

Sample Letter Explaining the 2020 Form W-4 to Employees

Because the 2020 Form W-4, *Employee's Withholding Certificate*, will be very different from previous versions, communicating the changes to employees will be challenging. Payroll professionals must balance the desire to be helpful to employees with the understanding that they need to be careful not to give tax or legal advice.

To make it easier for you to inform your employees about the new form, APA has created a sample letter that you may give to your employees. The letter provides an explanation of why the form has changed, recommends that employees perform a “paycheck checkup” using the IRS’s Tax Withholding Estimator, and provides basic information about the new steps employees will take to complete the form.

You may customize the letter for your organization.

About APA

Established in 1982, APA is a nonprofit association serving the interests of about 21,000 payroll professionals nationwide. APA’s primary mission is to educate its members and the payroll industry about the best practices associated with paying America’s workers while complying with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. APA members are directly responsible for calculating wages and tax withholding for their employers. For more information about the APA visit <https://www.americanpayroll.org>.

Sample Letter Explaining the 2020 Form W-4

To: (all employees or individually named employees)

CC: Human Resources

From: (your name here)

Date: (fill in as appropriate)

Re: 2020 Form W-4

The 2020 Form W-4, *Employee's Withholding Certificate*, is very different from previous versions. This is due to the federal tax law changes that took place in 2018. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is not requiring all employees to complete the revised form and has designed the withholding tables so that they will work with both the new and prior year forms. However, certain employees will be required to use the new form: those hired in 2020 and anyone who makes withholding changes during 2020.

Even though the IRS does not require all employees to complete the revised form and even if your tax situation has not changed, we recommend you perform a "paycheck checkup" to see if you need to make adjustments to your current withholding. To conduct the checkup, you can use the IRS's Tax Withholding Estimator (www.irs.gov/W4App). To effectively use the estimator, it is helpful to have a copy of your most recent pay stub and tax return. It is likely that the estimator will be updated to account for the 2020 tax tables in early January.

Please note: if you do not submit a new form, withholding will continue based on your previously submitted form.

Before completing the 2020 Form W-4, please read the instructions that are included with the form. You must complete Steps 1 and 5. Complete Steps 2 through 4 only if they apply to you. Doing so will make your withholding more accurately match your tax liability. Step 1 is for your personal information; Step 2 is for households with multiple jobs; Step 3 is used to claim tax credits for dependents; Step 4 is for other adjustments (additional income such as interest and dividends, itemized deductions that exceed the standard deduction, and extra tax you want withheld); and Step 5 is where you sign the form.

The IRS takes your privacy seriously and suggests that, if you are worried about reporting income from multiple jobs in Step 2 or other income in Step 4(a), you check the box in Step 2(c) or enter an additional withholding amount in Step 4(c). To determine the additional withholding amount, you can use the withholding estimator.

The IRS has also published Frequently Asked Questions that you may find helpful as you complete the form (<https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/faqs-on-the-draft-2020-form-w-4>).