

American Eagle (AEO)

\$9.17 (As of 03/19/20)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$10.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation:

Neutral

(Since: 12/05/19)

Prior Recommendation: Outperform

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

4-Sell

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:C

Value: A

Growth: C

Momentum: D

Summary

Shares of American Eagle have lagged the industry year to date despite an earnings and sales beat in fourth-quarter fiscal 2019. The stock remains under pressure due to the ongoing global COVID-19 situation. It expects the coronavirus outbreak to significantly impact the results. Following the public health guidance, the company has closed all stores across the United States and Canada for 10 days, and also withdrew its first-quarter fiscal 2020 guidance. Additionally, dismal margins for the past few quarters remain a drag. However, the company posted solid fourth-quarter results, driven by sturdy traffic during the holiday season. Moreover, it witnessed comps growth for the 20th straight quarter, driven by strong performance across AE Jeans, Aerie and the digital channel.

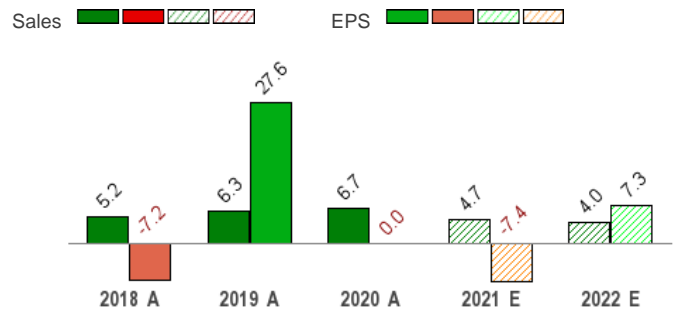
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52 Week High-Low	\$24.30 - \$7.10
20 Day Average Volume (sh)	6,450,168
Market Cap	\$1.5 B
YTD Price Change	-37.6%
Beta	0.87
Dividend / Div Yld	\$0.55 / 6.0%
Industry	Retail - Apparel and Shoes
Zacks Industry Rank	Bottom 32% (172 out of 254)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	2.8%
Last Sales Surprise	3.5%
EPS F1 Est- 4 week change	-7.6%
Expected Report Date	06/03/2020
Earnings ESP	-0.4%

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022					4,691 E
2021	926 E	1,081 E	1,120 E	1,392 E	4,510 E
2020	886 A	1,041 A	1,066 A	1,315 A	4,308 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022					\$1.47 E
2021	\$0.21 E	\$0.26 E	\$0.48 E	\$0.41 E	\$1.37 E
2020	\$0.24 A	\$0.39 A	\$0.48 A	\$0.37 A	\$1.48 A

*Quarterly figures may not add up to annual.

P/E TTM	6.2
P/E F1	6.7
PEG F1	0.9
P/S TTM	0.4

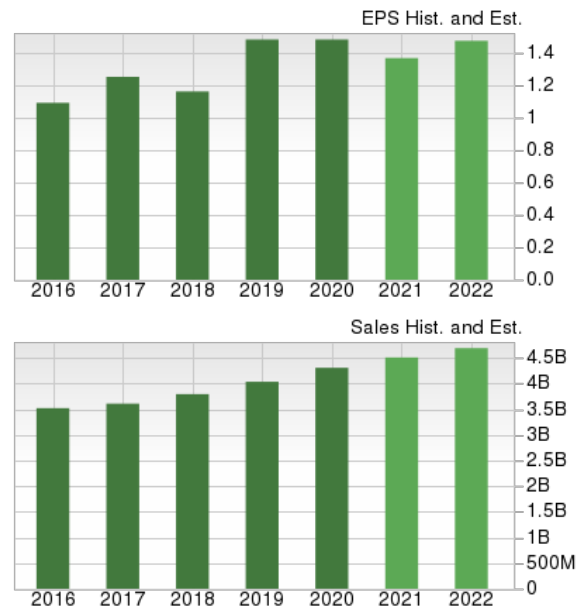
The data in the charts and tables, including the Zacks Consensus EPS and Sales estimates, is as of 03/19/2020. The reports text is as of 03/20/2020.

Overview

Based in Pittsburgh, PA, American Eagle Outfitters Inc. is a specialty retailer of casual apparel, accessories and footwear for men and women aged 15–25 years. American Eagle, along with its subsidiaries, engages in the designing and marketing of casual clothing. The company's assortment includes jeans, cargo pants, graphic T-shirts as well as a range of accessories, outerwear and footwear.

American Eagle currently operates under the American Eagle (AE) Brand, Aerie by American Eagle and an online retailing channel – AEO Direct.

- **AE Brand:** Under this brand, the company sells latest fashion apparel and accessories for men and women in the age group of 15–25 years, including sweaters, graphic T-shirts, fleece, outerwear and accessories.
- **Aerie by American Eagle:** Launched in 2006, Aerie is a lifestyle brand providing simple and stylish apparel, especially for young girls. The company sells apparel through its standalone Aerie stores across the United States and Canada, and globally through its online channel, aerie.com.
- **AEO Direct:** AEO Direct is American Eagle's online retailing channel, through which it sells a wide range of apparel and accessories from its different brands. The company merchandises its products through e-commerce websites, ae.com and aerie.com.



As of Feb 1, 2020, the company operated 1,095 stores, comprising 940 AE (including 174 Aerie side-by-side locations), 148 Aerie stand-alone, five Tailgate and two Todd Snyder stores. Additionally, it operated 217 international licensed outlets.



Reasons To Buy:

▲ **Impressive Q4 Results:** American Eagle reported better-than-expected results in fourth-quarter fiscal 2019, driven by robust traffic across brands and channels, an impressive performance of Aerie's and solid growth in the bottoms unit on robust jeans sales. Notably, adjusted earnings of 37 cents per share in the fiscal fourth quarter surpassed the Zacks Consensus Estimate of 36 cents. Total revenues grew 6% year over year and beat the Zacks Consensus Estimate. Further, the company witnessed positive consumer feedback for women's sweaters and fleece, and men's hoodies in the holiday season. Also, the accessories category, including its new mood personal care line, performed well. Moreover, sturdy traffic during the holiday season as well as the post-holiday period acted as a catalyst.

Aerie brand reported the 21st straight quarter of double-digit comps growth in fourth-quarter fiscal 2019. The brand remains on track to reach its next milestone of \$1 billion in sales.

In fiscal 2020, management remains focused on making supply-chain efforts to improve customers' shopping experiences and boost operational efficiencies. Moreover, it foresees an improvement in the women's category, driven by core products such as tops, tees and fleece. Also, both store and online traffic are expected to remain strong.

▲ **Solid Comps Trend:** American Eagle boasts a solid comparable sales (comps) trend, which continued in fourth-quarter fiscal 2019. Comps growth of 2% in the fourth quarter marked the company's 20th straight quarter of positive comps. Comps gained from a strong performance across AE Jeans, Aerie and the digital channel. Comps also benefited from increased number of transactions and rise in average transaction size on account of higher average unit retail price. Brand-wise, comps rose 26% at Aerie, offset by 3% decline at the AE brand. Meanwhile, the AE jeans business recorded the 26th consecutive quarter of robust top-line growth.

Going forward, management remains optimistic about continued strength in the Aerie brand, which will continue delivering growth. Also, the AE brand's jeans and bottoms businesses remain strong. Moreover, the company's efforts to improve product assortments and inventory management remain encouraging.

▲ **Strengthening Omni-Channel Capabilities:** American Eagle is striving to develop its omni-channel platform by enhancing its digital portals while also investing in store fleet. Backed by its investments in omni-channel capabilities, store and digital channels have been witnessing strong growth for several quarters. Although in-store comps fell 3% in the fiscal fourth quarter, the company's digital business continued to exhibit solid growth, contributing about 45% to total revenues. Overall, the company's digital sales rose in double digits, up 200 basis points (bps) from the year-ago period. In the recent quarters, American Eagle saw significant increases in its app and mobile channels, which together represent more than half of the company's digital business.

Moreover, its investments in store fleet are highlighted by its store optimization efforts. In fiscal 2020, management intends to open 55-60 Aerie stand-alone stores and 10-15 AE stores. Further, American Eagle expects to shut down 10-20 AE and 5-10 Aerie stand-alone stores in fiscal 2020. This makes it clear that a winning marketing strategy in retail is providing the best combination of digital and physical store experiences.

▲ **Accelerating Aerie Growth:** American Eagle continues to witness spectacular growth for its Aerie brand, with comps growth of 26% in the fiscal fourth quarter. This marked the 21st straight quarter (fifth year) of double-digit comps growth for the brand, reflecting a significant momentum in all areas of the business. Further, Aerie's digital business continued to exhibit solid growth, contributing about 33% to total revenues. Aerie has evolved into a lifestyle brand, and remains focused on expanding market share and rapidly growing customer base. After the success of its core intimates offerings, the brand is rapidly gaining share in the innovative apparel market with the body positivity movement. The Aerie brand is a key growth engine for American Eagle and remains on track to reach the next brand milestone of \$1 billion in sales. The company sees store expansion as an essential tool for building the Aerie brand. Consequently, American Eagle plans to accelerate the Aerie store footprint, with the opening of 55-60 Aerie stand-alone stores in fiscal 2020.

▲ **Robust Capital Plan & Shareholder-Friendly Moves:** American Eagle enjoys a strong financial status. As of Feb 1, 2020, the company had a debt-free balance sheet, with total cash and investments of \$361.9 million. These help it to make capital investments alongside returning excess cash to shareholders via dividends and share buybacks. Notably, the company returned nearly \$205 million to its shareholders via dividends and share buybacks in fiscal 2019. It paid out dividends of \$93 million and bought back nearly 6.3 million shares for \$112 million. This clearly underscores the company's commitment toward boosting shareholder value. Moreover, the company spent \$210 million as capital expenditure in the fiscal. For fiscal 2020, management anticipates capital expenditures of \$225-\$275 million, which will be invested in distribution network and for Aerie store openings.

Reasons To Sell:

- ▼ **COVID-19 Compels to Withdraw Outlook, Stock Underperforms:** The crippling effect of the coronavirus outbreak has been leading to supply-chain disruptions, slowdown in production activities and reduced demand for several commodities. In the view of implementation of safety measures and a drop in store footfall, companies are temporarily shutting down their brick-and-mortar stores, curtailing work hours and operating in shifts, or permitting employees to work remotely. In response to the continued spread of COVID-19 and following the public health guidance, American Eagle temporarily closed all AE and Aerie stores across the United States and Canada from Mar 17 to 27. The clothing retailer has also chosen to withdraw its first-quarter fiscal 2020 guidance. Given this tough situation, shares of the company have plunged 37.6% year to date as compared to the industry's growth of 49.1%.

The global COVID-19 outbreak has weighed on American Eagle's first-quarter fiscal 2020 bottom line expectations. Further, soft margin trend remains a concern.
 - ▼ **Dismal Margin Trend, a Worry:** American Eagle has been witnessing weak gross margin for the past few quarters. Notably, the metric contracted 360 bps in fourth-quarter fiscal 2019, following a contraction of 160 bps in the preceding quarter, mainly due to higher markdowns. Meanwhile, adjusted operating income was \$77 million as compared to \$101 million in the year-ago quarter. Owing to sluggishness in gross margin, operating margin declined 240 bps to 5.8%. Persistence of this trend may weigh on the company's bottom line in the near future.
 - ▼ **High Dependence on Outside Suppliers:** American Eagle does not own or operate any manufacturing facility and therefore, depends on third-party manufacturers for all its merchandise. The company's operations may be adversely affected in case of any import disruptions, like manufacturers' failure to ship orders on time or meet the company's standards.
 - ▼ **Macroeconomic Challenges & Seasonality of Business:** The apparel retail industry is consumer driven and hence, very sensitive to the health of the economy. Spending on apparel and accessories is heavily dependent on the personal disposable income of consumers. The current macroeconomic challenges such as high household debt and unemployment levels may restrain consumers from spending on these items. Further, the seasonal and cyclical nature of the company's business puts it at risk as failure to perform well during the peak season might hurt its annual performance.
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Last Earnings Report

American Eagle Beats Earnings & Sales Estimates in Q4

American Eagle reported better-than-expected results in fourth-quarter fiscal 2019. Despite sluggishness in the AE brand; robust traffic across brands and channels, an impressive performance of Aerie's, solid growth in the bottoms unit on robust jeans contributed to the strong quarterly results.

The company witnessed positive consumer feedback for women's sweaters and fleece, and men's hoodies in the holiday season. Also, the accessories category, including its new mood personal care line, performed well. Moreover, sturdy traffic during the holiday season as well as the post-holiday period acted as a catalyst. Apart from these, the Aerie brand continued to show strength, recording the fifth straight year of double-digit sales growth.

Quarter Ending **01/2020**

Report Date	Mar 04, 2020
Sales Surprise	3.54%
EPS Surprise	2.78%
Quarterly EPS	0.37
Annual EPS (TTM)	1.48

Q4 Highlights

Adjusted earnings of 37 cents per share in the fiscal fourth quarter surpassed the Zacks Consensus Estimate of 36 cents. However, the figure decreased 14% year over year from 43 cents reported in the prior-year quarter.

Total revenues grew 6% year over year to \$1,314.6 million and beat the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$1,270 million. The upside was backed by consolidated comparable sales (comps) growth of 2% year over year. This marked the company's 20th straight quarter of positive comps, with strong performances across AE Jeans, Aerie and the digital channel.

Brand-wise, comps rose 26% at Aerie, marking the brand's 21st straight quarter of double-digit comps growth. Further, Aerie's digital business continued to exhibit solid growth, contributing about 33% to total revenues.

However, comps fell 3% for the AE brand, owing to the soft demand for selective tops categories and higher promotions. On the flip side, customer traffic and transactions remained positive. Meanwhile, the AE jeans business recorded the 26th consecutive quarter of robust top-line growth.

Overall, the company's digital sales rose in double digits, up 200 basis points (bps) from the year-ago period. In the recent quarter, American Eagle saw significant increases in its app and mobile channels, which represented more than half of the company's digital business. On a consolidated basis, in-store comps fell 3% in the reported quarter, after a rise in the previous quarter.

Quarter in Detail

Gross profit declined 5% to \$408 million in the reported quarter. However, gross margin contracted 360 bps to 31% mainly due to higher markdowns.

SG&A expenses edged down 0.3% to \$287 million, thanks to lower incentive expenses, somewhat offset by increased professional fees. As a percentage of sales, SG&A declined 130 bps to 21.8%.

Further, adjusted operating income was \$77 million as compared to \$101 million in the year ago quarter. Adjusted operating margin declined 240 bps to 5.8% due to gross margin contraction, somewhat mitigated by lower SG&A as a percentage of sales.

Other Financial Details

American Eagle ended fiscal 2019 with cash and investments of \$361.9 million. Further, total shareholders' equity as of Feb 1, 2020, was \$1,247.9 million. Moreover, the company spent \$210 million as capital expenditure in fiscal 2019.

For fiscal 2020, management anticipates capital expenditure of \$225-\$275 million.

As of Feb 1, American Eagle's merchandise inventory was \$446.3 million, up 5.2% from the comparable year-ago period number.

During fiscal 2019, the company returned nearly \$205 million to its shareholders via dividends and share buybacks. It paid out dividends of \$93 million and bought back 6.3 million shares for \$112 million.

Store Update

In fourth-quarter fiscal 2019, American Eagle inaugurated eight AE stores and Aerie stand-alone stores each, while closed 13 AE stores and two Aerie stand-alone outlets.

During the quarter, the company operated 1,095 stores, comprising 940 AE (including 174 Aerie side-by-side locations), 148 Aerie stand-alone, five Tailgate and two Todd Synder stores. Additionally, it operated 217 international licensed outlets.

Going ahead, the company remains on track with store expansion plans, with an increased focus on standalone locations. In fiscal 2020, management intends to open 55-60 Aerie stand-alone stores and 10-15 AE stores. Further, American Eagle expects to shut down 10-20 AE and 5-10 Aerie stand-alone stores in fiscal 2020.

Looking Ahead

For fiscal 2020, management remains focused on enhancing product portfolio, managing inventory efficiently, strengthening AE jeans and maintaining growth at Aerie. Further, the company is making supply-chain efforts to improve customers' shopping experiences and boost operational efficiencies. Moreover, it foresees an improvement in the women's category, driven by core products such as tops, tees and fleece.

Also, both store and online traffic are expected to remain strong.

For first-quarter fiscal 2020, the company expects comparable sales growth in low-single digits. For the first quarter, the bottom line is envisioned to be 20-22 cents per share, inclusive of \$1 impact each due to the coronavirus outbreak and the exit of the Japanese licensed business.

Recent News

American Eagle Closes Stores In North America and Canada – Mar 17, 2020

In the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, American Eagle announced temporary store closures across the United States and Canada beginning Mar 17 till Mar 27. During this time, the company will continue providing salary to its employees. However, it will continue to operate online through ae.com, aerie.com as well as the AE/Aerie app. Additionally, the company has withdrawn its fiscal first-quarter guidance as it envisions COVID-19 to have a material impact on its results.

American Eagle Reports Impressive Holiday Sales – Jan 13

American Eagle announced impressive holiday sales numbers, which can be attributed to strong momentum in American Eagle's (AE) brand's signature jeans range and the Aerie brand. Management stated that fourth-quarter fiscal 2019 comparable sales (comps) till date were nearly flat compared with 6% increase in the year-ago quarter.

Moreover, the company reiterated the previously issued fiscal fourth-quarter earnings guidance. It continues to anticipate earnings per share of 34-36 cents, which indicates a decline from 43 cents recorded in the year-ago quarter. Also, the Zacks Consensus Estimate for the current quarter is pegged at 37 cents per share, which is higher than the company's guidance. Markedly, the aforementioned earnings guidance does not include the impacts of tax reform as well as potential asset impairment and restructuring charges.

American Eagle Announces Quarterly Dividend – Dec 18, 2019

American Eagle declared a quarterly cash dividend of 13.75 cents per share, payable on Dec 17, 2019 to shareholders with record as of Jan 3, 2020.

Valuation

American Eagle shares are down 37.6% in the year-to-date period and nearly 54.9% over the trailing 12-month period. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry and the Zacks Retail-Wholesale sector are down 49.1% and 18.1% in the year-to-date period, respectively. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry and the sector are down 61.2% and 11.1%, respectively.

The S&P 500 index is down 25.3% in the year-to-date period and 16.7% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 6.71X forward 12-month earnings, which compares to 6.73X for the Zacks sub-industry, 20.43X for the Zacks sector and 14.12X for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 20.58X and as low as 5.73X, with a 5-year median of 12.71X. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in-line with the market. Our \$10 price target reflects 7.32X forward 12-month earnings.

The table below shows summary valuation data for AEO

Valuation Multiples - AEO					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/E F12M	Current	6.71	6.73	20.43	14.12
	5-Year High	20.58	18.38	26.2	19.34
	5-Year Low	5.73	6.73	19.07	14.12
	5-Year Median	12.71	14.2	23.01	17.42
P/S F12M	Current	0.34	0.32	0.84	2.58
	5-Year High	1.26	1.34	1.11	3.43
	5-Year Low	0.29	0.32	0.8	2.54
	5-Year Median	0.82	0.81	0.92	3
EV/EBITDA TTM	Current	5.78	6	12.83	8.87
	5-Year High	10.58	8.94	16.23	12.88
	5-Year Low	3.46	4.66	10.82	8.31
	5-Year Median	6.32	6.73	12.49	10.79

As of 03/19/2020

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Bottom 32% (172 out of 254)



Top Peers

Buckle, Inc. (The) (BKE)	Neutral
Foot Locker, Inc. (FL)	Neutral
Guess?, Inc. (GES)	Neutral
The Gap, Inc. (GPS)	Neutral
L Brands, Inc. (LB)	Neutral
Urban Outfitters, Inc. (URBN)	Neutral
Abercrombie & Fitch Company (ANF)	Underperform
PVH Corp. (PVH)	Underperform

Industry Comparison Industry: Retail - Apparel And Shoes				Industry Peers		
	AEO Neutral	X Industry	S&P 500	ANF Underperform	BKE Neutral	URBN Neutral
VGM Score	C	-	-	D	C	C
Market Cap	1.53 B	314.28 M	16.45 B	572.89 M	813.68 M	1.58 B
# of Analysts	9	3	13	10	1	13
Dividend Yield	6.00%	0.00%	2.67%	8.76%	7.26%	0.00%
Value Score	A	-	-	A	B	A
Cash/Price	0.25	0.27	0.06	0.95	0.33	0.28
EV/EBITDA	4.69	4.82	10.36	4.88	5.44	4.54
PEG Ratio	0.91	0.61	1.49	0.94	NA	0.76
Price/Book (P/B)	1.23	0.81	2.16	0.53	2.09	1.09
Price/Cash Flow (P/CF)	3.53	3.45	8.92	2.54	6.39	7.47
P/E (F1)	6.54	6.72	13.12	14.31	9.03	8.70
Price/Sales (P/S)	0.36	0.24	1.72	0.16	0.90	0.40
Earnings Yield	14.94%	13.90%	7.54%	7.01%	11.07%	11.48%
Debt/Equity	1.04	0.93	0.70	1.39	0.75	0.78
Cash Flow (\$/share)	2.60	1.44	7.01	3.59	2.59	2.16
Growth Score	C	-	-	D	C	C
Hist. EPS Growth (3-5 yrs)	11.67%	-0.23%	10.85%	-0.50%	-11.03%	8.33%
Proj. EPS Growth (F1/F0)	-7.73%	2.12%	4.90%	-12.60%	-14.49%	-5.90%
Curr. Cash Flow Growth	0.06%	1.12%	6.03%	8.78%	1.12%	-49.61%
Hist. Cash Flow Growth (3-5 yrs)	10.30%	-0.99%	8.55%	-7.00%	-8.74%	-10.61%
Current Ratio	1.39	1.50	1.23	1.55	2.19	1.65
Debt/Capital	51.06%	51.06%	42.57%	58.09%	42.72%	43.87%
Net Margin	4.44%	2.75%	11.57%	1.09%	11.60%	4.22%
Return on Equity	20.31%	11.37%	16.74%	4.61%	25.98%	13.88%
Sales/Assets	1.29	1.21	0.54	1.04	1.02	1.23
Proj. Sales Growth (F1/F0)	4.69%	0.02%	3.13%	-0.08%	-3.55%	5.25%
Momentum Score	D	-	-	F	F	F
Daily Price Chg	17.11%	7.21%	1.03%	13.56%	15.76%	6.54%
1 Week Price Chg	-15.41%	-20.10%	-11.01%	-0.18%	-29.67%	-17.78%
4 Week Price Chg	-37.87%	-47.35%	-33.45%	-46.45%	-35.35%	-42.92%
12 Week Price Chg	-37.28%	-48.36%	-30.67%	-47.53%	-37.69%	-42.72%
52 Week Price Chg	-54.89%	-54.89%	-23.69%	-64.06%	-8.01%	-42.61%
20 Day Average Volume	6,450,168	453,882	3,981,936	4,028,549	771,520	3,154,865
(F1) EPS Est 1 week change	1.23%	0.00%	-0.01%	-18.96%	-8.50%	-6.59%
(F1) EPS Est 4 week change	-7.59%	-5.33%	-0.85%	-47.79%	-7.11%	-18.45%
(F1) EPS Est 12 week change	-8.42%	-7.54%	-1.70%	-47.05%	-4.19%	-23.74%
(Q1) EPS Est Mthly Chg	-12.33%	-34.73%	-0.88%	-70.44%	-32.26%	-61.04%

Zacks Style Scores

The Zacks Style Score is as a complementary indicator to the Zacks rating system, giving investors a way to focus on the highest rated stocks that best fit their own stock picking preferences.

Academic research has proven that stocks with the best Value, Growth and Momentum characteristics outperform the market. The Zacks Style Scores rate stocks on each of these individual styles and assigns a rating of A, B, C, D and F. We also produce the VGM Score (V for Value, G for Growth and M for Momentum), which combines the weighted average of the individual Style Scores into one score. This is perfectly suited for those who want their stocks to have the best scores across the board.

Value Score	A
Growth Score	C
Momentum Score	D
VGM Score	C

As an investor, you want to buy stocks with the highest probability of success. That means buying stocks with a Zacks Recommendation of Outperform, which also has a Style Score of an A or a B.

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