

HOW TO BUSK

UK

2026

WHERE TO PLAY
WHAT YOU'LL EARN
HOW TO STAY LEGAL

AARON NORTON

A UK WORKING ACOUSTIC GUITARIST'S
GUIDE

HOW TO BUSK IN THE UK — THE 2026 GUIDE

Where to play, what you'll earn, and how to stay legal — by a working acoustic guitarist.

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BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE

Ed Sheeran busked the streets of London before his first record deal. James Bay busked Brighton during his BIMM years and reportedly made up to £100 on a good day. Allie Sherlock from Cork started busking Dublin's Grafton Street as an eleven-year-old, turned that pavement into millions of YouTube subscribers and a 2018 appearance on

THE ELLEN DEGENERES SHOW

. Karolina Protsenko played her violin on Santa Monica's Third Street Promenade as a child and got the same call.

Every one of them set up on the same kind of pavement you're thinking about setting up on. Same hat. Same nerves. Same first hour with no money in the case at all.

QUICK-START DECISION TREE

ARE YOU IN THE CITY OF LONDON (THE FINANCIAL SQUARE MILE)? Then **NO, YOU CAN'T LEGALLY COLLECT MONEY** — section 1916 Police, Factories etc. (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act. Move two streets west into Westminster and the rules change. Read the City of London chapter, you'll see why.

ARE YOU IN EDINBURGH? No licence required. But Police Scotland can move you on under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982. Stick to a 50m move-on after an hour and you'll be fine. Read the Edinburgh chapter.

ARE YOU IN ANY LONDON BOROUGH OTHER THAN THE CITY? Probably yes, you need a licence — but the cost, slot rules, and application time vary wildly. Westminster, Camden, Lambeth, Harrow all have different schemes. Find your borough.

ARE YOU ON THE TUBE, OR THINKING ABOUT IT? Separate ball game entirely. Audition required. See **PART 6: TRANSIT SCHEMES**.

ANYWHERE ELSE IN ENGLAND, WALES, OR NORTHERN IRELAND? Find your council. Skim Part 4 (the legal framework) first to understand what kind of rules to look for, then jump to your city in Part 5.

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PART 1

WHAT YOU'LL EARN
WHAT YOU NEED
WHERE TO PLAY



The three questions you've already Googled

PART 1 — WHAT YOU’LL EARN, WHAT YOU NEED, WHERE TO PLAY

The three questions you’ve already Googled. Worth answering up front so the rest of the guide makes sense.

HOW MUCH CAN I ACTUALLY EARN?

Honest 2026 ranges, drawn from public reports and gigging experience. Hourly takings, before any platform fees or HMRC.

PITCH TYPE	TYPICAL RANGE	WHAT THAT MEANS
Quiet pitch, low footfall	£5–£10/hr	Side-street, sleepy market town, off-peak weekday
Typical busy high street	£15–£30/hr	Saturday in any UK town centre at lunchtime
Beginner in a good spot	£15–£25/hr	First-month basis, decent songs, no pitch experience
Skilled regular, prime pitch	£30–£60/hr	Covent Garden 4–7pm, Camden Lock Saturday afternoon, Brighton seafront in summer
Top tier — TfL Tube hubs, festivals, peak Christmas markets	£30–£80/hr, occasional individual tips of £50–£100	King’s Cross or Oxford Circus on a Friday rush; Edinburgh Royal Mile during Fringe

Three honest caveats:

- **Variance is enormous.** Some prime central-London pitches reportedly average a few hundred pounds in a long day; a hobbyist on a Tuesday in a quiet town earns £5/hr. Both ends of that range are real.
- **Weather, season, and time of day move takings by a factor of 5–10×.** Summer Saturdays at lunchtime are the peak. Wet Tuesday evenings are the floor.