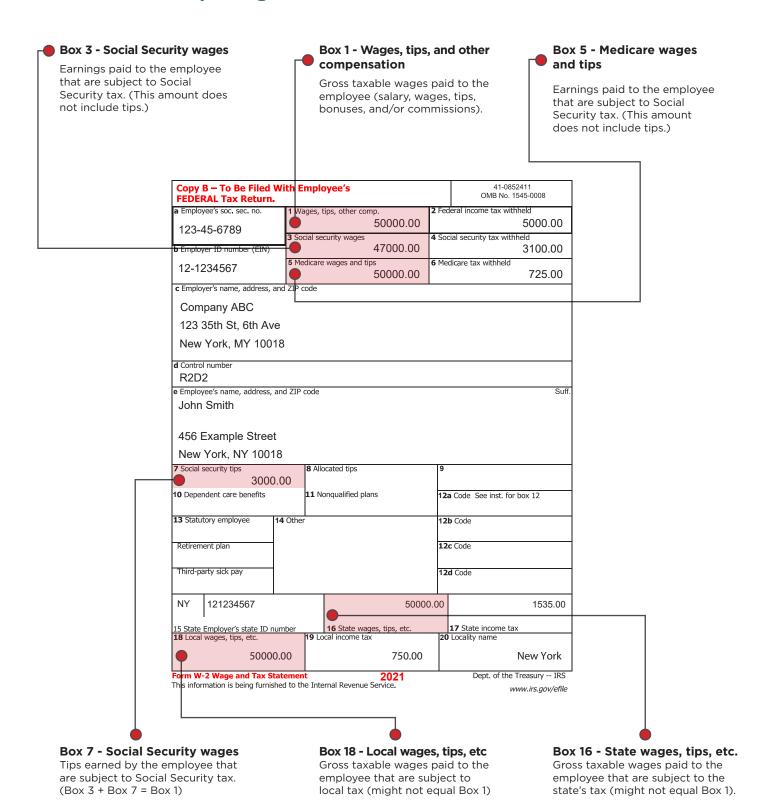
# 2021

# W-2 FORM BREAKDOWN



# Interpreting the Income Boxes on the Form W-2



# Form W-2 versus Final Pay Stub

Understanding the difference between a final pay stub and Form W-2 is important. When employees receive their W-2, they might notice the earnings on their last paycheck stub are different from the reported earnings on their W-2.

Typically, this is attributed to one of three different scenarios:

#### The company offers health insurance that is a pre-tax deduction.

This is the most common reason for the employee's pay stub earnings to be different from those on the Form W-2. If the employee participated in the company's pre-tax health insurance, the taxable wages in Boxes 1, 3, 5, 16 and 18 will be lower than the amount of the pre-tax health insurance deduction. Pre-tax deductions lower the gross wages by the annual amount of the deduction.

Example: Jane's gross wages are \$30,000, but during the year she contributed \$3,000 to a pre-tax health insurance deduction. Jane's taxable Form W-2 wages are 27,000. (30,000 - 3,000 = 27,000)

### • Participation in a company-sponsored retirement plan.

These types of plans, such as a 401(k), reduce only the taxable federal and state and local wages. It does not reduce Social Security and Medicare taxable. Those amounts are reported in Boxes 1 and 16 and 18 (if applicable).

Example: Sondra's gross wages are \$30,000, but over the course of the year she contributed \$2,500 towards her 401(k) retirement. Sondra's federal and state Form W-2 wages are \$27,500. (30,000 - 2,500 = 27,500)

#### • Earnings include non-taxable income items:

Non-taxable income can include reimbursement for mileage or other non-taxable expenses the employee incurred that were reimbursed to the employee in a payroll. As a result, the gross wages on the employee's pay stub often differ from the Boxes 1, 3, 5, 16 and 18 wages on the Form W-2 because the non-taxable item lowers the gross taxable wages.

Example: Maurice's gross wages are \$30,000, but over the course of the year he received \$2,000 towards a non-taxed car allowance. Maurice's taxable Form W-2 wages are \$28,000. (30,000 - 2,000 = 28,000)









