

American Eagle (AEO)

\$20.21 (As of 12/23/20)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$21.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation:

Neutral

(Since: 04/27/20)

Prior Recommendation: Underperform

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

3-Hold

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:D

Value: B

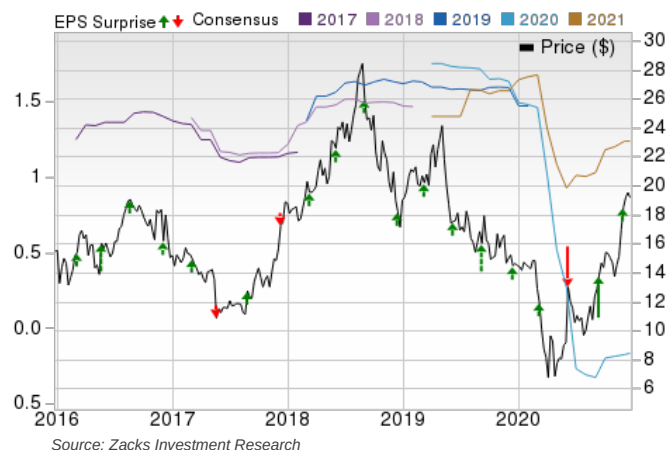
Growth: F

Momentum: D

Summary

Shares of American Eagle have increased year to date. The stock has been gaining from strong digital demand that exceeded pre-pandemic levels. Digital channel customer acquisitions jumped 37% in third-quarter fiscal 2020. Further, the Aerie brand retained its momentum, with double-digit sales growth for the 24th successive quarter. It is on track to reach the next brand milestone of \$1 billion in sales. Moreover, elevated merchandise margins, stemming from increased full-priced sales, lower promotions and inventory optimization efforts led to improved gross margins in the fiscal third quarter. However, sales missed the Zacks Consensus Estimate and declined year over year due to soft mall traffic amid the pandemic. Also, rising SG&A expenses related to greater performance-based incentive compensation remain concerning.

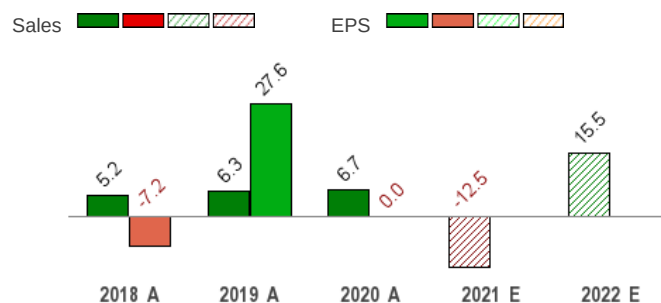
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	\$20.34 - \$6.54
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	3,962,985
Market Cap	\$3.4 B
Year-To-Date Price Change	37.5%
Beta	1.40
Dividend / Dividend Yield	\$0.55 / 2.7%
Industry	Retail - Apparel and Shoes
Zacks Industry Rank	Top 41% (105 out of 255)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	6.1%
Last Sales Surprise	-2.1%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	14.4%
Expected Report Date	03/03/2021
Earnings ESP	0.0%
P/E TTM	NA
P/E F1	NA
PEG F1	NA
P/S TTM	0.9

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	763 E	1,062 E	1,127 E	1,397 E	4,351 E
2021	552 A	884 A	1,032 A	1,300 E	3,768 E
2020	886 A	1,041 A	1,066 A	1,315 A	4,308 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	\$0.04 E	\$0.34 E	\$0.49 E	\$0.36 E	\$1.24 E
2021	-\$0.84 A	-\$0.03 A	\$0.35 A	\$0.30 E	-\$0.17 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.

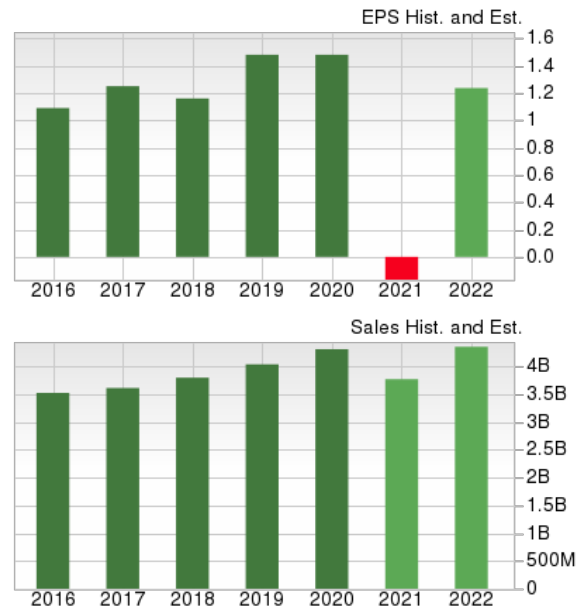
The data in the charts and tables, including the Zacks Consensus EPS and Sales estimates, is as of 12/23/2020. The reports text is as of 12/24/2020.

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 Oct 31, the company operated 1,105 stores, comprising 931 AE (including 177 Aerie side-by-side locations), 167 Aerie stand-alone, four Tailgate and three Todd Snyder stores. Additionally, it operated 225 international licensed outlets.



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Reasons To Buy:

▲ **Robust Online Demand Aid Digital Growth:** With the ongoing pandemic forcing in-store shoppers to shift to online shopping, American Eagle witnessed strong digital demand. Management is banking on further digital acceleration in the current scenario. Although stores have reopened, digital demand remained strong and exceeded pre-pandemic levels. This led to strong consolidated digital sales growth of 29%, with an 83% increase for Aerie and 11% growth for AE. Overall, online sales contributed to 37% of the company's revenues during the third quarter. Also, digital channel customer acquisitions jumped 37% in the quarter under review. Further, it recently tested self-checkout facility in stores and same-day delivery option for online orders. It also enhanced its website in a bid to improve the paid loads speed by 60% particularly for the holiday season. Additionally, its four new distribution hubs are likely to boost its growing online demand. We note that shares of this company have gained 37.5% year to date compared with the industry's growth of 42.8%.

American Eagle's fiscal third-quarter revenues were affected by soft mall traffic due to the coronavirus outbreak and weak store traffic. Also, rising costs remain concerning.

▲ **Accelerating Aerie Growth:** American Eagle has been witnessing spectacular growth for its Aerie brand for quite some time now. Notably, sales rose 34% for Aerie, driven by its unique brand platform and significant momentum in all areas of the business. This marked the 24th successive quarter of double-digit growth for the Aerie brand. Further, Aerie's customer acquisitions across all channels increased in double-digits, reflecting growth of 15% with 62% in the online platform. Meanwhile, the AE brand also witnessed strong digital demand and gained in key categories such as jeans and bottoms. 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. Encouragingly, it recently launched a new activewear collection, namely OFFLINE, which is expected to further boost Aerie's growth. In this context, it opened its first OFFLINE store in October and received positive customer response. Also, management earlier revealed plans of opening 25 Aerie locations with the first one in Nashville this fall.

▲ **Robust Q3 Margins:** After a dismal performance in the past two quarters, American Eagle's gross margin got back on the growth trajectory. Notably, gross profit was \$415 million, up almost 2% year over year in the third quarter of fiscal 2020. Furthermore, the gross margin rate expanded 200 basis points (bps) to 40.2%, which marked the company's highest rate in several years. The upside can be attributable to elevated merchandise margins, which, in turn, stemmed from increased full-priced sales, reduced promotions and inventory-optimization efforts. Also, reduced product costs and improvement in rent expenses aided the gross margin. These were somewhat negated by increased delivery and distribution center costs due to a solid digital business and escalated costs per shipment.

▲ **Financial Flexibility:** American Eagle ended the quarter with long-term debt (including operating lease liabilities) of \$1,571.8 million as of Oct 31, 2020, which reflects a sequential decline of 11.2%. Moreover, the debt-to-capitalization ratio is at a respectable 0.23 compared to 0.34 reported in the prior quarter. Also, it stands below the industry's ratio of 0.64, which makes American Eagle well-placed from a liquidity standpoint. The company's cash and short-term investments of \$692 million. This included proceeds from convertible notes offering of \$406 million. During the quarter, the company repaid \$200 million of the remaining balance on its revolving credit facility. Additionally, American Eagle suspended its dividend in June 2020 alongside deferring its first-quarter dividend until 2021. The dividend will be paid out on Apr 23, 2021, to shareholders of record as of Apr 9, 2021. For fiscal 2020, the company also reduced capital expenditure plan to \$100-\$125 million, whereas it spent \$210 million in the prior year. That said, a liquidity of \$1 billion at the end of the fiscal third quarter is likely to help it stay afloat amid this pandemic.

Reasons To Sell:

- ▼ **Soft Q3 Sales:** Despite earnings beat in third-quarter fiscal 2020, American Eagle's sales missed the Zacks Consensus Estimate and declined year over year. The downside can be accountable to soft mall traffic amid the pandemic, partially compensated by robust online sales. Brand-wise, revenues declined 11% for AE, while it rose 34% for Aerie. Further, store revenues declined 16% year over year due to sluggish traffic, which more than offset favorable AUR and conversion rate.
- ▼ **Higher SG&A Expenses:** During the fiscal third quarter, American Eagle's SG&A expenses rose from \$259 million to \$273 million in the third quarter due to greater performance-based incentive compensation. Moreover, the metric as a percentage of sales expanded 220 bps to 26.5%. Prior to this, SG&A expenses increased 360 bps and 7 bps in the second and first quarters of fiscal 2020, respectively. Persistence of such a trend may weigh on the bottom line in the near term.
- ▼ **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.

American Eagle's fiscal third-quarter revenues were affected by soft mall traffic due to the coronavirus outbreak and weak store traffic. Also, rising costs remain concerning.

Last Earnings Report

American Eagle Q3 Earnings Top Estimates, Sales Miss

American Eagle reported third-quarter fiscal 2020 results, wherein earnings beat the Zacks Consensus Estimate, while sales missed the same due to sluggish traffic amid the pandemic.

Nonetheless, the company continued to witness robust digital sales. Management remains particularly impressed with the performance of the Aerie brand, which also benefited from a solid debut of the OFFLINE activewear brand. In fact, increased full-priced sales across both Aerie and AE brands led to solid margins in the quarter.

Apart from this, the company remains pleased with the initial holiday season trends in November as well as a solid response to its assortments. The company's inventory is well-managed, and it anticipates continued AUR enhancement and favorable margins. Also, increased online shopping is likely to perk up distribution center and delivery costs.

Q3 Details

Adjusted earnings of 35 cents per share beat the Zacks Consensus Estimate of 33 cents. However, the bottom line declined 27.1% year over year due to an elevated tax rate as well as the effect of increased interest expenses and shares outstanding associated with convertible debt.

Total revenues declined 3% year over year to \$1,031.6 million and lagged the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$1,054 million. The downside can be accountable to soft mall traffic amid the pandemic, partially compensated by robust online sales. Brand-wise, revenues declined 11% for AE, while it rose 34% for Aerie.

Store revenues declined 16% year over year due to sluggish traffic, which more than offset favorable AUR and conversion rate. Meanwhile, the company witnessed a robust digital demand. Markedly, digital channel customer acquisitions jumped 37% in the quarter under review. Despite stores having reopened, digital demand remained strong and exceeded pre-pandemic levels. This led to strong consolidated digital sales growth of 29%, with an 83% increase for Aerie and 11% growth for AE. Overall, online sales formed 37% of the company's revenues during the third quarter.

Gross profit was \$415 million in the reported quarter, up almost 2% year over year from \$407 million in the year-ago quarter. Furthermore, the gross margin rate expanded 200 bps to 40.2% in the quarter under review, which marked the company's highest rate in several years.

The upside can be attributable to elevated merchandise margins, which, in turn, stemmed from increased full-priced sales, reduced promotions and inventory optimization efforts. Also, reduced product costs and improvement in rent expenses aided the gross margin. These were somewhat negated by increased delivery and distribution center costs due to a solid digital business and escalated cost per shipment.

SG&A expenses rose from \$259 million to \$273 million in the third quarter due to greater performance-based incentive compensation.

Excluding COVID-related costs of \$7 million, the company reported an adjusted operating income of \$103 million, which came in line with the figure reported in the year-ago period.

Other Financial Details

American Eagle ended the quarter with cash and short-term investments of \$692 million. This included proceeds from convertible notes offering of \$406 million. During the quarter, the company repaid \$200 million of the remaining balance on its revolving credit facility. Total shareholders' equity as of Oct 31, 2020, was \$1,068.2 million.

Moreover, the company spent \$31 million as capital expenditure in third-quarter fiscal 2020 and \$93 million year to date. For fiscal 2020, it anticipates capital expenditure of \$100-\$125 million, while it spent \$210 million in the prior year.

Additionally, American Eagle suspended its dividend in June 2020 alongside deferring its first-quarter dividend until 2021. This dividend will be paid out on Apr 23, 2021, to shareholders of record as of Apr 9, 2021. The company anticipates no dividend payments throughout fiscal 2020.

Store Update

In third-quarter fiscal 2020, American Eagle inaugurated three AE and seven Aerie stand-alone stores, while it closed three AE stores.

As of Oct 31, the company operated 1,105 stores, comprising 931 AE (including 177 Aerie side-by-side locations), 167 Aerie stand-alone, four Tailgate and three Todd Snyder stores. Additionally, it operated 225 international licensed outlets.

Quarter Ending	10/2020
Report Date	Nov 24, 2020
Sales Surprise	-2.08%
EPS Surprise	6.06%
Quarterly EPS	0.35
Annual EPS (TTM)	-0.15

Recent News

American Eagle Approves Deffered Q1 Dividend - Dec 3, 2020

American Eagle has now approved first-quarter fiscal 2020 dividend which was previously suspended during the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. The dividend of \$13.75 per share will now be paid on Dec 30, 2020 as of shareholders record on Dec 16.

Valuation

American Eagle shares are up 37.5% in the year-to-date period and nearly 40.9% over the trailing 12-month period. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry and the Zacks Retail-Wholesale sector are up 42.8% and 37.5% respectively, in the year-to-date period. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry and the sector are up 42.4% and 38%, respectively.

The S&P 500 index is up 16.4% in the year-to-date period and 16.5% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 18.48X forward 12-month earnings, which compares to 18.87X for the Zacks sub-industry, 30.78X for the Zacks sector and 22.86X for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 60.54X and as low as 5.63X, with a 5-year median of 12.47X. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in-line with the market. Our \$21 price target reflects 19.2X 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	18.48	18.87	30.78	22.86
	5-Year High	60.54	88.06	34.06	23.79
	5-Year Low	5.63	8.26	19.08	15.3
	5-Year Median	12.47	14.36	23.62	17.81
P/S F12M	Current	0.78	1.04	1.31	4.33
	5-Year High	1.26	1.1	1.32	4.34
	5-Year Low	0.25	0.33	0.83	3.17
	5-Year Median	0.74	0.82	1.01	3.67
EV/EBITDA TTM	Current	36.37	25.03	19.25	16.71
	5-Year High	36.37	25.03	20.72	16.87
	5-Year Low	1.48	3.25	11.14	9.56
	5-Year Median	5.74	6.34	13.05	13.17

As of 12/23/2020

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Top 41% (105 out of 255)



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
Capri Holdings Limited (CPRI)	Outperform	1
Tapestry, Inc. (TPR)	Outperform	1
Abercrombie & Fitch Company (ANF)	Neutral	3
Burberry Group PLC (BURBY)	Neutral	3
Designer Brands Inc. (DBI)	Neutral	3
Next PLC (NXGPY)	Neutral	3
PVH Corp. (PVH)	Neutral	3
Urban Outfitters, Inc. (URBN)	Neutral	3

The positions listed should not be deemed a recommendation to buy, hold or sell.

Industry Comparison Industry: Retail - Apparel And Shoes				Industry Peers		
	AEO	X Industry	S&P 500	ANF	TPR	URBN
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Neutral	Outperform	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	3	-	-	3	1	3
VGM Score	D	-	-	A	D	A
Market Cap	3.36 B	780.47 M	25.78 B	1.28 B	8.47 B	2.63 B
# of Analysts	10	4	13	9	11	10
Dividend Yield	2.72%	0.00%	1.49%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Value Score	B	-	-	B	F	B
Cash/Price	0.22	0.23	0.06	0.65	0.19	0.24
EV/EBITDA	7.00	4.23	14.51	3.33	-27.02	5.49
PEG F1	NA	4.50	2.80	NA	1.16	12.59
P/B	3.14	2.70	3.62	1.49	3.35	1.84
P/CF	7.78	5.94	13.84	5.81	16.22	8.15
P/E F1	NA	28.22	22.03	NA	13.56	144.84
P/S TTM	0.89	0.57	2.85	0.40	1.77	0.75
Earnings Yield	-0.84%	2.41%	4.39%	-6.73%	7.37%	0.71%
Debt/Equity	0.30	0.20	0.70	0.40	0.63	0.00
Cash Flow (\$/share)	2.60	1.68	6.93	3.53	1.88	3.30
Growth Score	F	-	-	B	C	A
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	-1.32%	-3.92%	9.71%	11.89%	-3.06%	-24.38%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	-111.28%	-47.60%	1.26%	-288.74%	132.05%	-90.56%
Current Cash Flow Growth	0.06%	-0.52%	5.23%	-6.25%	-48.91%	-22.87%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	10.42%	1.72%	8.33%	-5.89%	-6.40%	-2.66%
Current Ratio	1.69	1.48	1.38	1.60	1.56	1.45
Debt/Capital	23.11%	24.90%	41.97%	28.57%	38.57%	0.00%
Net Margin	-5.50%	-5.50%	10.40%	-3.55%	-9.22%	-0.22%
Return on Equity	-1.82%	-2.15%	14.99%	-6.61%	11.91%	2.30%
Sales/Assets	1.07	1.03	0.50	0.95	0.59	1.04
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	-12.53%	-3.35%	0.39%	-13.80%	6.56%	-11.76%
Momentum Score	D	-	-	B	F	B
Daily Price Change	3.91%	0.89%	0.40%	7.55%	1.16%	4.58%
1-Week Price Change	-1.74%	1.79%	0.87%	-3.14%	-1.60%	1.80%
4-Week Price Change	9.30%	0.00%	0.78%	-10.12%	2.80%	-9.48%
12-Week Price Change	36.46%	28.11%	14.63%	47.31%	95.27%	29.46%
52-Week Price Change	40.84%	-10.36%	5.58%	21.06%	14.14%	-0.70%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	3,962,985	319,841	2,005,107	1,574,580	4,243,135	1,401,573
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	14.36%	0.00%	0.00%	26.19%	0.00%	726.47%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	16.03%	16.39%	3.68%	28.07%	21.43%	486.38%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	-11.97%	-1.07%	0.00%	-19.11%	0.10%	0.36%

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Zacks Stock Rating System

We offer two rating systems that take into account investors' holding horizons: Zacks Rank and Zacks Recommendation. Each provides valuable insights into the future profitability of the stock and can be used separately or in combination with each other depending on your investment style.

Zacks Recommendation

The Zacks Recommendation aims to predict performance over the next 6 to 12 months. The foundation for the quantitatively determined Zacks Recommendation is trends in the company's estimate revisions and earnings outlook. The Zacks Recommendation is broken down into 3 Levels; Outperform, Neutral and Underperform. Unlike many Wall Street firms, we maintain a balance between the number of Outperform and Neutral recommendations. Our team of 70 analysts are fully versed in the benefits of earnings estimate revisions and how that is harnessed through the Zacks quantitative rating system. But we have given our analysts the ability to override the Zacks Recommendation for the 1200 stocks that they follow. The reason for the analyst over-rides is that there are often factors such as valuation, industry conditions and management effectiveness that a trained investment professional can spot better than a quantitative model.

Zacks Rank

The Zacks Rank is our short-term rating system that is most effective over the one- to three-month holding horizon. The underlying driver for the quantitatively-determined Zacks Rank is the same as the Zacks Recommendation, and reflects trends in earnings estimate revisions.

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	B
Growth Score	F
Momentum Score	D
VGM Score	D

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.

Disclosures

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Returns quoted represent past performance which is no guarantee of future results. Investment returns and principal value will fluctuate so that when shares are redeemed, they may be worth more or less than their original cost. Current performance may be higher or lower than the performance shown.

Investing involves risk; principal loss is possible. There is no guarantee that companies that can issue dividends will declare, continue to pay or increase dividends.

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

52-Week High-Low: The range of the highest and lowest prices at which a stock has traded during the past year. This range is determined based on the stock's daily closing price which may differ from the intra-day high or low. Many investors use it as a technical indicator to determine a stock's current value and future price movement. The idea here is that if price breaks out from the 52-week range, in either direction, the momentum may continue in the same direction.

20-Day Average Volume (Shares): The average number of shares of a company traded in a day over the last 20 days. It is a direct indication of a security's overall liquidity. The higher the average daily trading volume, the easier it is to enter or exit the stock at a desired price with more buyers and sellers being available.

Daily Price Change: This is the percentage difference between a trading day's closing price and the prior trading day's closing price. This item is updated at 9 p.m. EST each day.

1-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change in a stock's closing price over the last 5 trading days. This change reflects the collective buying and selling sentiment over the 1-week period.

A strong weekly price increase for the stock, especially when accompanied by increased volume, is an indication of it gaining momentum.

4-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change in a stock's closing price over the last 20 trading days or past 4 weeks. This is a medium-term price change metric and an indication of the stock gaining momentum.

12-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change of a stock's closing price over the last 60 trading days or past 12 weeks. Similar to 4-week price change, this is a medium-term price change metric. It shows whether a stock has been enjoying strong investor demand, or if it has been in consolidation, or distress over this period.

52-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change in a stock's closing price over the last 260 trading days or past 52 weeks. This long-term price change metric is a good reference point for investors. Some investors seek stocks with the best percentage price change over the last 52 weeks, expecting the momentum to continue.

Market Cap: The number of outstanding common shares of a company times its latest price per share. This figure represents a company's size, which indicates various characteristics, including price stability and risk, in which investors could be interested.

Year-To-Date Price Change: Change in a stock's daily closing price in the period of time beginning the first day of the current calendar year through to the previous trading day.

of Analysts: Number of EPS estimates used in calculating the current-quarter consensus. These estimates come from the brokerage analysts tracking this stock. However, the number of such analysts tracking this stock may not match the number of estimates, as all brokerage analysts may not come up with an estimate or provide it to us.

Beta: A measure of risk commonly used to compare the volatility of a stock to the overall market. The S&P 500 Index is the base for calculating beta and carries a value of 1. A stock with beta below 1 is less risky than the market as a whole. And a stock with beta above 1 is riskier.

Dividend: The portion of earnings a company is expected to distribute to its common shareholders in the next 12 months for each share they own. Dividends are usually paid quarterly. Dividend payments reflect positively on a company and help maintain investors' trust. Investors typically find dividend-paying stocks appealing because the dividend adds to any market price appreciation to result in higher return on investment (ROI). Moreover, a steady or increasing dividend payment provides investors a cushion in a down market.

Dividend Yield: The ratio of a company's annual dividend to its share price. The annual dividend used in the ratio is calculated based on the most recent dividend paid by the company. Dividend yield is an estimate of the dividend-only return from a stock in the next 12 months. Since dividend itself doesn't change frequently, dividend yield usually changes with a stock's price movement. As a result, often an unusually high dividend yield is a result of weak stock price.

S&P 500 Index: The Standard & Poor's 500 (S&P 500) Index is an unmanaged group of securities considered to be representative of the stock market in general. It is a market-capitalization-weighted index of stocks of the 500 largest U.S. companies. Each stock's weight in the index is proportionate to its market value.

Industry: One of the 250+ groups that Zacks classifies all stocks into based on the nature of business. These groups are termed as expanded (aka "X") industries and map to their respective (economic) sectors; Zacks has 16 sectors.

Zacks Industry Rank: The Zacks Industry Rank is determined by calculating the average Zacks Rank for all stocks in the industry and then assigning an ordinal rank to it. For example, an industry with an average Zacks Rank of 1.6 is better than an industry with an average Zacks Rank of 2.3. So, the industry with the better average Zacks Rank would get a better Zacks Industry Rank. If an industry has the best average Zacks Rank, it would be considered the top industry (1 out of 250+), which would place it at the top 1% of Zacks-ranked industries. Studies have shown that roughly half of a stock's price movement can be attributed to the industry group it belongs to. In fact, the top 50% of Zacks-ranked industries outperforms the bottom 50% by a factor of more than 2 to 1.

Last EPS Surprise: The percentage deviation of a company's last reported earnings per share from the Zacks Consensus Estimate. Companies with a positive earnings surprise are more likely to surprise again in the future (or miss again if they recently missed).

Last Sales Surprise: The percentage deviation of a company's last reported sales from the Zacks Consensus Estimate.

Expected Report Date: This is an estimated date of a company's next earnings release. The information originated or gathered by Zacks Investment Research from its information providers or publicly available sources is the basis of this estimate.

Earnings ESP: The Zacks Earnings ESP compares the Most Accurate Estimate to the Zacks Consensus Estimate for the yet-to-be reported quarter. The Most Accurate Estimate is the most recent version of the Zacks Consensus EPS Estimate. The idea here is that analysts revising their estimates closer to an earnings release have the latest information, which could potentially be more accurate than what they and others contributing to the consensus had predicted earlier. Thus, a positive or negative Earnings ESP reading theoretically indicates the likely deviation of the actual earnings from the consensus estimate. However, the model's predictive power is significant for positive ESP readings only. A positive Earnings ESP is a strong predictor of an earnings beat, particularly when combined with a Zacks Rank #1 (Strong Buy), #2 (Buy) or #3 (Hold). Our research shows that stocks with this combination produce a positive surprise nearly 70% of the time.

Periods:

TTM: Trailing 12 months. Using TTM figures is an effective way of analyzing the most-recent financial data in an annualized format that helps neutralize the effects of seasonality and other quarter-to-quarter variation.

F1: Current fiscal year. This period is used to analyze the estimates for the ongoing full fiscal year.

F2: Next fiscal year. This period is used to analyze the estimates for the next full fiscal year.

F12M: Forward 12 months. Using F12M figures is an effective way of analyzing the near-term (the following four unreported quarters) estimates in an annualized manner. Instead of typically representing estimates for the full fiscal year, which may not represent the nitty-gritty of each quarter, F12M figures suggest an all-inclusive annualized estimate for the following four quarters. The annualization helps neutralize the potential effects of seasonality and other quarter-to-quarter variations.

P/E Ratio: The price-to-earnings ratio measures a company's current market price per share relative to its earnings per share (EPS). Usually, the trailing-12-month (TTM) EPS, current-fiscal-year (F1) EPS estimate, or forward-12-month (F12M) EPS estimate is used as the denominator. In essence, this ratio shows what the market is willing to pay today for each dollar of EPS. In other words, this ratio gives a sense of what the relative value of the company is at the already reported level of earnings or at a future level of earnings.

It is one of the most widely-used multiples for determining the value of a company and helps comparing its valuation with that of a competitor, the industry group or a benchmark.

PEG Ratio: The price/earnings to growth ratio is a stock's P/E ratio using current fiscal year (F1) EPS estimate divided by its expected EPS growth rate over the coming 3 to 5 years. This ratio essentially determines a stock's value by factoring in the company's expected earnings growth and is thus believed to provide a more complete picture than just the P/E ratio, particularly for faster-growing companies.

P/S Ratio: The price-to-sales ratio is calculated as a company's current price per share divided by trailing 12 months (TTM) sales or revenues per share. This ratio shows what the market is willing to pay today for each dollar of TTM sales per share. The P/S ratio is at times the only valuation metric when the company has yet to become profitable.

Cash/Price Ratio: The cash-to-price ratio or Cash Yield is calculated as cash and marketable securities per share divided by the company's current share price. Like the earnings yield, which shows the anticipated yield (or return) on a stock from earnings for each dollar invested, the cash yield does the same, with cash being the source of return instead of earnings. For example, a cash/price ratio of 0.08 suggests a return of 8% or 8 cents for every \$1 investment.

EV/EBITDA Ratio: The EV/EBITDA ratio, also known as Enterprise Multiple, is calculated as a company's enterprise value (market capitalization + value of total long-term debt + book value of preferred shares - cash and marketable securities) divided by EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization). Usually, trailing-12-month (TTM) or forward-12-month (F12M) EBITDA is used as the denominator.

EV/Sales Ratio: The enterprise value-to-sales ratio is calculated as a company's enterprise value (market capitalization + value of total long-term debt + book value of preferred shares - cash and marketable securities) divided by annual sales. It is an expansion of the P/S valuation, which uses market value instead of enterprise value. The EV/Sales ratio is perceived as more accurate than P/S, in part, because the market capitalization does not take a company's debt into account when valuing it.

EV/CF Ratio: The enterprise value-to-cash flow ratio is calculated as a company's enterprise value (market capitalization + value of total long-term debt + book value of preferred shares - cash and marketable securities) divided by the trailing-12-month (TTM) operating cash flow. It's a measure of how long it would take to buy the entire business if you were able to use all the company's operating cash flow.

The EV/CF ratio is perceived as more accurate than the P/CF ratio, in part, because the market price does not take a company's debt into account when valuing it.

EV/FCF Ratio: The enterprise value-to-free cash flow metric compares a company's enterprise value to its trailing-12-month (TTM) free cash flow (FCF). This metric is very similar to the EV/CF ratio, but is considered a more exact measure owing to the fact that it uses free cash flow, which subtracts capital expenditures (CAPEX) from a company's total operating cash flow, thereby reflecting the actual cash flow available for funding growth activities and payments to shareholders.

P/EBITDA Ratio: The P/EBITDA ratio is calculated as a company's per share market value divided by EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization). This metric is very similar to the EV/EBITDA ratio, but is considered a little less exact measure as it uses market price, which does not take a company's debt into account. However, since EBITDA is often considered a proxy for cash income, the metric is used as a measure of what the market is willing to pay today for each dollar of the company's cash profitability in the trailing 12 months (TTM) or forward 12 months (F12M).

P/B Ratio: The price-to-book ratio is calculated as a company's current price per share divided by its book value (total assets – liabilities – preferred stocks) per share. In short, the book value is how much a company is worth. In other words, it reflects the total value of a company's assets that its common shareholders would receive if it were to be liquidated. So, the P/B ratio indicates whether you're paying higher or lower than what would remain if the company went bankrupt immediately. Investors typically use this metric to determine how a company's stock price stacks up to its intrinsic value.

P/TB Ratio: The price-to-tangible-book value ratio is calculated as a the per share market value of a company divided by the value of its tangible assets (total assets – liabilities – preferred stocks – intangible assets) per share. Tangible book value is the same thing as book value except it excludes the value of intangible assets to get a step closer to the baseline value of the company.

P/CF Ratio: The price-to-cash flow ratio measures a company's per share market price relative to its trailing-12-month (TTM) operating cash flow per share. This metric is used to determine whether a company is undervalued or overvalued relative to another stock, industry or sector. And like the P/E ratio, a lower number is typically considered better from the value perspective.

One of the reasons why P/CF ratio is often preferred over P/E ratio is the fact that operating cash flow adds back non-cash expenses such as depreciation and amortization to net income. This feature helps valuing stocks that have positive cash flow but are not profitable because of large noncash charges.

P/FCF Ratio: The price-to-free cash flow ratio is an extension of P/CF ratio, which uses trailing-12-month (TTM) free cash flow per share instead of operating cash flow per share. This metric is considered a more exact measure than P/CF ratio, as free cash flow subtracts capital expenditures (CAPEX) from a company's total operating cash flow, thereby reflecting the actual cash flow available for funding activities that generate additional revenues.

Earnings Yield: The earnings yield is calculated as current fiscal year (F1) EPS estimate divided by the company's current share price. The ratio, which is the inverse of the P/E ratio, measures the anticipated yield (or return) from earnings for each dollar invested in a stock today.

For example, earnings yield for a stock, which is trading at \$35 and expected to earn \$3 per share in the current fiscal year (F1), would be 0.0857 ($3/35 = 0.0857$) or 8.57%. In other words, for \$1 invested in the stock today, the yield from earnings is anticipated to be 8.57 cents.

Investors most commonly compare the earnings yield of a stock to that of a broad market index (such as the S&P 500) and prevailing interest rates, such as the current 10-year Treasury yield. Since bonds and stocks compete for investors' dollars, stock investors typically demand a higher yield for the extra risk they assume compared to investors of U.S. Treasury-backed securities that offer virtually risk-free returns. This additional return is referred to as the risk premium.

Debt/Equity Ratio: The debt-to-equity ratio is calculated as a company's total liabilities divided by its shareholder equity. This metric is used to gauge a company's financial leverage. In other words, it is a measure of the degree to which a company is financing its operations through debt versus its own funds. The higher the ratio, the higher the risk for shareholders.

However, this ratio is difficult to compare across industry groups where ideal amounts of debt vary. Some businesses are more capital intensive than others and typically require higher debt to finance their operations. So, a company's debt-to-equity ratio should be compared with other companies in the same industry.

Cash Flow (\$/share): Cash flow per share is calculated as operating cash flow (after-tax earnings + depreciation + other non-cash charges) divided by common shares outstanding. It is used by many investors as a measure of a company's financial strength. Since cash flow per share takes into consideration a company's ability to generate cash by adding back non-cash expenses, it is regarded by some as a more accurate measure of a company's financial situation than earnings per share, which could be artificially deflated.

Current Ratio: The current ratio or liquidity ratio is a company's current assets divided by its current liabilities. It measures a company's ability to pay short-term obligations. A current ratio that is in line with the industry average or slightly higher is generally considered acceptable. A current ratio that is lower than the industry average would indicate a higher risk of distress or default. A higher number is usually better. However, a very high current ratio compared to the industry average could be an indication of inefficient use of assets by management.

Debt/Capital Ratio: Debt-to-capital ratio is a company's total debt (interest-bearing debt + both short- and long-term liabilities) divided its total capital (interest-bearing debt + shareholders' equity). It is a measure of a company's financial leverage. All else being equal, the higher the debt-to-capital ratio, the riskier the stock.

However, this ratio can vary widely from industry to industry, the ideal amount of required debt being different. Some businesses are more capital intensive than others and typically require higher debt to finance their operations. So, a company's debt-to-capital ratio should be compared with the same for its industry.

Net Margin: Net margin is calculated as net income divided by sales. It shows how much of each dollar in sales generated by a company translates into profit. For example, if a company's net margin is 15%, its net income is 15 cents for every \$1 of sales it makes.

A change in margin can reflect either a change in business conditions, or a company's cost controls, or both. If a company's expenses are growing faster than sales, its net margin will decline. However, different net margin rates are considered good for different industries, so it's better to compare net margin rates of companies in the same industry group.

Return on Equity: Return on equity (ROE) is calculated as trailing-12-month net income divided by trailing-12-month average shareholder equity (including reinvested earnings). This metric is considered a measure of how effectively management is using a company's assets to generate profits. For example, if a company's ROE is 10%, it creates 10 cents profits for every \$1 shareholder equity, which is basically the company's assets minus debt. A company's ROE deemed good or bad depends on what's normal for its peers or industry group.

Sales/Assets Ratio: The sales-to-assets ratio or asset utilization ratio or asset turnover ratio is calculated as a company's annual sales divided by average assets (average of assets at the beginning of the year and at the year's end). This metric helps investors understand how effectively a company is using its assets to generate sales. For example, a sales-to-assets ratio of 2.5 indicates that the company generated \$2.50 in sales for every \$1 of assets on its books.

The higher the sales-to-assets ratio, the better the company is performing. However, similar to many other ratios, the asset turnover ratio tends to be higher for companies in certain industries/sectors than in others. So, a company's sales-to-assets ratio should be compared with the same for its industry/sector.

Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years): This is the average annual (trailing-12-month) EPS growth rate over the last 3-5 years. This metric helps investors see how a company's EPS has grown from a long-term perspective.

Note: There are many factors that can influence short-term numbers — a recession will reduce this number, while a recovery will inflate it. The longterm perspective helps smooth out short-term events.

Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0): This is the estimated EPS growth rate for the current financial year. It is calculated as the consensus estimate for the current fiscal year (F1) divided by the reported EPS for the last completed fiscal year (F0).

Current Cash Flow Growth: It measures the latest year-over-year change in operating cash flow. Cash flow growth tells an investor how quickly a company is generating inflows of cash from operations. A positive change in the cash flow is desired and shows that more 'cash' is coming in than going out.

Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years): This is the annualized change in cash flow over the last 3-5 years. The change in a longer period helps put the current reading into proper perspective. By looking at the rate, rather than the actual dollar value, the comparison across the industry and peers becomes easier.

Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0): This metric looks at the estimated sales growth for the current year. It is calculated as sales estimate for the current fiscal year (F1) divided by the reported sales for the last completed fiscal year (F0).

Like EPS growth, a higher rate is better for sales growth. A look at a company's projected sales growth instantly tells you what the outlook is for their products and services. However, different sales growth rates are considered good for different industries, so it's better to compare sales growth rates of companies in the same industry group.

EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year over the past week. The change in a company's consensus EPS estimate (or earnings estimate revision) has proven to be strongly correlated with the near-term price movement of its shares. It is an integral part of the Zacks Rank.

If a stock's consensus EPS estimate is \$1.10 now versus \$1.00 a week ago, that will be reflected as a 10% upward revision. If, on the other hand, it went from \$1.00 to 90 cents, that would be a 10% downward revision.

EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year over the past four weeks.

A stock's earnings estimate revision in a 1-week period is important. But it's more meaningful to look at the longer-term revision. And, of course, the 4-week change helps put the 1-week change into proper perspective.

EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year over the past 12 weeks.

This metric essentially shows how the consensus EPS estimate has changed over a period longer than 1 week or 4 weeks.

EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal quarter over the past four weeks.

While the revision in consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year is strongly correlated with the near-term price movement of its shares, the estimate revision for the current fiscal quarter is an important metric as well, especially over the short term, and particularly as a stock approaches its earnings date. If a stock's Q1 EPS estimate decreases ahead of its earnings release, it's usually a negative sign, whereas an increase is a positive sign.