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## Who is the teaching musician?

Instrumental and singing teachers working in the UK are not required to complete any formal training course or qualification, unlike classroom music teaching, which requires a degree in music and a PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate of Education) or other teaching qualification. Musicians come to teaching through a variety of routes – some start while still studying, and others begin much later, perhaps having worked as performers or in other professions entirely. They come from a wide range of formal and non-formal musical backgrounds; they may be formally trained, taught through peer- or social-learning models such as the brass band approach, or they may be self-taught. The role of the teaching musician varies with each route, and will inform the way individuals develop their identity and approach as teachers.

Teaching musicians work with children and adults of all ages, either on a one-to-one basis or in groups, in a range of settings including schools, colleges, universities, conservatoires, homes or community-based facilities. Instrumental teachers typically work in a variety of locations with the freedom to combine various forms of employed and self-employed roles. For example, they may be a self-employed teacher in various settings, engaged by a local authority music service to teach in schools, and/or work as an employee in schools, colleges, universities and music centres.

Whilst it can take time to establish a good reputation as an instrumental or singing teacher and build a portfolio, this arrangement works well for musicians who perform regularly, offering flexibility and a valuable source of reliable income. In many cases, musicians promote themselves locally to build a teaching practice, although schools, universities, music services and other educational institutions also regularly advertise vacancies. Teaching can be combined with other roles in the music industry such as composing, performing, directing, examining, or with work in another sector entirely.

### **Key features of instrumental and singing teaching in the UK**

- Can take place in a variety of settings.
- There is no set curriculum.
- No formal training is required.
- There are no regulations.
- Provides high levels of professional autonomy.

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## Settings and workplaces

This chapter introduces the educational settings in which you might work as a teaching musician, including schools, music services and music education hubs as well as community and outreach situations. We will explore the key considerations of teaching individuals, small groups, whole classes and ensembles as well as working with adults.

### **Instrumental and singing teaching in the UK**

Since the 1990s, instrumental teaching in the UK has seen a period of significant change with a growth in group and online tuition. Developments in technology have enabled access to a wider range of styles and cultures, and students now enjoy a greater range of ways to engage with the study of music. Students are increasingly interested in taking instrumental and singing lessons in a range of musical styles. As teachers we need to adapt, just as education institutions have by running higher education courses in diverse musical styles and disciplines including jazz, popular music, musical theatre, music technology, arts management and music education.

Developments in group and whole-class teaching (and changes in the goals of those involved in music education) mean that instrumental teachers need to be flexible and accommodate a range of interests and styles that may or may not reflect their own experience as musicians.

Before deciding what specific range of styles and instruments you might prefer to teach, it is important to understand the main features of the work in each context. The following sections provide an introduction to the role of the musician as teacher in a range of professional settings.

### **Music services and music education hubs**

#### *What is a music service?*

Regional and Local Authority music services are a key employer and engager of instrumental and singing teachers in the UK, providing a range of activities in schools and music centres, including instrumental and vocal lessons, choirs,

### *Self-employed*

If you are truly self-employed then you should set your own hourly rates of pay or fees for whatever work you are doing. Sometimes organisations or institutions will say that the self-employed rate is fixed or may 'recommend' a rate, but this can be challenged as setting your own rate of pay is one of the indicators of being self-employed.

## **How to set your own rates**

The Musicians' Union publish their recommended hourly teaching rates annually for the new academic year (available at [themu.org](http://themu.org)). These are based pro rata on the Statutory Teachers' Pay and Conditions scales. The rates are revised each year and adjusted accordingly based on the inflation rate. These are recommended minimums, and a good starting point for pitching your own rates. It is useful to take into account what the local market is, what you are offering and what your skills and experience are.

Be realistic about what you charge but take into account where you are based in the country (cities often have higher rates than more rural locations) and if you are teaching from your own home or travelling to students' houses, which will always take longer. You can be creative in your pricing by offering discounts for lessons paid in advance, holding a taster lesson that is reimbursed if a course of lessons is taken up afterwards or offering discounts for families and friends. Think of how you can provide more services for parents such as obtaining music or entering students for exams, which will justify a higher hourly rate.

Have a policy on cancellations and whether a student will be charged. It is important that you are strict enough to ensure cancellations don't become commonplace as this will affect your income, but have some flexibility so that it isn't too onerous for those paying the bill!

Having an hourly rate that you feel reflects your expertise will help if you are asked to do work that involves teaching groups, directing ensembles or taking a workshop, as you can evaluate how much extra work or preparation time that will involve. Remember that out of your hourly rate of pay comes your tax and National Insurance as well as your pension contributions and money to cover time taken off for holiday or illness.

For private tuition, communicate effectively with your students and whoever is paying for the lessons about how much you charge, what that includes and when any fee increases will take place. Give as much notice as you can and aim to increase at a set time each year as this will help people budget for the music lessons.

**Top tips for using social media:**

- Post regularly.
- Update followers on tuition offers, practice tips, mini warm-ups, cool downs, exercises, teaching ideas and recordings of recommended repertoire for students.
- Include links to events.
- Show excerpts of your own performances where possible to enhance your appeal as a practising musician.
- Convey both your skill and passion for teaching with potential students.
- Keep your personal and professional pages separate.
- Don't link to personal pages, or include personal details such as your address.
- Use the right platform for the job.
- Present a consistent image and message.
- Don't follow or 'friend' students.
- Do be aware that all interactions can be seen and be careful about who you choose to follow.
- Don't post pictures or recordings that feature students unless you have consent from the student and parent.

## Finance

If you are starting out as a freelance musician undertaking a variety of work, including teaching, then you must register with **Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC)** as being self-employed. Failure to do so can incur a penalty. Most musicians who teach will in reality do a mixture of employed and self-employed work and it is worthwhile finding out about any potential tax saving opportunities regarding traded income through claiming expenses against self-employed income.

If some of your work is employed and some self-employed then the tax rate you pay should work out the same overall. The only difference is that in employed work tax is usually taken at source through PAYE (Pay As You Earn) schemes.

Many freelance musicians will do their own accounts and work out their own tax liability but to start with you can always engage an accountant to advise. They will also be able to explain what you are eligible to claim as legitimate expenses, saving you money, so are worth the investment.