

'Dangerous' and illegal tax advice on TikTok targets millennials and Gen Z with W-2s

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Viral TikTok posts are telling Americans to stop paying taxes by illegally exempting themselves from tax withholdings.

The videos suggest that it's possible to avoid paying federal taxes by selecting "exempt" on IRS Form W-4, or Employee's Withholding Certificates. The videos urge viewers to reach out to their employers and request zero-dollar tax withholding, assuring that companies have to comply.

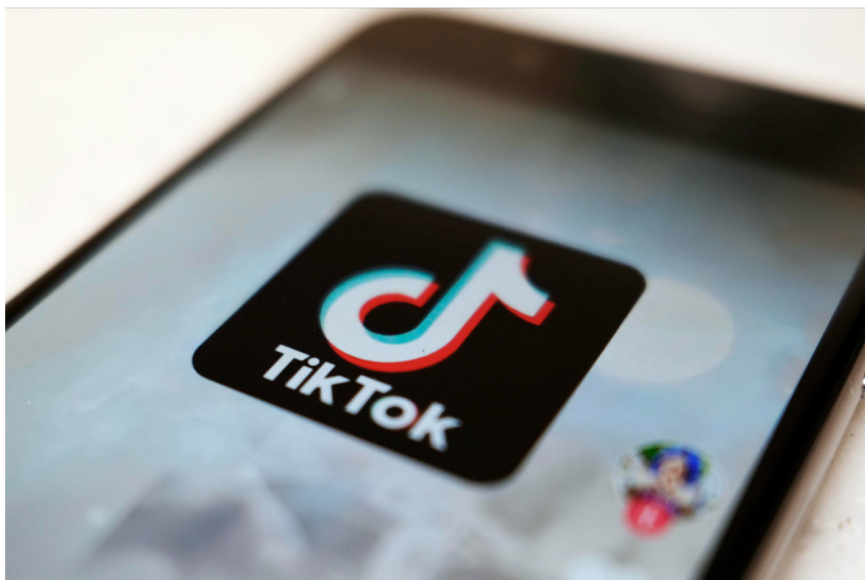
The videos further imply that not having taxes withheld means not paying taxes — a false claim that can land taxpayers in trouble with the IRS if followed.

"The videos where people are telling others to claim exemption on W-4 are very dangerous," Ahad Ali, CPA and CEO of [Ahad&Co](#), a CPA firm based in New York City, told Yahoo Finance. "That's not how it works, and there are some serious implications involved that many people don't know."

Falsely claiming "exemption" on a W-4 doesn't mean you get to skip out on federal taxes like the videos imply. In fact, taxpayers would need to pay back all taxes due for the year during the filing season and may even be subject to penalties and interest.

The social media platform, popular with millennials, Gen Z, and Gen Alpha, is littered with other bad advice. Taxpayers, beware — or be prepared for the tax man.

Full coverage: [Taxes 2024 — Everything you need to file your taxes on time](#)



A quick search on TikTok turns up videos with contents such as "how rich people write off their dogs on taxes" and "how you can be non-taxable." (AP Photo/Kiichiro Sato) (ASSOCIATED PRESS)

'Gurus' urging taxpayers to eliminate tax withholdings

A quick search on TikTok turns up videos baiting unassuming taxpayers with flashy text declaring "how rich people write off their dogs on taxes" and "how you can be non-taxable."

"It is unfortunate because tax law is already somewhat confusing to the average person," Greg Kling, CPA and associate professor at the USC Leventhal School of Accounting, told Yahoo Finance. "Now you have people who candidly don't know what they're talking about posting videos."

What the TikTok "gurus" don't say is that taxpayers would need to pay an entire tax bill in April if they didn't have any taxes withheld during the year. And if that bill is not paid, the IRS can charge penalties and interest on outstanding balances.

"That tax that you didn't pay throughout the year on your paycheck because you claimed exemption now becomes due," Ali said. "You [could] end up paying more because of the various penalties and interest."

Furthermore, the tax agency can go after taxpayers who skip filing returns and charge those who commit serious delinquencies with tax evasion, [a felony punishable by fine or imprisonment](#).

"All these aggressive collection actions can come into play," Ali said. "If you don't pay in full, make plans to pay, or go into a payment agreement [with the IRS], then it can levy your bank account, garnish your paycheck."

Read more: [What if I can't pay my taxes? 5 ways to manage your bill.](#)