



## How To Avoid the Worst Style ETFs

Question: Why are there so many ETFs?

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

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

### 1. Inadequate Liquidity

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

### 2. High Fees

ETFs 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 ETFs with [total annual costs](#) below 0.48%, which is the average total annual cost of the 289 U.S. equity Style ETFs we cover. The weighted average is lower at 0.18%, which highlights how investors tend to put their [money in ETFs with low fees](#).

Figure 1 shows AdvisorShares Athena High Dividend ETF (DIVI) is the most expensive style ETF and Schwab US Large-Cap ETF (SCHX) is the least expensive. AdvisorShares (DIVI and FWDD) and Absolute Shares (WBID and WBIB) each provide two of the most expensive ETFs while Schwab (SCHX, SCHB, SCHG) ETFs are among the cheapest.

**Figure 1: 5 Least and Most Expensive Style ETFs**

Ticker	Name	Style	Total Annual Cost
<b>Most Expensive</b>			
DIVI	AdvisorShares: Athena High Dividend ETF	Large Cap Value	1.45%
FWDD	AdvisorShares: Madrona Domestic ETF	All Cap Blend	1.39%
FLAG	WeatherStorm Forensic Accounting Long-Short	All Cap Value	1.28%
WBID	Absolute: WBI Tactical SMS Shares	Mid Cap Blend	1.19%
WBIB	Absolute: WBI Tactical SMV Shares	Mid Cap Blend	1.19%
<b>Least Expensive</b>			
SCHX	Schwab US Large-Cap ETF	Large Cap Blend	0.03%
SCHB	Schwab US Broad Market ETF	All Cap Blend	0.03%
ITOT	iShares Core S&P Total US Stock Market ETF	Large Cap Blend	0.03%
VTI	Vanguard Total Stock Market Index Fund	All Cap Blend	0.06%
SCHG	Schwab US Large-Cap Growth ETF	Large Cap Growth	0.07%

Sources: New Constructs, LLC and company filings

Investors need not pay high fees for quality holdings. Schwab U.S. Large-Cap ETF (SCHX) earns our Very Attractive rating and has low total annual costs of only 0.03%.

On the other hand, State Street SPDR S&P 400 Mid Cap Value ETF (MDYV) holds poor stocks and receives our Dangerous rating, yet has low total annual costs of 0.17%. No matter how cheap an ETF, if it holds bad stocks, its performance will be bad. The quality of an ETFs holdings matters more than its price.

### 3. Poor Holdings

Avoiding poor holdings is by far the hardest part of avoiding bad ETFs, but it is also the most important because an ETF's performance is determined more by its holdings than its costs. Figure 2 shows the ETFs within each style with the worst holdings or [portfolio management ratings](#).

**Figure 2: Style ETFs with the Worst Holdings**

Ticker	Name	Style	Portfolio Management Rating
DIG	ProShares Ultra Oil & Gas	All Cap Blend	Dangerous
IWP	iShares Russell Mid-Cap Growth ETF	All Cap Growth	Dangerous
DVP	Deep Value ETF	All Cap Value	Dangerous
EQAL	PowerShares Russell 1000 Equal Weight	Large Cap Blend	Dangerous
SBUS	ETFS Diversified-Factor US Large Cap	Large Cap Growth	Dangerous
PXLV	PowerShares Russell Top 200 Pure Value	Large Cap Value	Dangerous
VXF	Vanguard Extended Market Index Fund	Mid Cap Blend	Dangerous
VOT	Vanguard Mid-Cap Growth Index Fund	Mid Cap Growth	Dangerous
IWS	iShares Russell Mid-Cap Value ETF	Mid Cap Value	Dangerous
EQWS	PowerShares Russell 2000 Equal Weight	Small Cap Blend	Dangerous
PXSG	PowerShares Russell 2000 Pure Growth	Small Cap Growth	Dangerous
MDYV	SPDR S&P 400 Mid Cap Value ETF	Small Cap Value	Dangerous

Sources: New Constructs, LLC and company filings

PowerShares (EQAL, PXLV, EQWS, PXSG) appears more often than any other providers in Figure 2, which means that they offer the most ETFs with the worst holdings.

PowerShares Russell 2000 Equal Weight Portfolio (EQWS) is the worst rated ETF in Figure 2. State Street SPDR S&P 400 Mid Cap Value (MDYV), ProShares Ultra Oil & Gas (DIG), and PowerShares Russell 2000 Pure Growth Portfolio (PXSG) also earn a Dangerous [predictive overall rating](#), which means not only do they hold poor stocks, they charge high total annual costs.

Our [overall ratings on ETFs](#) are based primarily on our [stock ratings](#) of their holdings.

#### The Danger Within

Buying an ETF without analyzing its holdings is like buying a stock without analyzing its business and finances. Put another way, research on ETF holdings is necessary due diligence because an ETF's performance is only as good as its holdings' performance. Don't just take our word for it, [see what Barron's says](#) on this matter.

PERFORMANCE OF ETFs HOLDINGS = PERFORMANCE OF ETF

*This article originally published [here](#) on August 12, 2016.*

*Disclosure: David Trainer and Kyle Martone receive no compensation to write about any specific stock, style, or theme.*



## ***New Constructs® – Profile***

---

### ***How New Constructs Creates Value for Clients***

We find it. You benefit. Cutting-edge technology enables us to scale our [forensic accounting expertise](#) across 3000+ stocks. We shine a light in the dark corners of SEC filings so our clients can make safer, more informed decisions.

Our [stock rating methodology](#) instantly informs you of the quality of the business and the fairness of the stock's valuation. We do the diligence on earnings quality and valuation so you don't have to.

In-depth risk/reward analysis underpins our ratings. Our rating methodology grades every stock, ETF, and mutual fund according to what we believe are the 5 most important criteria for assessing the quality of an equity. Each grade reflects the balance of potential risk and reward of buying that equity. Our analysis results in the 5 ratings described below. Very Attractive and Attractive correspond to a "Buy" rating, Very Dangerous and Dangerous correspond to a "Sell" rating, while Neutral corresponds to a "Hold" rating.

QUESTION: Why shouldn't fund research be as good as stock research? Why should fund investors rely on backward-looking price trends?

ANSWER: They should not.

Don't judge a fund by its cover. Take a look inside at its holdings and understand the quality of earnings and valuation of the stocks it holds. We enable you to choose the best fund based on its stock-picking merits so you do not have to rely solely on backward-looking technical metrics.

The drivers of our [forward-looking fund ratings](#) are Portfolio Management (i.e. the aggregated ratings of its holdings) and Total Annual Costs. The Total Annual Costs Rating ([details here](#)) captures the all-in cost of being in a fund over a 3-year holding period, the average period for all fund investors.

### ***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.

## 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.

All material in this report is the property of, and under copyright, of New Constructs. None of the contents, nor any copy of it, may be altered in any way, copied, or distributed or transmitted to any other party without the prior express written consent of New Constructs. All trademarks, service marks and logos used in this report are trademarks or service marks or registered trademarks or service marks of New Constructs.

Copyright New Constructs, LLC 2003 through the present date. All rights reserved.