

What do the Standard & Poore's letter ratings mean?

The general meaning of our credit rating opinions is summarized below:

'AAA'—Extremely strong capacity to meet financial commitments. Highest Rating.

'AA'—Very strong capacity to meet financial commitments.

'A'—Strong capacity to meet financial commitments, but somewhat susceptible to adverse economic conditions and changes in circumstances.

'BBB'—Adequate capacity to meet financial commitments, but more subject to adverse economic conditions.

'BBB-'—Considered lowest investment grade by market participants.

'BB+'—Considered highest speculative grade by market participants.

'BB'—Less vulnerable in the near-term but faces major ongoing uncertainties to adverse business, financial and economic conditions.

'B'—More vulnerable to adverse business, financial and economic conditions but currently has the capacity to meet financial commitments.

'CCC'—Currently vulnerable and dependent on favorable business, financial and economic conditions to meet financial commitments.

'CC'—Currently highly vulnerable.

'C'—Currently highly vulnerable obligations and other defined circumstances.

'D'—Payment default on financial commitments.

Note: Ratings from 'AA' to 'CCC' may be modified by the addition of a plus (+) or minus (-) sign to show relative standing within the major rating categories.

Specific ratings are also available from Standard & Poor's Ratings Desk by emailing ratings_request@standardandpoors.com.