two-dimensional, 29 changing dimension, 31 ListPlot. 18 log options, from Black-Scholes PDE, 92 Greeks for, 128 implied volatility for, 130 Mathematica model of, 127 lookback options, analytical Mathematica models of, 190-197 and impedance boundary conditions, 118 classified, 189 Greeks for. 191-192 Monte Carlo simulation of, 421, 424 matrices. 29 MatrixForm. 29 mean reversion, for interest rates, 473 model risk, 2 Monte Carlo modelling, Asian options, 422, 427 European options re-visited, 413 hedge parameter computation in. 414 lookback options, 421, 424 multivariate analysis, 450 multivariate simulation, 438 paths, fine clockwork, 407 paths, coarse clockwork, 411 paths, coarse irregularly-spaced, 412 N. numerical evaluation, 19 NDSolve, numerical ODE solver, 45 Nest, 33

NestList. 33

Newton-Raphson, 27

Norm definition, 141

normal distribution.

series for, 147

142

relation to Erf, 141

Monte Carlo sampling

ODE, solution of, 44-45 OOP, 4 option prices, basic derivations, 107 types, see e.g. calls, puts and names in general. ordinary differential equations symbolic solution 44 numerical solution 45 Options, 49 packages basic use, 59 American options, 233 European options, 162 FourierTransform, 59 LaplaceTransform, 96 partial differential equations, see Black-Scholes PDE Partition, 31 path-dependent options, PDE for, 81 Monte Carlo sampling, see Monte Carlo see also Asian. lookback options PDE, see Black-Scholes PDE pure functions, 53 Plot, introduced 17 plotting. colours and, 60 legends and, 61 several functions, 60 several data sets, 63 functions of many variables, 65 movies, 67 POO, see OOP power options, continued fractions for, 148 from Black-Scholes PDE, 92 Greeks for, 134 implied volatility for, 135 Mathematica model of, 133 traditional approximations for, probability functions, log-normal, 108

non-central chi-squared, 509 normal, see normal distribution put options, CEV model of, 530 derivation of solution, 112 Greeks for. 154 implied volatility for, 159 Mathematica model of, 152 with barriers, 178, 180 projected successive over-relaxation, see PSOR PSOR. compiled solver for, 309 alternatives to, using linear programming, 331 Quanto options, PDE derivation, 79 Greeks for, 250 Mathematica model of, 249 rebates. PDE basics, 101 calculated for barrier options, 114 recursion, 55 regression, least squares, see Fit robust, 340 rho. defined, 82 link to delta, 83 risk-neutrality and dynamic hedging, 70 Series function, 44 simulation, see Monte Carlo skew, for volatility in CEV models, 527 Solve function, 21 SOR. 307 speed, improving, see compilation spread, two asset option, 446 spreadsheets, issues with, 4 SRCEV, see CEV Standard Form, 16 stochastic process, naive view, 69 substitutions. permanent, 40 temporary, 40 successive over-relaxation, see SOR supersymmetric, see trees swaps, use in yield curve construction, 487

options on, 506 swaptions, Black model, 506 Together, 37 Traditional Form, 16 transforms, Fourier, package for, 59 Laplace, see Laplace transforms trees. barriers, nasty behaviour of, 381 binomial Cox-Ross-Rubenstein, compiled implementation, 387 binomial Cox-Ross-Rubenstein, convergence analysis, 367 binomial Cox-Ross-Rubenstein, magic tree sizes, 367 binomial Cox-Ross-Rubenstein, recursive implementation, 364 binomial Cox-Ross-Rubenstein style defined, 348 binomial Jarrow-Rudd, convergence analysis, 373 binomial Jarrow-Rudd, magic tree sizes. 374 binomial Jarrow-Rudd. recursive implementation, 371 binomial Jarrow-Rudd style defined, 347 binomial supersymmetric, convergence analysis, 377 binomial supersymmetric, magic tree sizes, 379 binomial supersymmetric, recursive implementation, 375 binomial supersymmetric style defined. 350 general specification, 344 Mathematica solution of binomial constraint equations, 354 relation to finite-differences, 263 trinomial supersymmetric, compiled implementation, 396 trinomial supersymmetric, Mathematica solution of constraints, 356 trinomial supersymmetric style defined. 356 tridiagonal equations,

compiled solver for, 270 solution of implicit FD schemes using, 271 up and in options, calls, 170 puts, 178 up and out options, calls, 174 puts, 180 vanilla option, see call, put option Vasicek interest rate model, bond option pricing, 508 bond price in, 476 random walk defined, 473 vega, defined. 82 link to gamma, 82 verification, in general, 2 of FD schemes for European Put, 281 of tree schemes, 367, 373, 377 volatility, approaches to, 515 CEV model of, 516 implied, see implied volatility implied for named options, see e.g. call options, implied volatilty introduction as random walk parameter, 69 warrant pricing and implied volatility, 7 Greeks for, 253 Mathematica model of, 252 Wozniakowksi integration, 416

yield curve, bonds and, 472 bootstrapping algorithm for, 495 construction from market data, 487 forward rate computation and, 499

zero-coupon bonds, and yield curve, 472 options on, 508, 513