

The Morningstar Rating™ for Funds

Investor Benefits

- ▶ Provides focused comparison groups to help investors build multi-fund portfolios
- ▶ Is sensitive to manager skill and fund quality and less sensitive to recent overall performance of the category
- ▶ Gives investors the ability to quickly and easily identify funds that are worthy of further research, those with superior risk-adjusted returns

Background

The Morningstar Rating™ for funds, often called the “star rating,” debuted in 1985 and was quickly embraced by investors and advisors. Using a scale of one to five stars, the original rating allowed investors to easily evaluate a fund’s past performance within six broad asset classes. For the first time, it introduced the concept of risk- and cost-adjusted return to the average investor. Over time, investors moved from owning one or two funds to assembling diversified portfolios of funds. This meant they were more likely to need a specific type of fund, such as mid-cap value, to complement their other holdings. For this reason, in 1996 Morningstar created its Category Rating™, which rated funds within their smaller and more focused Morningstar Categories, and encouraged investors to use it along with the broader-based star rating.

In 2002, Morningstar enhanced the star rating with new peer groups and a new measure of risk-adjusted return. The peer groups for the rating were changed to the smaller category groups instead of the broad asset classes.

What It Means for Investors

The Morningstar Rating™ is a quantitative assessment of a fund’s past performance—both return and risk—as measured from one to five stars. It uses focused comparison groups to better measure fund manager skill. As always, the Morningstar Rating™ is intended for use as the first step in the fund evaluation process. A high rating alone is not a sufficient basis for investment decisions.

Category-Based Rating Groups

The rating allows investors to distinguish among funds that use similar investment strategies. The use of smaller rating groups minimizes the possibility of a “tail wind” effect boosting or hurting the ratings of funds that invest in specific areas of the market. For example, under the original methodology, persistent outperformance by the value investment style resulted in high ratings for most value funds, and relatively lower ratings for most growth-oriented funds.

Multiple Share Classes

Because the comparison groups are smaller, in 2002 Morningstar also changed its treatment of funds with multiple share classes. Although they share the same portfolio, share classes are evaluated separately because their individual expense structures produce different returns. For the rating distribution scale, however, a single portfolio counts only once, regardless of the total number of share classes. This prevents a single portfolio from dominating any portion of the rating scale.

Overall Rating

A provision is made for funds that change investment categories. In such cases, the fund’s historical information is given less weight, depending on the magnitude of the change. Doing so ensures the fairest comparisons and minimizes the incentive for fund companies to change a fund’s style in an attempt to receive a better rating.

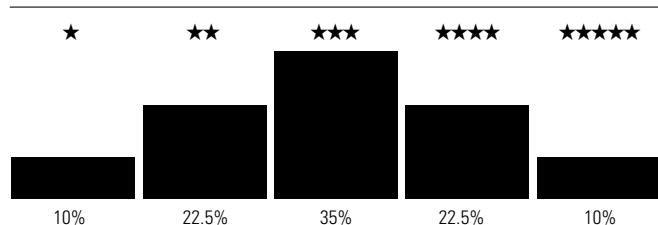
Enhanced Risk Measure

In 2002, Morningstar also enhanced its treatment of risk. The original methodology defined risk as underperformance relative to the 90-day Treasury bill. If a fund’s return exceeded this benchmark each month, the fund was deemed to be riskless. Yet funds with highly variable returns are likely to eventually produce losses, even if they’re currently enjoying a run of success. Internet funds provide a perfect example. Because they outperformed the Treasury bill for many successive months, they exhibited little downward risk in 1999; but they suffered huge losses in subsequent years.

The Morningstar Rating™ is based on “expected utility theory,” which recognizes that investors are a) more concerned about a possible poor outcome than an unexpectedly good outcome and b) willing to give up some portion of their expected return in exchange for greater certainty of return. The rating accounts for all variations in a fund’s monthly performance, with more emphasis on downward variations. It rewards consistent performance and reduces the possibility of strong short-term performance masking the inherent risk of a fund.

How Does It Work?

The Morningstar Rating™ for funds methodology rates funds based on an enhanced Morningstar Risk-Adjusted Return measure, which also accounts for the effects of all sales charges, loads, or redemption fees. Funds are ranked by their Morningstar Risk-Adjusted Return scores and stars are assigned using the following scale:



Funds are rated for up to three periods—the trailing three-, five-, and 10-years. For a fund that does not change categories during the evaluation period, the overall rating is calculated using the following weights¹:

Age of fund	Overall rating
At least three years, but less than five	100% three-year rating
At least five years, but less than 10	60% five-year rating 40% three-year rating
At least 10 years	50% 10-year rating 30% five-year rating 20% three-year rating

Current Morningstar Categories

Large Value	Target Date 2000-2010	Managed Futures ³	Muni National Long
Large Blend	Target Date 2011-2015	Volatility ³	Muni National Intermediate
Large Growth	Target Date 2016-2020	Trading–Leveraged Commodities ³	Muni National Short
Mid-Cap Value	Target Date 2021-2025	Trading–Inverse Commodities ³	High-Yield Muni
Mid-Cap Blend	Target Date 2026-2030	Trading–Leveraged Debt ³	Muni Single State Long
Mid-Cap Growth	Target Date 2031-2035	Trading–Inverse Debt ³	Muni Single State Intermediate
Small Value	Target Date 2036-2040	Trading–Leveraged Equity ³	Muni Single State Short
Small Blend	Target Date 2041-2045	Trading–Inverse Equity ³	Muni California Long
Small Growth	Target Date 2046-2050	Trading–Miscellaneous ³	Muni California Intermediate
Leveraged Net Long	Target Date 2051+	Commodities Agriculture ³	Muni Massachusetts
Communications	Retirement Income	Commodities Broad Basket	Muni Minnesota
Consumer Cyclical	Foreign Large Value	Commodities Energy ³	Muni New Jersey
Consumer Defensive	Foreign Large Blend	Commodities Industrial Metals ³	Muni New York Long
Equity Energy	Foreign Large Growth	Commodities Miscellaneous ³	Muni New York Intermediate
Equity Precious Metals	Foreign Small/Mid Value	Commodities Precious Metals ³	Muni Ohio
Financial	Foreign Small/Mid Blend	Long Government	Muni Pennsylvania
Global Real Estate	Foreign Small/Mid Growth	Intermediate Government	Taxable Money Market ³
Health	World Stock	Short Government	Tax-Free Money Market ³
Industrials	Diversified Emerging Markets	Inflation-Protected Bond	
Natural Resources	Diversified Pacific/Asia	Long-Term Bond	
Real Estate	Europe Stock	Intermediate-Term Bond	
Technology	Latin America Stock	Short-Term Bond	
Utilities	Pacific/Asia ex-Japan Stock	Ultrashort Bond	
Miscellaneous Sector ³	China Region	Bank Loan	
Convertibles	India Equity	Stable Value	
Conservative Allocation	Japan Stock	High-Yield Bond	
Moderate Allocation	Bear Market ³	Multisector Bond	
Aggressive Allocation	Currency ³	World Bond	
World Allocation	Long/Short Equity	Emerging-Markets Bond	
	Market Neutral	Nontraditional Bond	
	Multialternative		

¹ When a fund changes investment categories, its historical information is given less weight, depending on the magnitude of the change.

² While the 10-year formula seems to give the most weight to the 10-year period, the most recent three-year period actually counts the most because it is included in all three rating periods.

³ Ratings are not assigned to funds in these categories.