

What Did the Gig Actually Earn?

For performers, musicians, voice artists, DJs, podcasters, engineers, and other independent creatives. Use this before accepting a fee and again after the job.

An example: a \$1,200 booking

Booking amount	Direct costs to review	Amount left
\$1,200	Hired players \$300 + studio \$125 + travel \$75 + payment fee \$40	\$660 before tax, your time, and ongoing overhead

The fee is not the same as take-home pay. This is a cash-planning example; tax treatment of each cost still needs review.

Price the whole job

- Count preparation, revisions, hired help, rentals, travel, and platform fees.
- Agree on usage rights, delivery, extra revisions, and cancellation terms.

One line per job or project

Job / client	Gross fee	Direct costs	Amount left

For pricing: amount left = gross fee minus direct project costs. Set aside room for tax, your time, and ongoing costs. This is not a calculation of taxable profit or a required tax percentage.

Income, Records & 1099s

Track each income stream, not just the forms that arrive after year-end.

- Performance, session, speaking, and appearance fees.
- Production, recording, editing, mixing, and engineering fees.
- Royalties, licensing, sync payments, and distributor statements.
- Sponsorships, advertising, subscriptions, memberships, and tips.
- Merchandise and artwork sales, with product costs separated.
- Agent and platform statements showing gross income and fees.

2026: the \$2,000 1099-NEC threshold

For payments made in 2026, a business generally files Form 1099-NEC when it pays a reportable independent contractor \$2,000 or more for services during the year. Add payments from the same payer across all jobs. Exceptions apply.

Paid by one business in 2026	What the threshold means
One \$1,500 job	Generally below its federal NEC filing threshold; still business income to record.
\$900 + \$800 + \$400 = \$2,100	Generally reaches its federal NEC filing threshold. It is not a per-gig limit.

Less paperwork does not mean tax-free income. Royalties, card payments, and platform reporting have different rules. Record income even when no form arrives.

If you hire other people

Confirm worker status, request W-9s securely, and track payments by payee and method. Shared ownership may need a partnership review.

Official references

IRS: 2026 information-return thresholds

IRS: Business income and expenses (Pub. 334)