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FREE GUIDE · 2026/27 · UPDATED OCTOBER 2026

Tax Guide for Content Creators & Influencers

Platform income, gifted products, expenses, VAT and the records you need to keep

Zen Bookkeeping & Advisory
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Earning money from YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Twitch or brand deals means you're likely running a business in HMRC's eyes. This guide explains how creator income is taxed, including gifted products, what you can claim and how to stay on the right side of HMRC.

> *"I started Zen to make finance feel calm and clear for business owners. I hope this guide answers your questions, and if anything doesn't quite fit your situation, I'm always happy to talk it through with you."*
>
> **Ann Williams**
> Founder, Zen Bookkeeping & Advisory

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01 Is your content a business?

If you regularly create content with the aim of earning money, from ad revenue, sponsorships, affiliate links, subscriptions or tips, HMRC will usually see it as a **trade**. You'll need to register for Self Assessment once your income goes over the **£1,000 trading allowance**.

! HMRC can see platform income

Since January 2024, digital platforms have to report sellers' and creators' income to HMRC each year. Being reported doesn't mean you owe tax, but HMRC can compare the figures with your tax return.

02 Gifted products and freebies

- If a brand sends you something **in return for** a post, review or mention, its value is usually taxable income, even if no money changes hands.
- Value gifted items at their normal retail price when you receive them.
- Genuinely unsolicited items with no expectation of promotion may not be taxable. Keep evidence, such as emails showing nothing was asked of you.
- Keep a simple log: what you received, from whom, when, its value and what was expected in return.

✦ Set money aside

You can't pay HMRC in products, so put cash aside for the tax on gifted items.

03 What you can claim

Usually allowable

- Cameras, lighting and microphones (business use)
- Editing software and subscriptions
- Phone and internet (business share)
- Props bought specifically for content
- Travel to shoots and events
- Agent and management fees
- Working from home costs

Usually not allowed

- Everyday clothes and make-up, even if worn on camera
- Haircuts and gym memberships
- Personal holidays, even if you film them
- The personal share of anything used privately

04 VAT, overseas income and structure

- **VAT:** you must register if your VAT-taxable turnover goes over £90,000, and that includes the value of products received as payment.
- **US platforms:** if you earn from US viewers through platforms like YouTube, submit the US tax form (W-8BEN) through your account so you can claim UK–US treaty benefits and avoid unnecessary US tax being withheld.
- **Income from several platforms:** keep records for each and reconcile them to your bank account.
- **Growing fast?** A limited company may make sense at higher profits. See our guide *Sole Trader or Limited Company?*

Records to keep

- [ ] Platform statements for every payout.
- [ ] Brand contracts and briefs.
- [ ] Your gifted products log.
- [ ] Receipts for equipment and expenses.
- [ ] Bank statements for a separate business account.

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How Zen can help

We help creators get their tax right, claim the right expenses and plan for growth.

- Self Assessment for creators
- Bookkeeping across multiple platforms
- Sole trader or company advice
- VAT registration and advice
- Expenses reviews
- Making Tax Digital set-up

Book a free, no-obligation call

Tell us about your business and we'll explain how we can help, with a tailored fixed-fee quote for just the services you need.

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