



# Schelling's Game Theory: How to Make Decisions

By Robert V. Dodge

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## Schelling's Game Theory: How to Make Decisions By Robert V. Dodge

Thomas Schelling, who wrote the foreword for this book, won the Nobel Prize in economics for "having enhanced our understanding of conflict and cooperation through game-theory analysis." This came after he had taught a course in game theory and rational choice to advanced students and government officials for 45 years. In this book, Robert Dodge provides in language for a broad audience, the concepts that Schelling taught. Armed with Schelling's understanding of game theory methods and his approaches to problems, the general reader can improve daily decision making.

Mathematics often make game theory challenging but was not a major part of Schelling's course and is even less of a factor in this book. Along with a summary of the material Schelling presented, included are problems from the course and similar less challenging questions. While considerable analysis is done with the basic game theory tool--the two-by-two matrix--much of the book is descriptive and rational decision-making is explained with stories. Chapter supplements are added to illuminate points presented by Schelling, including writings by Paul Krugman, Thomas Friedman, Steven Levitt, and others.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

Praise for *Schelling's Game Theory: How to Make Decisions*

"Gives readers an excellent Harvard game theory course by a renowned Nobel Prize winner through the eyes of his Boswell. This book is a must read for political scientists, economists, and anyone who has to make decisions of import."--*New York Journal of Books*

"Few authors enable the reader to understand and appreciate game theory and have fun at the same time. Tom Schelling is one of them; Robert Dodge is another."--Albert Carnesale, Chancellor Emeritus and Professor; University of California, Los Angeles

"Exactly forty years ago, I was privileged as an undergraduate to take Tom Schelling's now famous course, *Conflict, Coalition, and Strategy*. It was a stunning--even life-changing--experience. Now Robert Dodge has assembled the animating ideas of this course for everyone to enjoy, learn from, and use. I wish it had been available as a study guide when my compatriots and I were wrestling with these concepts the first time!"--Herman B. "Dutch" Leonard, George F. Baker Professor of Public Management, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

"Robert Dodge has articulated the genius of Tom Schelling's insights in ways that are accessible to experienced and aspiring decision makers alike. Having spent my own career negotiating international trade agreements and commercial deals or trying to achieve consensus among governmental agencies, legislators, faculty or not-for-profit board members, I was consistently reminded of how many of these lessons still apply."--Ambassador Susan C. Schwab, Professor and former Dean, School of Public Policy, University of Maryland and Former United States Trade Representative

"[Dodge] discusses in a very lucid fashion some of the most important tools in game theory. Despite game theory's being a highly mathematical field, Dodge abstains from abstract technical details and has produced a cogent, thoroughly enjoyable text, as Schelling himself would have done. Recommended." --*CHOICE*

"Dodge is clearly a practiced presenter of Schelling's work, and of game theory more generally. His explanations are accessible enough for novices but meaty enough for all but the most advanced readers. The book covers the foundations of game theory--from basic strategic concepts through workhouse, two-player models and eventually to group decisions and outcomes. To bring this kind of source material to a broader audience is a great cause. Dodge enhances that contribution by adding considerably to Schelling's material.

Overall, Dodge's book provides a solid introduction to game theory, more than expected about the field's history, and a nice overview of Schelling's work. In this effort, Dodge is a faithful steward of Schelling's course, but not without the trimming, shaping, and supplementing only an outsider could provide. The result is a game theory book unlike any other."--*Journal of Economic Literature*

#### Praise for Thomas Schelling

"Thomas Schelling gave the world that rarest of gifts--a set of tools that have allowed those in every intellectual walk of life to organize and make sense of their experience. I am one of many who owe him a great debt."--Malcolm Gladwell, author of *The Tipping Point*, *Blink*, *Outliers*

"Faced with a decision under a fog of uncertainty about other's decisions, we often ask ourselves: What would Tom Schelling do?"--Robert Solow, Nobel Prize Winner in Economics, 1987

"Thomas Schelling is a man whose genius comes from his ability to think about the world in the simplest possible ways. Over and over with Schelling, you read his ideas and ask yourself how you never thought of that yourself. Schelling has been one of my intellectual idols and role models for the last 25 years."--Steven Levitt, coauthor of *Freakonomics* and *Superfreakonomics*

"Forty years later, I still remember my excitement from the day I first read Tom Schelling's brilliant insights on strategy, conflict, and commitment. I have been inspired by his work ever since."--Robert Axelrod, author of *The Evolution of Cooperation*

"Tom Schelling is master of the profound but simple. His concept of 'focal point' and his understanding of the importance of commitment have become cornerstones of game theory and its applications."--Robert Aumann, Nobel Prize Winner in Economics, 2005

#### About the Author

**Robert V. Dodge** is author of *The Strategist: The Life and Times of Thomas Schelling* and is retired from 23 years of teaching social studies at the Singapore American School. He received a Master's degree in Public Administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

#### Users Review

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**Logan Merritt:**

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**Carolyn Hoar:**

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