# Understanding the 2020 Form W-4 and How to Use it to Compute Withholding Communications & Liaison Division Media: CL.SL.Web.Conference.Team@IRS.gov

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## Welcome to Today's IRS Webinar

## Understanding the 2020 Form W-4 and How to Use it to Compute Withholding

Moderator



Scott Mezistrano, Senior National Account Manager

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## Understanding the 2020 Form W-4 and How to Use it to Compute Withholding







Diane McGowan, IRS Tax Forms and Publications



Alice Jacobsohn, American Payroll Association

#### **TOPICS**

- Explain the reason for a new design of the W-4
- Explain Steps 1-5 of the 2020 Form W-4
- Explain who must use the 2020 Form W-4
- Illustrate how to complete two of the five worksheets from Publication 15-T
- · Live Q&A

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#### 2020 Form W-4 - Background

- Tax Cuts and Jobs Act or TCJA or tax reform enacted in December of 2017.
- First task was to update forms, instructions, and publications related to withholding and estimated taxes
- · Issued the 2018 Form W-4 two months later.
- Include the most critical changes necessary to comply with new law.

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#### 2020 Form W-4 - New Design

- Primary goals to provide simplicity, accuracy and privacy for employees while minimizing burden for employers and payroll processors.
- Designed to improve the accuracy of employee withholding amounts.
- No longer uses allowances, tied to the amount of the personal exemptions claimed.
- · The Form is now divided into 5 Steps.

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## Review of new Form W-4 — Step 1 Basic Personal Information Employee's Withholding Certificate Complete Form W-4 so that your employer can withhold the correct federal income tax from your pay. Complete Form W-4 so that your employer can withhold the correct federal income tax from your pay. Complete Form W-4 so that your employer can withhold the correct federal income tax from your pay. Complete Form W-4 so that your employer. Form W-4 Complete Form W-4 so that your employer. Form

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## Review of new Form W-4 - Step 2 (cont'd) 3 different options - Employees should select only one of three options to ensure enough withholding. Option 1: Use the Tax Withholding Estimator Option 2: Use the worksheet on page 3 Option 3: Check the box

## Review of new Form W-4 – Step 2 (cont'd)

#### Option 1

- Use the Tax Withholding Estimator tool.
- The Estimator will compute all the relevant entries for the Form W-4 for that job.
- The employee/spouse will also have to complete new Forms W-4 for the other jobs.

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## Review of new Form W-4 – Step 2 (cont'd)

#### Option 2

- Complete the Multiple Jobs Worksheet on page 3 to determine an amount to include in Step 4(c) of the Form W-4.
- The employee or spouse must complete new Forms W-4 for the other jobs as well.

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## Review of new Form W-4 – Step 2 (cont'd)

#### Option 3

 If the employee (and spouse together, if applicable) has only two jobs, the employee/spouse may check the box on a Form W-4 for each job to have tax withheld at higher rates so there will be enough withholding.

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## **Polling Question**

In Step 2, how many of the 3 available options can employees take?

- a. Only one of the three options
- b. Two of the three options
- C. All three of the options
- d. Can choose not to take any of the options

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## Review of new Form W-4 – Step 3

#### Dependents

Step 3: Claim Dependents If your income will be \$200,000 or less (\$400,000 or less if married filing jointly):

Multiply the number of qualifying children under age 17 by \$2,000 ▶ \$

Multiply the number of other dependents by \$500  $\dots$  . . . .  $\blacktriangleright$  \$



## Review of new Form W-4 – Step 3 (cont'd)

#### Dependents

- Allows employees to reduce withholding for child and dependent credits and other tax credits.
- Employees can calculate the child and dependent credits on the face of the form and add other credits to the total.

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## Review of new Form W-4 - Step 4

#### Adjustments

Step 4 (optional): Other Adjustments (a) Other income. If you want tax withheld for other income you expect this year that won't have withholding, enter the amount of other income here. This may include interest, dividends, and retirement income. You should not include income from any jobs





Allows employees to make other adjustments to their withholding.

## Review of new Form W-4 – Step 4 (cont'd)

#### Step 4(a)

 Allows employees to have income tax withheld for other income that normally doesn't have withholding, such as certain investment income and retirement income.



## Review of new Form W-4 – Step 4 (cont'd)

#### Step 4(b)

- Allows employees to have their employers reduce withholding for itemized deductions (less the standard deduction) and/or adjustments to income (from Form 1040 Schedule 1).
- Employees complete the Deductions Worksheet on page 3 and enter the result in Step 4b.

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## Review of new Form W-4 – Step 4 (cont'd)

#### Step 4(c)

- Allows employees to have their employers increase withholding per pay period.
- This is like line 6 on the 2019 Form W-4.



## Review of new Form W-4 – Step 4 (cont'd)

#### Step 4(c) - cont'd

- Employees can enter the amount the Tax Withholding Estimator directs them to enter in Step
  40
- Employees can enter the amount from the Multiple Jobs Worksheet on page 3 in Step 4c.
- Employees can enter an amount of extra withholding to get a refund or cover other income.



## Review of new Form W-4 below Step 4(c)

- Employees eligible to claim exemption from withholding enter "Exempt" in the space below Step 4(c).
- Also, non-resident alien (NRA) employees subject to the special rules described in Notice 1392 enter "NRA" in the space below Step 4(c).

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## Review of new Form W-4 additional details on Steps 3 and 4

- Generally, employees may complete Steps 3 and 4 to further adjust their withholding but are NOT required to
- If the employee (and spouse together, if applicable)
  has more than one job it's best to put all adjustments
  for Steps 3 and 4 on the Form W-4 for the highest
  paying job to allow adjustments to be made at the
  highest tax rates.

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### **Polling Question**

Carolyn and her spouse both have one job. Carolyn's annual wages are \$80,000 and her spouse has annual wages of \$65,000. They have 2 dependents. What steps should Carolyn complete on her Form W-4 to ensure the most accurate withholding?

- **a.** Steps 1, 2, and 5
- b. Steps 1, 3, and 5
- C. Steps 1 and 5
- d. Steps 1 through 5

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	Signature		
Step 5: Sign Here	Under penalties of perjuny, I declare that this certificate, to the best of my know     Employee's signature (This form is not valid unless you sign it.)	ledge and belief, is tru	e, correct, and complete.
Employers Only	Employer's name and address	First date of employment	Employer identification number (EIN)

## Review of new Form W-4 – Step 5

### Signature

- The signature area includes the penalties of perjury statement.
- Everyone must complete Step 5 or the Form W-4 isn't valid and the employer will apply the default withholding rule.

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## Must every employee submit a 2020 Form W-4?

- No.
  - Employees who have submitted Form W-4 in any year before 2020 are not required to submit a new form merely because of the redesign. Employers will continue to figure withholding based on the information from the employee's most recently submitted Form W-4.
- However, all newly hired employees in 2020 must use the redesigned form. Similarly, any employees hired prior to 2020 who wish to adjust their withholding in 2020 must use the redesigned form.

## Can I require all of my employees to submit a 2020 Form W-4?

- No
  - While you may ask your employees hired before 2020 to submit new Forms W-4 using the redesigned version of the form, you should explain to them that they aren't required to do this and if they don't submit a new Form W-4, withholding will continue based on a valid Form W-4 previously submitted.

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## What happens if a new employee doesn't submit a 2020 Form W-4?

- New employees hired in 2020 who fail to submit a Form W-4 will be treated as a single filer with no other adjustments.
- This means that the employer will determine withholding based only on a single filer's standard deduction with no other entries.



## How do I figure 2020 federal income tax withholding?

You will use the information provided on your employee's Form W-4 and the federal income tax withholding worksheets and tables in Publication 15-T to figure federal income tax withholding.



## **Polling Question**

Can an employer require all of their employees with a Form W-4 from before 2020 to submit a new 2020 Form W-4?

- **a.** Yes, because the new 2020 Form W-4 is mandatory.
- b. Yes, because it will be easier to have all employees under one system.
- C. Yes, because their old W-4 is no longer valid.
- d. No. It is not required.



## Publication 15-T Publication 15-T Federal Income Tax Withholding Methods Foruse in 2020 Forus in 2020 Forus in 2020 Forus in 2020 Forus in 2020 Forus

#### **Publication 15-T**

Includes separate computations based on:

- The method of withholding (Percentage or Wage Bracket Method),
- Payroll system (automated or manual); and
- Whether the Form W-4 is a 2020 form or a prior year form.



## Withholding example for automated payroll systems

- Sophie is a new employee who submitted a 2020 Form W-4 when she was hired.
- In Step 1 of her Form W-4, she selected "Married filing jointly" as her filing status.
- Sophie also completed Step 2 of Form W-4 because her spouse works. She checked the box in Step 2.

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## Withholding example for automated payroll systems (cont'd)

- Sophie did not complete Steps 3 and 4.
- Sophie's wages are \$2,000 biweekly.

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## Withholding example for automated payroll systems (cont'd)

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	1f				loyee's Form W-4				5	-0-
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				f zero or less,	enter -0 This is th	e Adjusted A	nnual	4i	\$	52,000
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If the	emple	Wage Amount oyee HAS NOT:	submitted a Fo		120 or later, figure t					
If the		Wage Amount oyee HAS NOT:	submitted a For eer of allowance	es claimed on	120 or later, figure t the employee's me	ost recent Form				

# Withholding example for automated payroll systems (cont'd) Step 2. Figure the Tentative Withholding Amount bladed on the employee's Adjusted Annual Wage Amount (Step 10) of the 2000 Form W-4) or martal status (Sine 3 of blade on the employee's Adjusted Annual Wage Amount from Sine 1 of the 2000 Form W-4) or martal status (Sine 3 of Sine 1 of Sine 2 of S

`\	Withholding example for automated payroll systems (cont'd)
Step 3.	Account for tax credits   3a   If the employee's Form W.4 is from 2020, enter the amount from Step 3 of that form; otherwise enter -0-   3a   5 -0-   3b   Divide the amount on line 3a by the number of pay periods on line 1b   3b   5 -0-   3c   5 -0-
Step 4.	Figure the final amount to withhold  4a Enter the additional amount to withhold from the employee's Form W-4 (Step 4(c) of the 2020 form or line 6 on earlier forms)  4b Add lines 3c and 4a. This is the amount to withhold from the employee's wages this pay period  4b S 177.48

## In the previous example, Sophie completed Step 2 of her Form W-4. Why would she complete Step 2 of the 2020 Form W-4 and what is the effect on her withholding? a. Because she has a dependent and this will reduce her withholding. b. Because she is married filing jointly and has a spouse who works. This will result in higher withholding. c. Because she wants a specified extra amount withheld from each paycheck. d. Because it was mandatory to complete.

## Withholding example for manual payroll systems using the Wage Bracket Method

- Logan is a new employee who submitted a 2020 Form W-4 when he was hired.
- In Step 1 of his Form W-4, he selected "Head of household" as his filing status.
- Step 2 was not applicable to Logan.
- Logan completed Step 3 and the total for Step 3 was \$2,000.
- Logan did not complete Step 4.
- Logan's wages are \$1,500 weekly.



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		-	•		payroll s	-	5
_	2a Use the ar Bracket Ta the emplo Withholdi	able in this section yee has checked t ing Amount	o look up the tentative of for your pay frequer the box in Step 2 of F	ocy, given the em form W-4. This is	nold in the appropriate ployee's filing status of the Tentative ems With Forms	and whether	\$ 147
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With	-	example for manual payroll systen Wage Bracket Method (cont'd)	ns	;	
Step 3.	Account for tax cred				2.000.00
		t from Step 3 of the employee's Form W-4			
	3b Divide the amoun	nt on line 3a by the number of pay periods on line 1b	3b	\$	38.46
	3c Subtract line 3b fr	from line 2a. If zero or less, enter -0-	3с	\$	108.54
Step 4.	Figure the final amou				
l	4a Enter the addition	nal amount to withhold from Step 4(c) of the employee's Form W-4	4a	\$	-0-
		4a. This is the amount to withhold from the employee's wages this	4b	\$	108.54
1000					
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### **IRS.gov Resources**

- About Form W-4 Page
- Tax Withholding Estimator
- Pub 505, Tax Withholding and Estimated Tax
- Pub 15-T, Federal Income Tax Withholding Methods
- Pub 15 (Circular E), Employer's Tax Guide

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## **Key Points**

- No longer uses allowances which have been tied to the amount of the personal exemptions.
- The Form is now divided into 5 Steps.
- Steps 1 & 5 must be completed to be valid
- Only newly hired employees in 2020 or any employee hired prior to 2020 who wish to adjust their withholding in 2020 must use the redesigned form.

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## **Key Points**

- There are five worksheets in Publication 15-T.
- Publication 15-T includes separate computations based on the method of withholding (Percentage or Wage Bracket Method), Payroll system (automated or manual); and Whether the Form W-4 is a 2020 form or a prior year form.

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