FREE BONUS CHAPTER

ADVANCED TOOLS FROM THE 2026 ICT MENTORSHIP

A companion to
Conservative Day Trading Strategies

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Advanced Tools from the 2026 ICT Mentorship

The main body of *Conservative Day Trading Strategies* gave you a complete mechanical system. One daily script. One entry engine. One set of traps to avoid. That system works. It's designed to work on its own.

But ICT's methodology doesn't stand still. In early 2026, his mentorship material introduced several concepts that sharpen the model you already have. They don't replace anything in your script. They add precision to it — finer tools for reading whether conditions are right, grading the levels you're already marking, and understanding what the algorithm is doing during the hours the main book told you to avoid.

Think of this chapter as a set of upgrades to the cockpit you built in Part 2 of Conservative Day Trading Strategies. Same plane. Same flight plan. Better instruments.

Reading the Room: High Resistance and Low Resistance Liquidity Run Conditions

Before you even think about entries, you need to know what kind of day you're in. Not every session is equal. Some days, the algorithm delivers clean, directional moves with visible gaps and smooth expansions. Other days, price chops sideways in a block of overlapping candles that eat every setup alive.

ICT formalised this distinction as High Resistance Liquidity Run Conditions and Low Resistance Liquidity Run Conditions.

High Resistance Liquidity Run Conditions look like a wall of overlapping candles. Every candlestick shares the range of the preceding candlestick. There are no clean gaps. No visible inefficiencies. No room to breathe. The price action literally makes it difficult to find an efficient, low-risk entry. If you look at a five-minute chart and it resembles a dense, compressed block with no daylight between the candles, you're in high resistance conditions.

The rule is simple. Don't force it. High resistance conditions are where the model breaks down — not because the model is wrong, but because the environment isn't giving you the ingredients the model requires. You need displacement. You need gaps. You need a clean expansion. If the chart isn't offering those things, no amount of screen time will manufacture them. Mark your levels, study the price action, and wait. The conditions will shift.

Low Resistance Liquidity Run Conditions are the opposite. The price action is porous. You can see Fair Value Gaps forming. Candles leave space between them. When price retraces into a gap, it respects it and expands in the direction of the prevailing bias. If your bias is bearish, up-close candles get repelled lower. Down-close candles get consumed entirely as the move continues. The price action has a rhythm you can read.

These are your conditions. When you see low resistance on the chart, that's when the mechanical entry engine from *Conservative Day Trading Strategies* — your FPFVGs, your IFVGs, your Breaker Blocks, your Silver Bullet windows — has the highest probability of delivering. When you see high resistance, you sit on your hands. The script doesn't change. Your willingness to run it does.

Here's the practical filter. Before your first trade of the day, look at the last two hours of price action on a five-minute chart. Can you see gaps? Can you see clean displacement candles with space between them? Is the price expanding directionally, or is it building a dense, overlapping block? If it looks porous and directional, you're in low resistance. Proceed with the script. If it looks compressed and messy, treat it as a no-trade environment and come back tomorrow.

The Larry Williams Range Cycle

This concept, which ICT credits to trader Larry Williams, gives you one more lens for anticipating what's coming next.

Markets cycle between large ranges and small ranges. Large-range sessions lead to small-range sessions. Small-range sessions lead to large-range sessions. It's a rhythm as old as the market itself — expansion, contraction, expansion.

The practical application is straightforward. When you're in low-resistance conditions, and you notice the candles starting to compress — small bodies, tight ranges, consolidation forming inside an inefficiency — pay attention. That contraction is not the market going quiet. It's the market loading. The next move is building pressure behind that tight range, and when it releases, the expansion is often significant.

If your daily bias is bearish and the chart shows low resistance conditions with a small consolidation forming inside a gap, you're looking at a coiled spring. The same applies in the other direction. Small ranges are not a reason to walk away. They're a reason to get ready — provided the broader conditions are low resistance, not high resistance. A small range within a high-resistance block is just more chop. A small range within a low-resistance trend is a precursor to the next leg.

Volume Imbalance: The Gap Between Bodies

You already know Fair Value Gaps — the space between the wicks of candle one and candle three. Volume Imbalance is a related concept, but it examines candle bodies rather than wicks.

A Volume Imbalance forms when two adjacent candle bodies don't overlap. The wicks might cross each other's range, but the real bodies — the open-to-close of each candle — leave a gap between them. That gap represents a zone where the actual transacted volume was imbalanced, and it acts as a level the algorithm tends to respect.

Examples of Volume Imbalance on the Nasdaq 100 Daily Chart.

On the daily chart, a Volume Imbalance appears as a clear gap between the closes and opens of two consecutive candles. Mark it like you would an FVG — draw a box from the top of one body to the bottom of the next, and extend it forward.

The key rule for Volume Imbalances is neutralisation. A Volume Imbalance stays active until a subsequent candle prints an entire body across the full range of that imbalance — not just a wick through it, but a complete body from the high to the low of the zone. Once that happens, the imbalance has been neutralised. It can still act as a reference for managing an existing position, but it's no longer a fresh level for new entries or targets.

Volume Imbalances are most useful on the daily and four-hour charts for your morning preparation. When you're building your daily bias and identifying the draw on liquidity — the first building block from *Conservative Day Trading Strategies* — an active Volume Imbalance on the daily chart gives you a structural target or support level that sits between the obvious highs and lows. It's one more layer of the algorithm's roadmap.

The TGIF Profile: How Fridays Behave

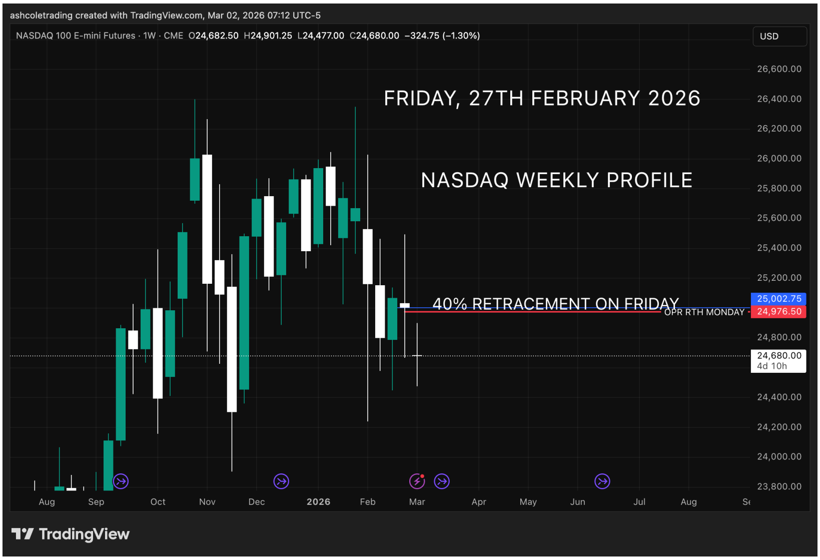
This concept adds an edge to your weekly preparation, specifically for Friday trading.

ICT observed that Fridays tend to retrace a portion of the weekly range. The size of that retracement depends on what kind of week it's been.

In a normal trending week — where the market has moved directionally from Monday through Thursday — Friday typically retraces 20 to 30% of the weekly range. The weekly objective has been met, and Friday is the market giving back a portion of that move before the weekend.

In a consolidation week — where the market has chopped sideways without a clear directional move — Friday retraces further. Expect at least 40% of the weekly range, potentially up to 60%. The logic is that a consolidation week hasn't delivered a clear objective, so Friday's retracement pulls the price back toward the middle of the range, resetting for the following week.

How to use this. On Friday morning, measure the full range from Monday's open to Thursday's extreme. Calculate the 20, 40, and 60 percent retracement levels. If it's been a trending week, the 20 to 30 percent zone becomes your likely target area. If it's been a choppy, range-bound week, look deeper — the 40 to 60 percent zone.



Friday was a consolidation week. The market was expected to pull back at least 40% of the weekly range.

This doesn't replace your daily script. It adds context to your Friday bias. If your model is telling you to take a trade that would push further into the weekly trend on a Friday afternoon, the TGIF profile is a reason to question that setup. Fridays retrace. They don't usually extend. Knowing that keeps you from fighting the weekly rhythm.

Gradient Levels: Grading the Opening Range Gap

In Conservative Day Trading Strategies, you learned to mark the Opening Range Gap — yesterday's close at 4:14 PM to today's open at 9:30 AM — and draw the 50 percent midpoint as your first morning target. That's the foundation. Gradient levels take it further.

Instead of marking only the midpoint, divide the entire Opening Range Gap into eighths and quarters. Place your Fibonacci retracement tool from the 9:30 AM opening price to the previous day's 4:14 PM settlement, and mark every gradient level: the 0, 0.125, 0.25, 0.375, 0.5, 0.625, 0.75, 0.875, and 1 levels.

Each of these gradient levels acts as a potential reaction point — a spot where the algorithm might find an order block, a breaker, or an entry point for institutional order flow (ICT refers to them collectively as PD Arrays). They're not random lines; they are structural divisions of the gap that institutional positioning respects.

The premium-versus-discount distinction applies here, just as it does everywhere else in ICT's framework. If the market opens above yesterday's settlement, the Opening Range Gap is in premium — price opened at an elevated level relative to its close. If it opens below, the gap is in discount. When you're bearish, you want to see the price retrace into the premium gradient levels and reject. When you're bullish, you want to see the price hold the discount gradient levels and expand higher.

Opening Range Gap Gradients. The Red Line Indicates the Midpoint at 50%.

Here's what makes gradient levels powerful in practice. When a Fair Value Gap, an IFVG, or a Breaker Block lines up with one of these gradient levels, the confluence adds confidence to the entry. You already have your mechanical checklist from *Conservative Day Trading Strategies* — bias, sweep, entry signal, time window, risk-to-reward. If the entry also sits on a gradient level of the Opening Range Gap, you've got an additional structural reason to trust it.

One more thing. Gradient levels don't only apply to the daily Opening Range Gap. The same principle works on the New Week Opening Gap — Friday's close to Monday's open — and the New Day Opening Gap (5 PM to 6 PM). Any gap between a session's close and the next session's open can be graded the same way. The algorithm respects these divisions regardless of the timeframe.

The Lunch Macro: What Happens Between 11:30 AM and 1:30 PM

In Conservative Day Trading Strategies, you learned the rule: between midday and 1:30 PM, the market builds fake highs and lows. Don't chase. Mark the levels. Wait for the afternoon to destroy them.

That rule still stands. But the Lunch Macro — running from Midday to 1:30 PM Eastern — adds a layer of precision to what's actually happening during those hours.

Here's the pattern. The algorithm uses the lunch period to retrace toward a specific level created during the morning session. The target depends on what the morning did.

If the AM session between 9:30 AM and 11:30 AM was bullish — price ran higher, taking buy-side liquidity — the Lunch Macro tends to drive price back down toward the key low that formed after 10 AM (on a ranging day) or before Midday (on a trending day). That 10 AM – Midday low becomes the Lunch Macro's target.

Ranging Price Action during a Bullish Morning. A Low Formed Shortly After 10 AM Was Taken Before 1:30 PM.

If the AM session was bearish — price sold off, sweeping sell-side liquidity — the Lunch Macro tends to push price back up toward the high that formed just after 10 AM (or just before Midday, in a trending market). That just after 10 AM (or before 12 PM) high becomes the target. Marking such high or low and watching whether the Lunch Macro reaches it by 1:30 PM gives you a powerful read on what the afternoon is likely to do. If the Lunch Macro hits that level, the retracement might be complete. The afternoon session — and your PM Silver Bullet window — starts from a clean slate with the morning range fully retraced.

The 30-Minute Opening Range

One clarification that ICT emphasised in his early 2026 mentorship, and it's worth stating clearly here.

The opening range is 30 minutes. Not 15.

If you've encountered other methods that use a 15-minute opening range breakout, that's a different approach. In the ICT framework, the algorithm uses the first 30 minutes of Regular Trading Hours — 9:30 AM to 10 AM — to establish the opening range. That's the window referenced throughout *Conservative Day Trading Strategies* when it discusses the 9:30 AM to 10 AM FPFVG, which serves as your reference. The algorithm shows you its hand and lays the foundation for the 9:50 AM to 10:10 AM Macro and the 10 AM to 11 AM Silver Bullet.

How These Tools Fit Your Script

None of these concepts replaces what you already have. Your daily script from Conservative Day Trading Strategies still runs the same way every morning. Your mechanical entry checklist still governs every trade.

What changes is the quality of your preparation. Before you sit down to trade, you now have additional questions to answer.

Are conditions low resistance or high resistance? If high resistance, you don't trade — regardless of what the script produces. Is there an active Volume Imbalance on the daily chart that gives you a structural target? Is it Friday, and if so, what does the TGIF profile suggest about how far the weekly range is likely to retrace? Do any of your entry levels align with a gradient level on the Opening Range Gap? And during lunch, is the algorithm retracing toward the 10 AM level, setting up a clean slate for the afternoon?

These are refinements. The model is the model. But refinements are how you move from following the script to understanding the script — and that understanding is what builds the fluency that lets you trade with genuine confidence, not just mechanical discipline.

The 2026 mentorship material continues to evolve. For the most complete and current version of these concepts, go directly to ICT's YouTube channel and study the source. What you have here is a distillation — enough to sharpen your edge while you develop your own depth with the original material.

— *Ash Cole*

BEFORE YOU GO

Keep building the edge.

This chapter sharpens a system you already have. If you want the full system - the daily script, the entry engine, the traps to avoid - it's all laid out, step by step, in the books.

Conservative Day Trading Strategies
The main book - the complete mechanical system (Kindle)

Day Trading for Beginners
ICT Smart Money Concepts - the foundations, A to Z

More free tools, cheat sheets & guides
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ICT methodology was created by Michael J. Huddleston, The Inner Circle Trader (youtube.com/@InnerCircleTrader). This is an independent educational interpretation, not official ICT material.

Educational content only and not financial advice. Trading involves substantial risk; only trade with capital you can afford to lose.

Trade smart. Trade with patience. Trade for freedom. - Ash Cole