



# 2025 payroll year-end checklist



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A woman with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a light blue button-down shirt and a grey skirt, is looking out a window. She is holding a grey jacket in her left hand. The background shows a cityscape through the window.

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# Ernst & Young LLP's 2025 payroll year-end checklist

by Debera Salam and Kenneth Hausser, Ernst & Young LLP



It is time to consider all the tasks necessary to successfully close 2025 and open 2026.

From tax filing to taxability, there is so much to consider when closing the year and starting anew and with federal, state and local rules constantly changing, preparing a year-end payroll checklist is no simple task. To get you started, we have compiled a sample checklist of items to consider for 2025 and 2026, and state charts to guide you through the Form W-2 and electronic filing requirements that apply.

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[Ernst & Young LLP's sample 2025 payroll year end checklist](#)

[Table 1: 2026 federal holidays](#)

[Filing electronically for tax year 2025](#)

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# Ernst & Young LLP's 2025 payroll year-end checklist

We have created a sample checklist of the top 30 payroll and employment tax activities for year-end 2025. Columns are included for inserting your own deadlines and the date you completed the tasks. Keep in mind that this is not a comprehensive list. Each business is unique in its payroll processes. Make a careful inventory of your own requirements and augment this checklist as necessary.

Top 30 payroll year-end tasks for 2025		Suggested deadline	Your deadline	Completed?
1	<b>Order Forms W-2 for 2025.</b> If purchasing Forms W-2 from a supplier, order and inspect the incoming stock. For software packages used in preparing Forms W-2, request the dated approval notice that the software provider obtained from the Social Security Administration (SSA).	November 15, 2025		
2	<b>Form W-4 verification.</b> Ask employees to review their name, address, Social Security Number and Form W-4 and confirm that their federal, state and local income tax withholding elections are correct for 2026.	December 1, 2025		
3	<b>2025 Forms W-4 claiming exemption.</b> Run a report of all employees claiming exemption from federal income tax withholding on Form W-4. If no 2025 Form W-4 is filed, withhold based on the last Form W-4 the employee provided where exemption from withholding was not claimed. If there is no prior Form W-4 where an exemption was not claimed, withhold at single with no adjustments beginning on February 17, 2026. (Many employers send notifications to employees when they are required to file a new Form W-4. Such notices should be sent to employees no later than January 31, 2026.) Check state and local Form W-4 requirements and repeat the same steps for state and local income taxing authorities where applicable.  For more about the federal and state Form W-4 requirements, read our <a href="#">special report</a> .	January 31, 2026. February 17, 2026		
4	<b>Payroll system tax configuration review.</b> Verify taxability configuration tables for all jurisdictions for 2025 and 2026.  • <b>Paid family leave benefits.</b> In recent years, many states have enacted laws requiring that employers provide paid family leave insurance to pay for time off to care for an employee's family members. <a href="#">The IRS issued guidance pertaining to the taxation and reporting of contributions and benefits under state paid family and medical insurance plans. This guidance applies effective January 1, 2026. Employers will need to coordinate with the state on paid medical leave benefits which are subject to the <a href="#">third-party sick pay</a> rules. (See <a href="#">Tax Alert 2025-0297</a>.)</a>	November 2025- January 2026		

Top 30 payroll year-end tasks for 2025	Suggested deadline	Your deadline	Completed?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Wellness benefits.</b> Confirm that you are giving the proper tax treatment to benefits provided under wellness plans. (See our special report, <a href="#">Fringe benefit FAQs</a>.)</li> <li>• <b>Third-party sick pay.</b> Your insurance provider is required to send you an annual statement of payments made and taxes withheld from disability pay in 2025 no later than January 15, 2026. You are likely required to file Forms W-2 with the SSA and provide copies to employees.  For more information on third-party sick pay, read our <a href="#">special report</a>.</li> <li>• <b>Domestic partner benefits.</b> Prior to the U.S. Supreme Court decision on June 26, 2015, (<i>Obergefell v. US</i>, No. 14 556, June 26, 2015) that required recognition of marriage for same-gender partners, several states issued civil union or registered domestic partner licenses that extended to same-gender partners the same state tax benefits as married couples. These tax rules continue to apply in some states in 2025. Accordingly, employers need to confirm if domestic partner health benefits are exempt from state income and unemployment insurance tax for some of their employees despite being taxable for federal income tax (FIT), federal income tax withholding (FITW), Social Security/Medicare (FICA) and federal unemployment insurance tax (FUTA) purposes.  For more information, contact an Ernst &amp; Young LLP employment tax professional.</li> <li>• <b>Moving expenses.</b> Under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA), reimbursements for moving expenses made to employees or paid directly to third parties on and after January 1, 2018, and through December 31, 2025 (made permanent under the One Big Beautiful Act or OBBBA), are included in wages subject to FIT, FITW, FICA and FUTA. An exception to this provision applies to members of the Armed Forces on active duty who are moving pursuant to a military order and incident to a permanent change of station. (TCJA §11048; <a href="#">Tax Alert 2025-1476</a>.)</li> </ul>	January 15, 2026		

# Ernst & Young LLP's 2025 payroll year-end checklist

Continued

Top 30 payroll year-end tasks for 2025		Suggested deadline	Your deadline	Completed?
	<p>For active-duty military personnel (and for moving expenses incurred by civilian employees prior to January 1, 2018), IRC §132(g) allows an exclusion from wages for FIT, FITW, FICA and FUTA purposes under IRC §132(a)(6) for moving expenses reimbursed or paid directly by the employer to the extent those moving expenses were deductible under IRC §217.</p> <p>Under IRC §217, the exclusion applies to the cost of moving household goods and personal effects from the former residence to the new residence, the first 30 days of storage for a domestic move and lodging and mileage expenses incurred during the period of travel from the former residence to the new place of residence.</p> <p>Nontaxable moving expense reimbursements paid directly to active-duty military employees are reported on Form W-2 in box 12, code P; however, civilian employers do not use box 12, code P for reimbursements paid on and after January 1, 2018. (See the <a href="#">IRS frequently asked questions for moving expenses</a>.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Other fringe benefits.</b> Note that a few states are not "coupled" with the federal Internal Revenue Code for specific fringe benefits.</li> </ul>			
5	<b>Accounts payable review.</b> Review accounts payable and general ledger records for unreported taxable items. See <a href="#">Table 3</a> for a sample list of compensatory items that might have been paid through accounts payable.	November-December 31, 2025		
6	<b>General ledger reconciliation and review.</b> Perform general ledger reconciliations before releasing 2025 annual information statements and returns. See <a href="#">Table 3</a> for a sample list of compensatory items that might be found in a general ledger review.	November-December 2025		
7	<b>Payroll bank reconciliation.</b> Perform payroll bank reconciliations through December 31, 2025, including identifying outstanding checks for 2025. Ask for an early cut-off statement if necessary.	November-December 2025		

Top 30 payroll year-end tasks for 2025		Suggested deadline	Your deadline	Completed?
8	<p><b>Gross-up and tax advances.</b> Perform all necessary gross-up calculations and impute all taxable amounts for 2025. Make tax advances when necessary (and when allowed by law) to remedy any withholding shortages resulting from imputed income. Remember that tax advances for 2025 must be repaid by employees no later than April 1, 2026.</p> <p>Alert! The IRS modified the instructions in Form 941-X to clarify that prior-year adjustments to federal income tax withholding and the Additional Medicare Tax are not allowed merely because these taxes were paid by the employer in connection with a gross-up. Businesses will need to carefully review their 2025 gross-up calculations prior to December 31, 2025, to avoid federal income tax and Additional Medicare Tax overpayments they cannot recover after the close of the year. (See <a href="#">Form 941-X instructions, page 4.</a>)</p>	December 31, 2025, April 1, 2026		
9	<p><b>Check your timing for posting taxable fringes to the payroll system.</b> To prevent late-deposit penalties and other adverse consequences, review the items on your year-end adjustment list to determine if they should have been posted to taxable wages on a periodic or other more frequent basis. Identify ways to mitigate exposures and adjust your procedures for the future accordingly.</p>	December 31, 2025		
10	<p><b>2025 Form W-2 distribution.</b> Determine what method will be used to distribute employee copies of the 2025 Forms W-2. If special mailing rates will be used, be certain to file all necessary documents with the U.S. Postal Service. (See <a href="#">T.D. 9114</a> for information on providing Forms W-2 to employees electronically.)</p>	December 31, 2025		
11	<p><b>Incentive Stock Option (ISO) and Employee Stock Purchase Plan (ESPP) reporting.</b> The exercise of an ISO in 2025 is required to be reported on Form 3921 and the transfer of shares under an ESPP in 2025 on Form 3922. Both forms are furnished to the employee by February 2, 2026, and filed with the IRS by March 2, 2026 (March 31, 2026, if filed electronically). (See IRS filing instructions <a href="#">here.</a>)</p>	January 31, 2025-March 31, 2026		
12	<p><b>Electronic filing requirements.</b> Check federal, state and local electronic tax filing requirements for 2025 and 2026. Register or make an application to remit taxes and returns electronically if the threshold for 2025 is met. (See <a href="#">Table 2</a> for the IRS application deadlines, if applicable.) Also, check federal, state and local electronic tax payment requirements for 2025 and file any required applications to meet electronic filing and payment requirements in 2025. See <a href="#">Table 4</a> for the current state electronic filing requirements for Forms W-2.</p>	November-December 2025		

# Ernst & Young LLP's 2025 payroll year-end checklist

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Top 30 payroll year-end tasks for 2025		Suggested deadline	Your deadline	Completed?
13	<p><b>Third-party employment tax service provider verification.</b> Work with your third-party employment tax provider to confirm that returns and information statements will be filed for all applicable jurisdictions and that the third party has reporting agent approval when necessary to file on your behalf.</p> <p>Read our <a href="#">special report</a> about the elements of oversight for third-party payroll service provider arrangements and complete the governance scorecard.</p>	December 31, 2025		
14	<p><b>Form W-2, box 13 pension plan indicator.</b> Coordinate with your benefits administrator to determine when Form W-2, box 13, "Pension Plan," should be checked for each Form W-2 recipient. See page 31 of the <a href="#">2025 General Instructions for Forms W-2 and W-3</a>.</p>	December 31, 2025		
15	<p><b>Form W-2 reporting of employer-provided group health benefits.</b> Employers that filed 250 or more Forms W-2 in 2024 are required to report the aggregate cost of employer-provided group health benefits on the 2025 Form W-2, box 12, code DD. Verify that the necessary information for each employee is available for Form W-2 reporting purposes.</p> <p>For further details, see the IRS <a href="#">frequently asked questions</a>.</p>	December 31, 2025		
16	<p><b>Check the rules governing employer reimbursements for employee-purchased health insurance.</b> Under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), employers are subject to substantial penalties if they reimburse employees under certain situations for their purchase of individual health insurance policies.</p> <p>For more information see <a href="#">T.D. 9667</a> and IRS <a href="#">frequently asked questions</a>.</p>	December 2025		
17	<p><b>Review your independent contractors the same way a governmental auditor would.</b> States are increasingly focused on whether employers have properly classified their workers as independent contractors, frequently asserting that they should be treated as employees.</p> <p>For more information on the federal employment tax standards that apply, see IRS <a href="#">Publication 1779</a>.</p>	December 31, 2025		
18	<p><b>Information reporting for US nonresident alien employees.</b> If you paid wages to US nonresident alien employees in 2025 and they claimed an exemption from federal income tax withholding under a treaty, you will be required to comply with the Form 1042-S reporting requirements. Keep in mind that Form W-2 reporting may also be required for Social Security/Medicare earnings and any state/local taxes that may apply. Both the recipient and IRS copies of Form 1042 are due by March 16, 2026.</p> <p>For more information, see the <a href="#">IRS website</a>.</p>	March 16, 2026		



Top 30 payroll year-end tasks for 2025		Suggested deadline	Your deadline	Completed?
19	<p>2025-26 employee notices. Run the reports necessary to comply with all federal and state employee notification requirements and consider others that may be helpful.</p> <p><b>Mandatory</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The special accounting rule/no federal income tax withholding on personal-use auto</b> – employee notices should be provided by January 31, 2026, if the special accounting rule was used in 2025 or if you will elect not to withhold federal income tax from the value of personal use of company cars in 2026.</li> <li>• <b>Charitable contributions</b> – you are required to provide employees with a report of the annual total of charitable contributions paid through payroll deduction. Consider using Form W-2, box 14, for this purpose. See <a href="#">IRS Publication 1771</a>.</li> <li>• <b>Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)</b> – for federal purposes, Form W-2, Copy B, includes the notice that employers are required to provide to employees concerning their eligibility for the Earned Income Tax Credit. Some states and localities require a separate notification (other than Form W-2, Copy B) and may also impose a different annual deadline for making it available to employees.</li> </ul> <p>See more information on the federal EITC <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>Have questions about state and local EITC notice requirements? Send us your questions <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p><b>Suggested</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Expiring Form W-4</b> – notify employees who claimed exemption from federal income tax withholding in 2025 that they are required to furnish you with a 2026 Form W-4 by February 16, 2026. Verify state rules concerning withholding allowance certificates claiming exemption and include state expiring information on the same employee notice.</li> <li>• <b>2026 withholding tax changes</b> – notify employees of any change in the amount of tax they will pay in 2026 for Social Security, Medicare or federal, state and local income tax withholding.</li> <li>• <b>Multistate employees</b> – for employees who worked in more than one state, consider providing a detail of the taxable wages that were paid within each work state. This is particularly relevant for employees working in New York because employers are required to report federal taxable wages (Form W-2, box 1) as state taxable wages (Form W-2, box 16).</li> <li>• <b>Tips and overtime eligible for federal tax deduction.</b> For 2025, The IRS will not impose penalties for failure to separately report overtime and tips eligible for the federal income tax deduction; however, the IRS encourages employers to voluntarily provide this information in a separate statement. Doing so would reduce employee inquiries during the 2025 tax filing season. (<a href="#">See Tax Alert 2025-2250</a>.)</li> </ul>	January 31, 2026 (unless otherwise noted)		

# Ernst & Young LLP's 2025 payroll year-end checklist

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Top 30 payroll year-end tasks for 2025		Suggested deadline	Your deadline	Completed?
20	<p><b>Federal unemployment insurance (FUTA) fourth-quarter deposit adjustment.</b> If you had employees working in California or the Virgin Islands, you are subject to a FUTA credit reduction in 2025, and you will pay a higher FUTA rate for taxable wages paid in these jurisdictions. The additional FUTA tax owed is computed on the 2025 Form 940, and the additional tax payment is due by February 2, 2026.</p> <p>The 2025 Form 940, once available, will be posted <a href="#">here</a>.</p>	February 2, 2026		
21	<p><b>2025 tax payment reconciliation.</b> Prepare all fourth-quarter tax reconciliation(s) prior to making the final tax payment(s) to jurisdictions for the quarter or year. (See page 20 for more information about year-end reconciliation procedures.)</p>	Various		
22	<p><b>Testing Form W-2 files before filing them.</b> The SSA will return Form W-2 files containing certain errors. For this reason, it is important that employers use SSA's <a href="#">AccuWage</a> before filing their returns. Employers using a third-party provider to handle Form W-2 files should require that the third-party provider give them a copy of the AccuWage acceptance report.</p> <p>Some states and localities require test files for first-time electronic filers. Be certain to comply with these requirements.</p>	January 15, 2026		
23	<p><b>2026 payroll processing schedule.</b> Prepare the 2026 payroll processing and tax return filing schedule. For a list of federal holidays, see <a href="#">Table 1</a>.</p>	December 2026		
24	<p><b>Review 2026 employer withholding tax guides.</b> Review IRS Circular E, <a href="#">Publication 15</a>, <i>Employer's Tax Guide</i> and <a href="#">Publication 15-T</a>, <i>Federal Income Tax Withholding Methods</i>, for 2026 and any similar state and local employer tax guides and withholding tables to determine taxability and reporting changes for 2026. Make all taxability, reporting and withholding rate changes for 2026 (including the 2026 exemption amounts for IRS tax levies in Publication 1494).</p> <p>Instructions for computing the amount exempt from a federal tax levy are available <a href="#">here</a>.</p>	December 23, 2025		

Top 30 payroll year-end tasks for 2025		Suggested deadline	Your deadline	Completed?
25	<p><b>2026 tax rate and wage base updates.</b> Input 2026 Social Security, state unemployment, state disability, paid family and medical leave and other similar taxable wage base and tax rate information.</p> <p>If using a third-party provider, test the third party's system requirements before the first live payroll in 2026.</p> <p>State unemployment insurance (SUI) tax rates should be verified within the protest period. Since many states issue their SUI rates in November and December, this is an important year-end item.</p> <p>It is also important to verify in March 2026 that the correct SUI rate and wage base are reflected on the first-quarter 2026 quarterly SUI returns (generally due by April 30, 2026).</p> <p>Don't forget that you may be required to pay additional FUTA taxes because of states that have an outstanding FUTA loan balance on November 10, 2025.</p> <p>For the 2025 employment tax rates and limits, see our <a href="#">special report</a>. The 2026 report, once available, will be published <a href="#">here</a>.</p>	December 31, 2025, March 31, 2026		
26	<p><b>Additional payroll period in 2026.</b> If you have an additional payroll period in 2026 (i.e., 27 rather than 26, or 53 rather than 52), you may need to adjust your federal, state and local income tax withholding calculations. You will also need to determine how employee payroll deductions might change for the additional payroll period.</p> <p>For more information on the additional payroll period, see our special report <a href="#">here</a>.</p>	December 2025		
27	<p><b>2026 payroll deductions.</b> Input 2026 payroll deduction information pursuant to benefit open enrollment data or other deductions that are subject to annual revision.</p> <p>Stop all payroll deductions that were authorized only through 2025.</p> <p>Test to confirm that 2026 payroll deductions are accurately updated.</p>	Prior to first payroll run for 2026		
28	<p><b>Purge 2025 expired records.</b> Purge the active employee master file of all employees terminated in 2025.</p>	December 31, 2025		
29	<p><b>Duplicate and returned Forms W-2.</b> Instruct the mailroom on where to send returned Forms W-2 for tax year 2025. Verify that all employee requests for duplicate 2025 Forms W-2 are timely provided.</p>	January 2, 2026, April 15, 2026 (federal due date for 2025 Forms 1040)		



# Ernst & Young LLP's 2025 payroll year-end checklist

Continued

Top 30 payroll year-end tasks for 2025		Suggested deadline	Your deadline	Completed?
30	<p>Note the following changes that are effective January 1, 2026:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Retirement plan catch-up contributions.</b> <i>Effective January 1, 2026, employees 50 and older whose 2025 earnings exceed \$145,000 (as adjusted for inflation) must make catch-up contributions on an after-tax basis through a Roth account rather than on a pre-tax basis. (See <a href="#">Tax Alert 2025-2010</a>.)</i></li> <li>• <b>Dependent care assistance.</b> Under the OBBBA, and effective January 1, 2026, the maximum amount that employees can exclude from gross income under IRC Section 129 for dependent care assistance is increased from \$5,000 to \$7,500, which will not be indexed for inflation. (See Tax Alert <a href="#">2025-1476</a>.)</li> <li>• <b>Educational assistance.</b> Under the OBBBA, IRC Section 127(c)(1)(B) makes permanent the exclusion for employer payments of qualified education loans. For tax years beginning after 2026, the maximum exclusion amount of \$5,250 will be adjusted for inflation. (See Tax Alert <a href="#">2025-1476</a>.)</li> <li>• <b>Other fringe benefit adjustments for 2026.</b> See Tax <a href="#">2025-2076</a>.</li> </ul>	December 31, 2025		



# Table 1 — 2026 federal holidays

When planning your 2026 payroll processing and employment tax schedule, refer to the list of federal holidays below. (*U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2026 Holiday Schedule*)

New Year's Day	Thursday, January 1, 2026
Martin Luther King Jr. Day	Monday, January 19, 2026
Inauguration Day	N/A
Presidents' Day*	Monday, February 16, 2026
Memorial Day	Monday, May 25, 2026
Juneteenth National Independence Day	Friday, June 19, 2025
Independence Day	Friday, July 3, 2026
Labor Day	Monday, September 7, 2026
Columbus Day	Monday, October 12, 2026
Veterans Day	Wednesday, November 11, 2026
Thanksgiving Day	Thursday, November 26, 2026
Christmas Day	Friday, December 25, 2026

Note: Holidays that fall on Saturday are observed the previous Friday, and those that fall on Sunday are observed the following Monday.  
(See 5 U.S.C. 6103(b).)

\*Also known as Washington's Birthday.



# Filing electronically for tax year 2025

For a schedule of key federal filing due dates for tax year 2025, see [Table 2](#).

For tax year 2025 (filed in 2026), businesses with the aggregate of 10 or more Form W-2, W-2c or other IRS information returns or statements, including those required under the Affordable Care Act (e.g., Forms 1094, 1095, 1099, 1042-S, 8027) are required to file electronically with the SSA or IRS. ([TD 9972](#).)

Remember that a penalty applies when a business files returns on paper that are required to be filed electronically.

Specifications for preparing Forms W-2 electronically for tax year 2025 are found in the SSA's [Publication 42-007, Specifications for Filing Forms W-2 Electronically \(EFW2\)](#).

For returns or statements filed with the IRS, specifications for electronic filing for 2025 are available in IRS Publication [1220, Specifications for Electronic Filing of Forms 1097, 1098, 1099, 3921, 3922, 5498, and W-2G](#).

## First-time electronic filers with the SSA

Filing electronically with the SSA is easy. Applications are not required. Instead, users register with the SSA by following the instructions within the Business Services Online (BSO) section [here](#). Note that electronic Forms W-2 also may be verified using AccuWage before they are submitted.

AccuWage 2025 is available through the SSA's [website](#).

### SSA password maintenance

The SSA suggests that users avoid the year-end rush by checking their access and updating their passwords now in preparation for the 2025 Form W-2 filing season.

Information is available [here](#).

## First-time electronic filers with the IRS

- **The IRS requires applications for first-time filers.** Unlike the SSA, the IRS Information Reporting Branch (IRB) requires that before submitting the first electronic file, you request authorization to file electronically by submitting an application for a Transmitter Control Code by filing [online, Information Return \(IR\) Application for Transmitter Control Code \(TCC\)](#). (This requirement applies even if you are required to file electronically.) You are not allowed to begin filing electronically until the IRS has approved your application.

The application for a TCC must be filed by November 1 of the year before information return(s) are due to ensure you're ready to electronically file. The IRS also states that applicants should allow 45 days for processing.

- **Sending test files to the IRS.** Filers are not required to submit a test file unless they wish to participate in the Combined Federal State Filing program; however, the submission of a test file is encouraged for all new electronic filers to test hardware and software.

Keep in mind when planning your year-end schedule that the IRS FIRE system [will be down](#) from 3 p.m. ET November 19, 2025, through January 6, 2026, for annual updates.

For more information, see IRS Publication [1220](#).



## Getting extensions on the SSA and IRS filing deadline

If you will not be able to meet the filing deadline for sending your 2025 forms to the IRS or SSA (e.g., a fire or other disaster), a 30-day extension can be obtained by filing Form [8809](#), *Application for Extension of Time to File Information Returns*, with the IRS (not the SSA). There is no longer an automatic 30-day extension for filing Forms W-2 or Form 1099-MISC reporting nonemployee compensation. Instead, only one 30-day extension for filing Form W-2 will be granted by the IRS and only if it can be shown that extenuating circumstances of the nature shown below are preventing you from filing by the January 31 due date.

In TD [9838](#), the IRS states the following reasons it will accept in approving the non-automatic 30-day extension:

- The business suffered a catastrophic event in a Federally Declared Disaster Area that made the business unable to resume operations or made necessary records unavailable.
- The business suffered a fire, casualty or natural disaster that affected the operation of the business.
- The responsible person’s unavoidable absence.
- The information return is being filed for the first year the business was established.
- The filer did not receive timely data on a third-party payee statement. This third-party payee statement might be a Schedule K-1, *Partner’s Share of Current Year Income, Deductions, Credits and Other Items*, Form 1042 S or the statement of sick pay required under IRS Reg. §31.6051-3(a)(1).

Additionally, the extension will be granted even if the filer receives the third-party payee statement by the statutory furnishing deadline, provided that the filer did not receive the statement in time to prepare an accurate information return.

The Form 8809 must be signed by the filer/transmitter or a person who is duly authorized to sign a return.

For other forms, one automatic 30-day extension is granted by filing Form 8809, and no signature is required. An additional second extension is allowed only if specifically granted by the IRS and only if you can show that extenuating circumstances are preventing you from filing by the first extended due date. The second extension request must be signed by the filer/transmitter or a person who is duly authorized to sign a return.

For the extension request to be granted, it must be postmarked, transmitted or completed online by the due date of the return.

If you are requesting an extension to file several types of forms, you may use one Form 8809, but you must file it by the earliest form due date. For instance, if you are filing a Form 8809 for a return due on March 15 and for another return due on March 31, the Form 8809 is due on March 15.

Note that extension requests for tax year 2025 returns should not be submitted prior to January 1, 2026.

Form 8809 may be used for the following forms and can be filed electronically [here](#).

- |          |          |            |            |
|----------|----------|------------|------------|
| • W-2    | • 1095-B | • 1099-NEC | • 5498     |
| • W-2G   | • 1097   | • 1099-QA  | • 5498-ESA |
| • 1042-S | • 1098   | • 3921     | • 5498-QA  |
| • 1094-C | • 1099   | • 3922     | • 5498-SA  |
| • 1095-C |          |            | • 8027     |

Note that Form 8809 cannot be used to request an extension on the time to give employees or payees copies of their information returns (e.g., Form W-2, Form 1099). Instead, a letter of request must be submitted to the IRS. Extensions on the time to provide recipient copies are rare.

For more information, see IRS Publication [1220](#).

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# Filing electronically for tax year 2025

*Continued*



## Obtaining a waiver from filing electronically with SSA or IRS

If for any reason you will not be able to submit your Forms W-2 to the SSA or information returns to the IRS electronically for tax year 2025 and you are required to do so, a one-year waiver may be granted for hardship cases. A waiver cannot be requested for more than one year at a time.

A onetime waiver from the electronic filing requirement can be obtained by filing Form [8508](#), *Request for Waiver From Filing Information Returns Electronically*, with the IRS (not the SSA).

By obtaining a waiver from the IRS, you will not be subject to penalties for failing to meet the electronic filing requirements.

The IRS encourages businesses to file Form 8508 at least 45 days before the due date of the electronic filing. The IRS does not process waiver requests until January 1 of the calendar year the returns are due.

Besides Form W-2, Form 8508 is used to request waivers from filing the following returns electronically: 1042-S, 1094-C/1095-C, 1095 B, 1097-BTC, 1098, 1098 C, 1098 E, 1098-T, 1099-A, 1099 B, 1099-C, 1099-CAP, 1099-DIV, 1099 G, 1099 INT, 1099-K, 1099-LTC, 1099-MISC, 1099-NEC, 1099 OID, 1099-PATR, 1099-Q, 1099 R, 1099-S, 1099-SA, 3921, 3922, 5498, 5498-ESA, 5498-SA, 8027, W-2AS, W-2G, W-2GU, W-2PR and W-2VI.

All requests for a waiver should be sent to the following address:

Internal Revenue Service  
Attn: Extension of Time Coordinator  
240 Murall Drive Mail Stop 4360  
Kearneysville, WV 25430

By fax:  
+1 877 477 0572 (304 579 4105, international)

# Table 2 — Federal electronic filing due dates for 2025

These are the due dates for filing federal wage and nonwage information returns.

Form	Electronic system used for reporting*	Electronic filing due date and deadline to request first 30-day extension (Form 8809)*	Deadline to submit request for waiver from filing electronically (Form 8508)*
Form 1042-S	IRS FIRE	March 16, 2026	March 16, 2026
Forms 1094-C, 1095-C, 1095-B, 1099-R, 3921, 3922 and W-2G	IRS FIRE	March 31, 2026	March 31, 2026
Form 1099-MISC/1099-R	IRS FIRE	March 31, 2026	March 31, 2026
Form 1099-NEC	IRS FIRE	February 2, 2026	February 2, 2026
Form 8027	IRS FIRE	March 31, 2026	March 31, 2026
Forms 1099-R, 5498, 5498 SA and 5498 ESA	IRS FIRE	June 1, 2026	June 1, 2026
Form W-2	SSA BSO	February 2, 2026	February 2, 2026

\*The [SSA](#) will begin accepting 2025 electronic Form W-2 file uploads on December 8, 2025. The IRS [FIRE system](#) will begin accepting tax year 2025 file uploads on January 6, 2025..

Note that excess golden parachute payments are no longer reported on Form 1099-MISC. Instead, report these payments on Form 1099-NEC in box 3. ([Instructions for Forms 1099-MISC and 1099-NEC, rev. 4/2025.](#))

States are making greater use of the internet and other electronic reporting options, with some having changed their Form W-2 electronic reporting requirements for Forms W-2. See our state survey in [Table 4](#).





## Table 3 — Special wage payments: sample list

The chart below is a sample list of earnings that may be reportable and often depend on data inputs outside of the payroll processing system.

Creating a list of such special wage payments, including the persons or third parties responsible for providing the data, is an important element of the payroll year-end checklist. We have indicated in a column below where third parties are frequently relied on to provide information necessary to meet tax and reporting requirements.

W-2 reportable item	Employer	Third party	W-2 reportable item	Employer	Third party
401(k) – W-2 box 13 indicator		✓	Expatriate taxes		✓
Adoption assistance	✓	✓	Expatriate wage update	✓	✓
Athletic club memberships	✓	✓	Gift cards	✓	✓
Award – length of service	✓	✓	Gifts – noncash	✓	
Award – recognition	✓	✓	Gross-up – federal tax	✓	✓
Award – safety	✓	✓	Gross-up – local nonresident tax	✓	✓
Business expense — non-accountable	✓	✓	Gross-up – state nonresident tax	✓	✓
Club memberships	✓		Insurance – annuity		✓
Credit card – non-accountable business expense reimbursements		✓	Jury duty – offset	✓	
Deferred compensation – distributions	✓	✓	Living expenses	✓	
Deferred compensation – earnings	✓	✓	Loans – forgiven	✓	
Dependent care on-site facility	✓	✓	Loans – interest income	✓	✓
Dependent care flexible spending	✓	✓	Medical debit card		✓
Dependent care assistance – backup day care	✓	✓	Noncash award	✓	✓
Dining hall – executive	✓		Parking	✓	✓
Disability pay – CA		✓	Relocation – domestic	✓	✓
Disability pay – HI		✓	Relocation – foreign	✓	✓
Disability pay – NJ		✓	Paid family leave benefits from private insurance fund or self- insured plan	✓	✓
Disability pay – NY		✓	Scholarships	✓	✓
Disability pay – private fund		✓	Settlement awards	✓	✓
Disability pay – PR		✓	State disability offset	✓	✓
Disability pay – state offset	✓	✓	Stock – W-2 box 12 indicators		✓
Discounts – merchandise	✓		Stock – Employee Stock Purchase Plan (ESPP)		✓
Discounts – services	✓		Stock – Incentive Stock Option (ISO)		✓
Educational assistance	✓	✓	Stock – Nonqualified		✓
Expatriate totalization	✓	✓	Stock – Restricted		✓
			Transit benefits	✓	✓
			Workers’ compensation offset	✓	✓

# 2025 state Form W-2 requirements

The following charts reflect our state survey results as of November 2025.

**Federal Form W-2 reporting requirements:** For tax year 2025 (filed in 2026), businesses with the aggregate of 10 or more federal Forms W-2, W-2c or other IRS information returns or statements, including those required under the Affordable Care Act (e.g., Forms 1094, 1095, 1099, 1042-S, 8027) are required to file electronically with the SSA or IRS. ([TD 9972](#).)

**Table 4 — 2025 State Form W-2 filing method requirements**

(Note that changes since November 2024 are highlighted in yellow.)

State	Citation	When electronic filing is required	Filing deadline	Due date for employee copy
Alabama (AL)	<a href="#">AL Dept. of Revenue website</a>	10 or more Forms W-2, or if you filed and paid electronically during the year	1/31	1/31
Alaska (AK)	N/A	No personal income tax	N/A	N/A
Arizona (AZ)	<a href="#">AZ Dept. of Revenue website</a>	All employers	1/31	1/31
Arkansas (AR)	<a href="#">AK Specifications for filing</a>	75 or more employees	1/31	1/31
California (CA)	<a href="#">CA Pub. DE 44, p. 71</a>	Forms W-2 are not filed with the state	N/A	1/31
Colorado (CO)	<a href="#">CO Dept. of Revenue website</a>	Follows federal	1/31	1/31
Connecticut (CT)	<a href="#">CT Dept. of Revenue website</a>	25 or more Forms W-2	1/31	1/31
Delaware (DE)	<a href="#">DE Div. of Revenue website</a>	Follows federal	1/31	1/31
District of Columbia (DC)	<a href="#">DC Specifications for the electronic filing</a>	25 or more Forms W-2	1/31	1/31
Florida (FL)	N/A	No personal income tax	N/A	N/A
Georgia (GA)	<a href="#">GA Employer's Withholding Tax Guide, p. 16</a>	Follows federal	1/31	1/31
Hawaii (HI)	<a href="#">HI website</a>	All employers required to remit Hawaii withholding tax returns electronically (annual withholding liability exceeds \$40,000)	1/31	1/31
Idaho (ID)	<a href="#">ID W2 E-Filing Guide, p. 2</a>	Follows federal	1/31	1/31
Illinois (IL)	<a href="#">IL Pub. 110, p. 2</a>	All employers	1/31	1/31
Indiana (IN)	<a href="#">IN EFW2 Electronic Filing Requirements, p. 3</a>	25 or more Forms W-2	1/31	1/31
Iowa (IA)	<a href="#">IA Dep. of Revenue website</a>	All employers if Iowa income tax withheld	2/15	1/31
Kansas (KS)	<a href="#">KS Withholding Tax Guide, p. 13</a>	51 or more Forms W-2	1/31	1/31

# 2025 state Form W-2 requirements\*

*Continued*

State	State Code FIPS <sup>(1)</sup>	When electronic filing is required	Filing deadline	Due date for employee copy
Kentucky (KY)	<a href="#">KY Dept. of Revenue website</a>	26 or more Forms W-2	1/31	1/31
Louisiana (LA)	<a href="#">LA Dept. of Revenue website</a>	50 or more employees	1/31	1/31
Maine (ME)	<a href="#">ME Dept. of Revenue website</a>	Follows federal	1/31	1/31
Maryland (MD)	<a href="#">MD Employer Withholding Guide, p. 7</a>	25 or more Forms W-2	1/31	1/31
Massachusetts (MA)	<a href="#">MA Dept. of Revenue website</a>	50 or more Forms W-2	1/31	1/31
Michigan (MI)	<a href="#">MI Income Tax Withholding Guide, p. 3</a>	Follows federal	1/31	1/31
Minnesota (MN)	<a href="#">MN Dept. of Revenue website</a>	Follows federal	1/31	1/31
Mississippi (MS)	<a href="#">MS website</a>	10 or more Forms W-2 or 10 or more Forms 1099	1/31	1/31
Missouri (MO)	<a href="#">MO specifications for e-filing, p.5</a>	250 or more Forms W-2	1/31	1/31
Montana (MT)	<a href="#">MT Employer and Information Agent Guide, p.9</a>	Optional	1/31	1/31
Nebraska (NE)	<a href="#">NE Circular EN, p. 2</a>	More than 50 Forms W-2	1/31	1/31
Nevada (NV)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New Hampshire (NH)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New Jersey (NJ)	<a href="#">NJ Pub. NJ-WT, p. 19</a>	All employers	2/15	2/15
New Mexico (NM)	<a href="#">NM FYI-330, p. 4</a>	25 or more employees	1/31	1/31
New York (NY)	<a href="#">NY Dept. of Taxation and Finance website</a>	Forms W-2 are not filed with the state	N/A	1/31
North Carolina (NC)	<a href="#">NC website</a>	All employers	1/31	1/31
North Dakota (ND)	<a href="#">ND Dept. of Revenue website</a>	All employers	1/31	1/31
Ohio (OH)	<a href="#">OH Dept. of Taxation website</a>	All employers	2/28	1/31
Oklahoma (OK)	<a href="#">OK website</a>	All employers	1/31	1/31
Oregon (OR)	<a href="#">OR Employer's Guide p. 22</a>	All employers	1/31	1/31
Pennsylvania (PA)	<a href="#">PA Dept. of Rev. website</a>	Follows federal	1/31	1/31
Rhode Island (RI)	<a href="#">RI W-2 Electronic Filing Requirements</a>	If required by IRS and has a minimum of 25 Rhode Island employees	1/31	1/31



# 2025 state Form W-2 requirements\*

*Continued*

State	State Code FIPS	When electronic filing is required	Filing deadline	Due date for employee copy
South Carolina (SC)	<a href="#">SC Dept. of Revenue website</a>	10 or more Forms W-2 or 1099	1/31	1/31
South Dakota (SD)	N/A	No personal income tax	N/A	N/A
Tennessee (TN)	N/A	No personal income tax	N/A	N/A
Texas (TX)	N/A	No personal income tax	N/A	N/A
Utah (UT)	<a href="#">UT Pub. 14, p. 5</a>	All employers	1/31	1/31
Vermont (VT)	<a href="#">VT Dept. of Taxes website</a>	Follows federal	1/31	1/31
Virginia (VA)	<a href="#">VA Dept. of Taxation website</a>	All employers for Forms W-2 that show Virginia income tax withheld	1/31	1/31
Washington (WA)	N/A	No personal income tax	N/A	N/A
West Virginia (WV)	<a href="#">WV electronic file specifications p. 3</a>	10 or more employees or that uses a payroll service provider	1/31	1/31
Wisconsin (WI)	<a href="#">WI Dept. of Revenue website</a>	Follows federal	1/31	1/31
Wyoming (WY)	N/A	No personal income tax	N/A	

\*Much of this information was obtained by Ernst & Young LLP during informal telephone, website or email surveys with state governmental agencies. Although surveys are useful in determining how government departments currently treat an issue, answers and positions derived from such surveys are not binding upon the state, cannot be cited as precedent, and may change over time and hence cannot be relied upon.

# Year-end employment tax reporting compliance

Particularly for the multi-state employer, preparing for annual employment tax reporting is a multi-step process that includes the following:

## 1. Create a list of jurisdictions requiring returns and information statements (e.g., Forms W-2, 1099, 1042-S)

Whether employment taxes are processed in-house or by a third-party provider, a list should be created of the jurisdictions and the returns and information statements that each requires. In our experience, reviewing employment tax processes, neglecting to report to all jurisdictions (including those outside the US, where applicable) is one of the most common errors that multi-jurisdictional employers make. To make your list of taxing jurisdictions as accurate and comprehensive as possible, a report from the employee master file should be created of both the work and resident states and localities that have been established for each employee. If work state and locality information is also carried in the timekeeping system (i.e., employees typically work in multiple jurisdictions within a single payroll period), a similar report should be run from this source. If you are uncertain of a jurisdiction's withholding, employment tax and reporting requirements, check with the state and local taxing authorities, your employer's accounting firm or other qualified employment tax consultant.

## 2. Verify the form and format of returns and information statements

Each jurisdiction imposes different reporting requirements. Some jurisdictions, for instance, require that Forms W-2, annual state income tax reconciliations or state unemployment insurance returns be filed magnetically or electronically if the employees or forms exceed a certain number. Under the federal requirements, for instance, if the aggregate of Forms W-2 and other information statements is 10 or more in the calendar year, Forms W-2 must be filed electronically. (State rules vary. See [Table 4](#) for our 2025 survey of state electronic Form W-2 filing requirements.)

If the employer is relying on a third party to file its employment tax returns and information statements for the first time, care must be taken that all the necessary steps have been completed to establish the third party as a reporting agent. For example, you and the third party must have obtained a User ID and PIN where required, as well as any other information necessary to meet the reporting requirements and you must have confirmed that file submissions were posted accurately. (Note that employers using a third-party provider can obtain a User ID and PIN to verify Form W-2 transmissions through the SSA's BSO. Go [here](#) for more information.)

Filing format and record layout specifications may also change from year to year and should be reviewed carefully before processing year-end returns and information statements.

Reference these publications for tax year 2025:

- IRS Publication 1220, *Specifications for Filing Form 1097, 1098, 1099, 3921, 3922, 5498, and W2-G Electronically* [here](#)
- SSA Publication 42-007 (EFW2) [here](#)
- IRS Publication 1187, *Specifications for Filing Form 1042-S, Foreign Person's U.S. Source Income Subject to Withholding, Electronically* [here](#)
- IRS Publication 1239, *Specifications for Filing Form 8027, Employer's Annual Information Return of Tip Income and Allocated Tips, Electronically* [here](#)
- For guidelines on electronic filing of Affordable Care Act information returns, refer to Publication [5165](#), *Guide for Electronically Filing Affordable Care Act (ACA) Information Returns for Software Developers and Transmitters*



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# Year-end employment tax reporting compliance

*Continued*



3. Verify that all laser-printed forms were approved by the SSA

If you plan to use laser-printed Forms W-2/W-2c from a third-party source (e.g., software or service provider), ask the supplier for a copy of its dated approval notice from the SSA. For more information, see:

IRS Publication 1141, *General Rules and Specifications for Substitute Forms W-2 and W-3* [here](#).

4. Test magnetic media and electronic files

Particularly when a jurisdiction's form or format for reporting has changed, it is prudent to perform tests validating that your files match the jurisdiction's reporting requirements. Discovering errors while printing or filing the actual returns and information statements not only creates delays in filing but also can expose you to penalties and other additional costs. For Form W-2 reporting purposes, the SSA makes software available that allows you to edit Form W-2 files before they are submitted electronically.

AccuWage 2025 is available through the SSA's website [here](#).

5. Verify taxability compliance

Taxability compliance can be verified by printing reports from the payroll system's tax configuration tables. These configuration tables carry the information necessary for including and excluding various wage payments and fringe benefits from taxable wages and the tax computation.

Verifying that amounts are reported on the appropriate lines or boxes of returns or statements and that the correct codes are used, where applicable, is a vital element of year end compliance testing.

Sample configuration tables are shown on the following page.



## 2025 sample federal employment tax configuration table – pay codes

Benefit	Federal income tax (Form W-2, box 1)	Social Security wages (Form W-2, box 3)	Medicare wages (Form W-2, box 5)	Form W-2, box 12	Federal unemployment insurance taxable (FUTA, Form 940)
Business expense accountable plan	No	No	No	N/A	No
Dependent care assistance	Yes – excess over \$5,000	Yes – excess over \$5,000	Yes – excess over \$5,000	N/A, but report in box 10	Yes – excess over \$5,000
Educational assistance, job-related	No	No	No	N/A	No
Educational assistance, non-job-related	Yes – excess over \$5,250	Yes – excess over \$5,250	Yes – excess over \$5,250	N/A	Yes – excess over \$5,250

## 2025 sample federal employment tax configuration table – deduction codes

Benefit	Federal income tax (Form W-2, box 1)	Social Security wages (Form W-2, box 3)	Medicare wages (Form W-2, box 5)	Form W-2, box 12	Federal unemployment insurance taxable (FUTA, Form 940)
Section 125, Dependent care assistance pretax	Reduce up to \$5,000	Reduce up to \$5,000	Reduce up to \$5,000	N/A, but report in box 10	Reduce up to \$5,000
Section 125, Health insurance premium pretax	Reduce 100%	Reduce 100%	Reduce 100%	Considered in arriving at amount in code DD	Reduce 100%
401(k) pretax contribution	Reduce up to \$23,500	No change	No change	Code D	No change

### When it comes to pay and deduction codes, we can help.

With Ernst & Young LLP's TaxAbility™ we can streamline the process for confirming payroll system tax configurations and assist you with gathering the documents you need for your tax history file. TaxAbility™ has an intuitive library of the income tax and unemployment insurance coverage rules for over 160 common pay and deduction types and a mechanism for automatically matching your payroll system data against our research to quickly identify where gaps may exist.

Learn more about TaxAbility™ [here](#).

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# Year-end employment tax reporting compliance

*Continued*

## 6. Reconciliation

Whether your payroll is processed in-house or by a third-party provider, reconciliation is vital to accuracy and internal control. Keep in mind that reconciling does not necessarily mean that there are no differences or adjustments but rather that differences and adjustments have a reasonable explanation and are well-documented.

There are four primary types of year-end reconciliation:

- **Wage and tax**

The wage and tax reconciliation should include a logical and chronological reconciliation of federal, state and local wage and tax information:

- **Chronological.** The purpose of a chronological reconciliation is to verify that wage and tax information has properly accumulated from each payroll period to the quarter and, finally, to the annual totals.
- **Logical.** The purpose of the logical reconciliation is to compare the wage and tax information of different jurisdictions to confirm that any differences in amounts are logically explained by variations in the tax rules. For instance, employers that provide taxable excess group-term life insurance coverage should have a difference between FICA and federal unemployment covered wages (taxable group-term life is excluded from federal unemployment insurance wages but is included in FICA wages). A similar reconciliation should be performed that compares federal wages with the taxable wages reported to each state and local taxing jurisdiction.

- **Bank statement**

A bank reconciliation is vital to verifying that checks, including voids and stop payments, were properly posted to the payroll system throughout the year and that outstanding checks are investigated and properly dealt with (keeping in mind the unclaimed-property rules of the applicable state) prior to preparing the 2025 returns and information statements. Failure to perform a bank reconciliation prior to filing employment tax returns and issuing information statements exposes an employer to the risk of reporting incorrect wages and paying or withholding an incorrect amount of tax. These errors

can result in time-consuming corrections to Forms W-2 and other information returns and statements, creating a potential for interest and penalty assessments.

- **Accounts payable and third-party payments**

The payroll system is not the only door through which wages and fringe benefits enter. All too frequently, expense reports and other business expenses, such as payments made on behalf of employees for educational or relocation expenses, are initially entered into the accounts payable system. Absent an automated interface between accounts payable and payroll, which is rare in today's technological environment, a recurring analysis should be made of accounts payable transactions to pinpoint items potentially reportable or subject to employment tax.

An accounts payable reconciliation of this type includes, for example, a review of expense reports and petty cash or impressed funds; the identification of non-accountable business expense reimbursements and taxable payments made to individual employees or former employees, relocation providers, stockbrokers, life insurance companies, and airlines and travel agents; and an accounting of business and personal use of company vehicles, including cars and airplanes.

See [Table 3](#) for a sample list of benefits and other compensation that might be paid through accounts payable or by a third-party service provider.

- **General ledger**

A general ledger reconciliation is routinely necessary to help confirm that the employer's financial statements accurately reflect the payroll transactions of the business. However, at year-end, the general ledger reconciliation is also vital to confirming that wages are correctly reported and that tax liabilities and payments are stated accurately. General ledger totals of wages, tax expenses and tax liabilities should correspond to the amounts reported to each of the taxing jurisdictions.

See [Table 3](#) for a sample list of special wage payments and other compensation that might be paid through accounts payable or by a third-party service provider.

Learn more about TaxAbility™ [here](#).

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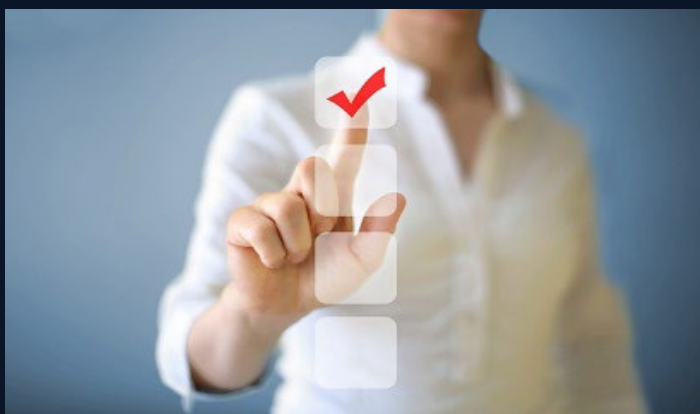
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