



Make The Most Of Your Winners: Five Approaches To Staking

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STAKING

Lets assume you start with 2 things:

- 1) A bank (your betting fund)
- 2) A unit stake plan (betting units). This could just be one unit for all bets, or a whole range of other approaches.

Some staking plan techniques might be:

a) Betting a fixed percentage of the bank each time

This means your bet size will fluctuate depending on your bank size. This has the benefit of stopping you going broke and lends a discipline (which is an underrated facet) to your staking. It also means if you're accurately measuring value and you're good you will turn a profit (i.e. there is no bet weighting to mess it up).

For me it has 2 main problems:

- If fails to reflect the merits of a individual bets. Not all even money shots are the same - it's perfectly reasonable to be more confident of one over the other even if you back both.

- It can play mental tricks. Let's say your normal bet is £50, your starting bank is £1000 and you decide to implement a 10% of bank strategy. It may not be long before you're betting uncomfortably large amounts of money which can make you over cautious.

Alternatively, you could be betting overly small amounts. Amounts so little you don't give a hoot about which can lead to carelessness. This can, of course, be mitigated by siphoning off your bank when it gets big, or supplementing it when it gets low.

So perhaps I can introduce a general rule here.

You have a betting comfort zone - a range of stake within which you can bet effectively, without mental anguish / carelessness.

b) Progressive staking plans.

You can implement a progressive staking plan which is based on previous results. We can use a method introduced on this site:

£5 on the first horse, if it wins, £5 on your next.
£5 on the first horse, if it loses, £10 on your next etc.....

The problem with this sort of bet is that it takes an independent bet and factors in the success of that into the attractiveness of the following bet. This for me makes little sense.

Let's take an example. Its casino time and you're doubling up on red.

£5 red, first spin – it comes in black. Odds of 18/37. (quite apart from the fact this is a terrible bet).

So next £10 red, second spin.....well it doesn't really matter does it. What you are effectively saying is you have the identical bet but it's worth twice as much the second time. If that loses you are now saying the bet is worth three times as much than it was the first time. However the odds remain the same.

Okay a mathematician can step in here and point out the odds aren't quite the same.....but I think the point holds. I won't argue - eventually you will get a red but I will argue that this escalation of stakes doesn't reflect the true odds (okay, true value). This applies even more when not dealing with mathematically determinable odds. What has your loser in the 2:30 got to do with your bet in the 3:00 (speaking generically here) that warrants twice the investment?

The same goes for betting on doubles. They may be attractive because of the combined odds. But if you double up 2 evens shots are you really saying the second outcome is worth twice as much as the first? What if you back a 5/1 shot and then a 3/1 shot in a double? Does the 3/1 shot really warrant a stake 5 times the size of the 5/1 shot?

Also if the first leg of the double loses did you really want nothing on the second? If so what were you doing including it in the first place?

c) Price Related Variable Unit Plans.

This is a plan where the stakes are escalated according to the odds with the aim of achieving a roughly similar return with each winner. E.g. 3 units on at evens or below - 2 units 5/4 – 2/1, 1 unit 3/1 or above. This isn't a bad technique as it requires discipline and also recognises that all bets aren't equal. However, by focusing on the end result, you are applying rigid rules that do not necessarily reflect the true value of the bet. E.g. the 2/1 shot may be an even better bet than the even money shot (in terms of pure chance), and yet you are having twice as much on the evens shot.

d) Confidence Related Variable Unit Plans

Similar to the above but you're using a gut feel to set your stakes. Has the benefit that perhaps you are loading according to the true worth of the bet, but who really knows given you are applying no discipline or technique to the setting of this. However, if you have a good gut feel, it may be racking them up for you. But wouldn't it be better actually understanding the decision and having method behind it?

It is far better to be able to systematically or scientifically quantify what it is about your gut feel that makes you positive about an event's outcome. That way, you can almost 'bottle it' and call on it as required. Otherwise, sentiment and the fear factor come in again when losing streaks inevitably occur.

e) Value Geared Bets

There is a good argument that says there should be one guiding principle when it comes to staking. The more the odds are in your favour the more you should have on. Basically this means if you back a 2/1 shot whose true odds you think should be 4/5 you should have more on than a 2/1 shot whose true odds you think should be 7/4. Although both are sound bets (assuming your measure of the true odds is accurate), a level staking approach won't reflect the exciting opportunity of the 4/5 shot priced at 2/1. That is, that staking approach won't take into account 'value'.

To use the blackjack example again, you can be the world's best card counter but won't make any money unless you are able to increase the size of your bet when the deck is in your favour (i.e. on a high count). This is effectively leveraging value / striking when the percentages are in your favour, and is entirely independent of the result of the last hand (count aside). This is how you can turn the percentages in your favour.

The principle also holds in other sports. The disadvantage of this method is, of course, that if you don't have a robust method for accurately assessing true odds, your house is built on sandy foundations.

So a suggested approach is to bring together the value element and the weighted staking element. It requires a comparison of available odds with true odds to calculate the bet strength.

Determining this is very personal. One way would be start by calculating the difference in true odds (this is subjective) over available odds as a percentage (a percentage figure is more accurate than points as it takes into account the length of the odds, e.g. 2/1 for an evens chance (1 point, but 100% difference) is a stronger bet than 10/1 for an 8/1 chance (2 points, but only 20% difference).

Let's say that to place a maximum bet I would require a 350% "value" premium. So if the "true odds" (determined by form analysis and pricing up of the market) of a selection was even money, a maximum bet would require the odds offered to be 7/2. My maximum is 10 pts, my minimum is 1pt. My bet strike is a premium of 125%. So on an evens chance, I'm only interested in betting at 5/4 or better (otherwise I don't deem it value). I would then have a sliding stake scale according to bet strength (defined by true odds versus available odds). So I may come up with the following:

True odds: Evens

Avail Odds	Stake
5/4	1 (this is min bet as it is at 125% premium)
6/4	2 (150% value)
7/4	3 (175% value)
2/1	4 (200% value)
5/2	6 (250% value)
3/1	8 (300% value)
7/2	10 (350% value)

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Here the stake units would be within an acceptable range. If my minimum bet is £10 and my maximum is £100 then each unit would be £10. Obviously any bet should be placed in the context of the total betting bank. It's dangerous to have £1000 on a selection when your bank is £2000, even if you make it a standout bet of the season opportunity.

In the example of the above, even if you considered a 7/2 chance to have true odds of even money, that still makes you as likely to lose as to win.

In that case it might make sense to increase your bank, and/or decrease the staking range (say 3 points rather than 10 points).

Ten points may be too broad a range, but a range up to four or even five is likely to be workable. E.g. £10 min, £50 max. (2 pts = £20, 3pts = £30, and so on up to 5 pts = £50).

Ultimately, staking plans – as with all other facets of betting – are a very personal subject area. What works for one person won't work for another. Some people have a more cautious approach to betting, while others are more aggressive or cavalier.

The above is just a handful of examples of how different approaches may suit your style better or worse. Do feel free to adopt them, but my advice with anything new is to always paper trade for a time first.

If you keep betting records, and have access to a spreadsheet programme, it can be quite easy to measure how staking plans would have enhanced or degraded your payouts and, therefore, your overall betting bank.

The one thing that is for certain with a staking plan is that it introduces a degree of rigour and discipline to one's betting. For most people, this is a very welcome weapon in their betting arsenal.