How To Avoid the Worst Sector Mutual Funds

Question: Why are there so many mutual funds?

Answer: mutual fund providers tend to make lots of money on each fund so they create more products to sell.

The large number of mutual funds has little to do with serving your best interests. Below are three red flags you can use to avoid the worst mutual funds:

1. Inadequate Liquidity

This issue is the easiest to avoid, and our advice is simple. Avoid all mutual funds with less than $100 million in assets. Low levels of liquidity can lead to a discrepancy between the price of the mutual fund and the underlying value of the securities it holds. Plus, low asset levels tend to mean lower volume in the mutual fund and larger bid-ask spreads.

2. High Fees

Mutual funds should be cheap, but not all of them are. The first step here is to know what is cheap and expensive.

To ensure you are paying at or below average fees, invest only in mutual funds with total annual costs below 1.90%, which is the average total annual cost of the 649 U.S. equity Sector mutual funds we cover.

Figure 1 shows the most and least expensive sector mutual funds. Rydex provides 3 of the most expensive mutual funds while Vanguard mutual funds are among the cheapest.

Figure 1: 5 Least and Most Expensive Sector Mutual Funds

Ticker	Name	Sector	Total Annual Cost
Most Expensive			
RYREX	Rydex Series Funds: Real Estate Fund	Financials	7.85%
SFPAX	Saratoga Advantage Trust: Financial Services	Financials	7.27%
RYELX	Rydex Series Funds: Electronics Fund	Information Technology	6.82%
RYCRX	Rydex Series Funds: Real Estate Fund	Financials	6.82%
SBMBX	Saratoga Advantage Trust: Energy & Basic Materials	Energy	5.96%
Least Expensive			
VGSNX	Vanguard Specialized Funds: Vanguard REIT Index	Financials	0.10%
FSRNX	Fidelity Salem Street Trust: Spartan Real Estate Index	Financials	0.10%
VGSLX	Vanguard Specialized Funds: Vanguard REIT Index	Financials	0.12%
FSRVX	Fidelity Salem Street Trust: Spartan Real Estate Index	Financials	0.12%
VMIAX	Vanguard World Funds: Vanguard Materials Index	Materials	0.14%

Sources: New Constructs, LLC and company filings

Investors need not pay high fees for quality holdings. Fidelity Select Portfolios: Insurance Portfolio (FSPCX) earns our Very Attractive rating and has low total annual costs of only 0.97%.

On the other hand, Vanguard Specialized Funds: Vanguard REIT Index (VGNSX) holds poor stocks. No matter how cheap a mutual fund, if it holds bad stocks, its performance will be bad. The quality of a mutual fund's holdings matters more than its price.

3. Poor Holdings

Avoiding poor holdings is by far the hardest part of avoiding bad mutual funds, but it is also the most important because a mutual fund's performance is determined more by its holdings than its costs. Figure 2 shows the mutual funds within each sector with the worst holdings or portfolio management ratings.

Figure 2: Sector Mutual Funds with the Worst Holdings

Ticker	Name	Sector	Portfolio Management Rating
FBMPX	Fidelity Select Multimedia Portfolio	Consumer Discretionary	Dangerous
FSHOX	Fidelity Select Construction & Housing Portfolio	Consumer Staples	Dangerous
SBMBX	Saratoga Advantage Energy and Basic Materials	Energy	Dangerous
HLPPX	World Funds REMS Real Estate Value Opportunity	Financials	Very Dangerous
PHLAX	Prudential Sector Funds: Jennison Health Sciences	Health Care	Dangerous
FSCGX	Fidelity Select Industrial Equipment Portfolio	Industrials	Dangerous
RSIFX	RS Investment Trust: RS Technology Fund	Information Technology	Dangerous
RYBMX	Rydex Series Funds: Basic Materials Fund	Materials	Dangerous
FTUAX	Fidelity Select: Fidelity Advisor Telecommunications	Telecom Services	Dangerous
FUGAX	Fidelity Advisor Series Utilities Fund	Utilities	Dangerous

Sources: New Constructs, LLC and company filings

Fidelity appears more often than any other providers in Figure 2, which means that they offer the most mutual funds with the worst holdings.

Our overall ratings on mutual funds are based primarily on our stock ratings of their holdings.

The Danger Within

Buying a mutual fund without analyzing its holdings is like buying a stock without analyzing its business and finances. Put another way, research on mutual fund holdings is necessary due diligence because a mutual fund's performance is only as good as its holdings' performance.

PERFORMANCE OF MUTUAL FUND's HOLDINGs = PERFORMANCE OF MUTUAL FUND

Disclosure: David Trainer and Max Lee receive no compensation to write about any specific stock, sector, or theme.

New Constructs® – Profile

How New Constructs Creates Value for Clients

1. **Superior Recommendations** – Our stock picks consistently outperform. See our track record in our stock-picking accolades and Proof Is In Performance reports.
2. **More Accurate Research** – Our patented Research Platform for reversing accounting distortions and discounted cash flow analysis leverages better data to deliver smarter research.
3. **Time Savings** – We check the fine print in thousands of corporate filings so you don't have to. As reported by Barron's, our expertise in analyzing SEC filings delivers Hidden Gems and Red Flags that drive long-term stock-picking success.
4. **Transparency** – We are proud to share the results of our analysis of over 50,000 10Ks. See the Corporate Disclosure Transgressions report we provided the SEC. Our reports detail all data and assumptions. Company Models enable users to change them.
5. **Objectivity** – New Constructs is an independent research firm, not tied to Wall Street or investment banking services. Our models are driven by comprehensive high-quality data not stories. See our presentation to the Senate Banking Committee, the SEC and many others in DC.

Our Philosophy About Research

Accounting data is not designed for equity investors, but for debt investors. Accounting data must be translated into economic earnings to understand the profitability and valuation relevant to equity investors. Respected investors (e.g. Adam Smith, Warren Buffett and Ben Graham) have repeatedly emphasized that accounting results should not be used to value stocks. Economic earnings are what matter because they are:

1. Based on the complete set of financial information available.
2. Standard for all companies.
3. A more accurate representation of the true underlying cash flows of the business.

Additional Information

Incorporated in July 2002, New Constructs is an independent publisher of investment research that provides clients with consulting and research services. We specialize in quality-of-earnings, forensic accounting and discounted cash flow valuation analyses for all U.S. public companies. We translate accounting data from 10Ks into economic financial statements, i.e. NOPAT, Invested Capital, and WACC, to create economic earnings models, which are necessary to understand the true profitability and valuation of companies. Visit the Free Archive to download samples of our research. New Constructs is a BBB accredited business and a member of the Investorside Research Association.

DISCLOSURES

New Constructs®, LLC (together with any subsidiaries and/or affiliates, "New Constructs") is an independent organization with no management ties to the companies it covers. None of the members of New Constructs' management team or the management team of any New Constructs' affiliate holds a seat on the Board of Directors of any of the companies New Constructs covers. New Constructs does not perform any investment or merchant banking functions and does not operate a trading desk.

New Constructs' Stock Ownership Policy prevents any of its employees or managers from engaging in Insider Trading and restricts any trading whereby an employee may exploit inside information regarding our stock research. In addition, employees and managers of the company are bound by a code of ethics that restricts them from purchasing or selling a security that they know or should have known was under consideration for inclusion in a New Constructs report nor may they purchase or sell a security for the first 15 days after New Constructs issues a report on that security.

New Constructs is affiliated with Novo Capital Management, LLC, the general partner of a hedge fund. At any particular time, New Constructs' research recommendations may not coincide with the hedge fund's holdings. However, in no event will the hedge fund receive any research information or recommendations in advance of the information that New Constructs provides to its other clients.

DISCLAIMERS

The information and opinions presented in this report are provided to you for information purposes only and are not to be used or considered as an offer or solicitation of an offer to buy or sell securities or other financial instruments. New Constructs has not taken any steps to ensure that the securities referred to in this report are suitable for any particular investor and nothing in this report constitutes investment, legal, accounting or tax advice. This report includes general information that does not take into account your individual circumstance, financial situation or needs, nor does it represent a personal recommendation to you. The investments or services contained or referred to in this report may not be suitable for you and it is recommended that you consult an independent investment advisor if you are in doubt about any such investments or investment services.

Information and opinions presented in this report have been obtained or derived from sources believed by New Constructs to be reliable, but New Constructs makes no representation as to their accuracy, authority, usefulness, reliability, timeliness or completeness. New Constructs accepts no liability for loss arising from the use of the information presented in this report, and New Constructs makes no warranty as to results that may be obtained from the information presented in this report. Past performance should not be taken as an indication or guarantee of future performance, and no representation or warranty, express or implied, is made regarding future performance. Information and opinions contained in this report reflect a judgment at its original date of publication by New Constructs and are subject to change without notice. New Constructs may have issued, and may in the future issue, other reports that are inconsistent with, and reach different conclusions from, the information presented in this report. Those reports reflect the different assumptions, views and analytical methods of the analysts who prepared them and New Constructs is under no obligation to insure that such other reports are brought to the attention of any recipient of this report.

New Constructs' reports are intended for distribution to its professional and institutional investor customers. Recipients who are not professionals or institutional investor customers of New Constructs should seek the advice of their independent financial advisor prior to making any investment decision or for any necessary explanation of its contents.

This report is not directed to, or intended for distribution to or use by, any person or entity who is a citizen or resident of or located in any locality, state, country or jurisdiction where such distribution, publication, availability or use would be contrary to law or regulation or which would be subject New Constructs to any registration or licensing requirement within such jurisdiction.

This report may provide the addresses of websites. Except to the extent to which the report refers to New Constructs own website material, New Constructs has not reviewed the linked site and takes no responsibility for the content therein. Such address or hyperlink (including addresses or hyperlinks to New Constructs own website material) is provided solely for your convenience and the information and content of the linked site do not in any way form part of this report. Accessing such websites or following such hyperlink through this report shall be at your own risk.