ZAZEN TAX

First Self Assessment

About an hour, once, and the January panic never happens. Platforms already report creator income to HMRC every 31 January, so the question is not whether the year gets seen; it is whether the return matches it.

Name .... **Tax year** .... **UTR** ....

Work top to bottom. The first section decides whether you are in the system at all, the middle builds the records that make the form ten minutes, and the last makes January arithmetic instead of drama.

1. Are you actually in? about 10 minutes

- [ ] **Total the year GROSS: payouts, fees, and gifts with strings**
  The £1,000 trading allowance tests turnover, not profit. £1,100 of sales with £900 of costs still crosses the line.
- [ ] **At or under £1,000: full relief, keep the records anyway**
  Usually no registration. The platform still reports its side, so keep the statements that show you were under.
- [ ] **Over £1,000: you are trading, carry on down this page**
  Regular content, brand outreach and a media kit are the badges of trade; HMRC reads them the same way you do.

2. Register, once about 10 minutes

- [ ] **Register for Self Assessment by 5 October after the tax year you crossed the line**
  Online, free, ten minutes. The UTR arrives by post; the Government Gateway login is the thing to not lose.
- [ ] **Diarise the two dates that matter**
  31 January for filing and paying, 31 July for the second payment on account when one applies.
- [ ] **Decide on voluntary Class 2 if profits are small**
  Tiny profits can leave gaps in the State Pension record; the voluntary top-up is cheap and often worth it.

> THE REPORT HMRC ALREADY HAS
> Every 31 January, platforms send HMRC the year's income and fees for their creators and sellers, with a copy to you. File a return that reconciles to that report and you are boring; file nothing and the mismatch is a letter waiting to happen.

3. The records that make it easy about 15 minutes

- [ ] **Income by stream, GROSS, with agency statements kept**
  Brand fees before the cut, the commission as an expense. The Creator Bookkeeping Template holds the shape.
- [ ] **The gifts log, kept as items arrive**
  Date, brand, item, market value, obligation. Barter with strings is income; the Gifts and PR Log is the evidence.
- [ ] **Receipts and the kit register, business shares honest**
  Six years of retention. The Kit and Home Studio Log carries the shares and the use-of-home flat rate.

4. Filling it in about 15 minutes

- [ ] **Self-employment pages: turnover is the gross, barter included**
  Match the platform reports. Net-of-commission turnover is the classic quiet understatement.
- [ ] **Choose the deduction: £1,000 allowance or actual expenses**
  Whichever is larger, chosen fresh each year. The Do I Need to Register Checker does the comparison in one pass.

- [ ] **Claim relief for any US tax actually withheld**
  Anything held under the treaty is usually creditable against UK tax rather than lost; the W-8BEN stops the withholding for next year.
- [ ] **Student loan and child benefit boxes, if they apply**
  Side income moves both; the return is where they reconcile.

5. Pay properly about 10 minutes

- [ ] **Reserve a third of profit as it arrives, not in January**
  A separate account the money moves to on payday. The Payments on Account Calculator shows why the first January is one and a half bills.
- [ ] **Check the payments on account position before 31 January**
  Bills over £1,000 add half again toward next year. Reduce them only on real evidence; too far and interest runs.
- [ ] **Set up the budget payment plan if smoothing helps**
  Monthly direct debit toward the next bill, free to use, kind to lumpy months.

Zazen Tax

Accountants for creators. zazentax.com/contact

General information, not advice for your circumstances. Rates and thresholds are 2026/27 for the UK and change from time to time. Platform reporting follows the OECD model rules as applied in the UK.