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6 Minute English

Becoming a musician



This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Pippa

Hello, this is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Pippa.

Neil

And I'm Neil.

Pippa

Now, Neil, have you ever wanted to be a musician?

Neil

Oh yes, Pippa, I still want to be a musician. I've been playing my guitar since I was 14.

Pippa

Wow. Well, maybe one day you'll, you'll manage it. Who knows?

Neil

What about you?

Pippa

I don't think I'd like to be a musician. I think it would be a bit stressful. Especially if you had lots of fans and were really successful.

Neil

Yeah. I wonder what life as a musician is actually like? We'll be finding that out in this programme as we hear from some people around the UK who would like to become successful musicians, and we'll even listen to some of their music too.

Pippa

But first, I have a question for you, Neil.

In the UK, we have a weekly chart of the best-selling songs in the country. And the top selling song is called the number one. But which musical artist do you think has had the most UK number one songs?

- a) The Beatles
- b) Ed Sheeran
- c) Elvis Presley

Neil

Oh well, I think that's easy. It must be, surely, The Beatles.

Pippa

Well, I'll reveal the answer at the end of the programme.

Now, getting a number one song is a dream for many musicians. But if you want to become a musician, where do you start?

Bailey Tomkinson

I grew up in a really rich music scene in St Ives. I was going to **open mics** from the age of about 11.

Neil

This is Bailey. She lives in St Ives in Cornwall on the south-west coast of England. She says she was going to **open mic nights** from a young age. **Open mic nights** are events where anyone can sing or play music.

Pippa

Bailey talked about her life as a musician to BBC Learning English programme My Song, My Home.

Bailey Tomkinson

I would go to these **songwriters' circles** at the Kettle and Wink on, like, a Friday night after school where I'd be, like, the youngest person by, like, 50 years. But I'd sit in a circle with a **bunch** of old men, and they'd play James Taylor and Carole King and The Eagles and lots of 70s music, and I guess that's influenced me massively. But I guess, you know, everyone kind of **took me under their wing** growing up.

Neil

When she was younger, Bailey went to **songwriters' circles**. These are meetings for people interested in writing their own music.

Pippa

Bailey remembers sitting with a **bunch** of old men. A **bunch** is an informal way to talk about a group of people.

Neil

The older men in the group would play music from the 1970s, and Bailey says they **took her under their wing**. If you **take somebody under your wing** you decide to protect them or guide them.

Pippa

Let's meet another musician, Josh.

Josh Robinson

So, I learnt my first proper song on guitar when I was about 13. I literally started **busking** the moment I could kind of do that.

Pippa

Josh lives in London and is a **busker**. This means that he performs on the street or in public places to earn money.

Neil

Busking is a common way for musicians to make money and perform to more people. And as Josh told BBC Learning English programme My Song, My Home, it can help musicians to get new opportunities.

Josh Robinson

It's been kind of like my **main earner** that's kept me going for the last ten or so years. From that, it's then got me various different opportunities. It's got me all my **gigs**, it's got me all my connections. So I **owe a lot to** busking.

Pippa

Busking is Josh's **main earner**, it's his main source of money.

Neil

He says that **busking** has got him all his **gigs** and connections. **Gigs** are musical concerts. It's an informal, slang word.

Pippa

Josh says **he owes a lot to** busking. If you **owe a lot to** someone or something, you have success or happiness because of that person or thing.

So, would you like to listen to some of Josh's music, Neil?

Neil

Of course I would.

Pippa

Well, here's a bit of his song That Side of the Wall, which he performed for BBC Learning English programme My Song, My Home.

Clip from song

Can you leave me something

Can you leave it by the door

So I know there's something

Or someone

That side of the wall

Stop the heat from coming
'Cause I always liked the cold
I need some belonging
Or someone
That side of the wall

Neil

Wow. Josh is pretty good, isn't he? I'd love to hear more.

Pippa

Well you can find performances by the musicians in the series on our website – bbclearningenglish.com. We'll also put a link in the notes below this episode!

Neil

OK. So, what about your question, Pippa?

Pippa

Yes, I asked which artist had the most number one songs in the UK charts? The Beatles, Ed Sheeran or Elvis Presley?

And you said The Beatles, Neil. But the answer is actually Elvis Presley. He's had 21 number one songs and The Beatles have had 18.

Neil

Really? Well that's OK, I love 'the King' as well.

Pippa

OK.

Neil

OK, let's recap the vocabulary we've learned in this musical episode, starting with **open mic nights**, events where anyone can sing or play music.

Pippa

Songwriters' circles are meetings for people interested in writing their own music.

Neil

A **bunch** of people is a group of people.

Pippa

The expression **take someone under your wing** means to protect or guide someone.

Neil

Busking is performing in a public place for money, and a **busker** is someone who performs on the street for money.

Pippa

Your **main earner** is your main source of income.

Neil

Gigs are musical concerts.

Pippa

And the expression **to owe a lot to** someone or something, means to have success or happiness because of that person or thing.

Neil

Once again our six minutes are up, but you can find My Song, My Home on our website – bbclearningenglish.com. Watch the songs and sing along, and learn more about the vocabulary in the lyrics!

Pippa

We'll see you again soon for some more trending topics and useful vocabulary. Bye for now!

Neil

Goodbye!

VOCABULARY

open mic nights

events where anyone can sing or play music

songwriters' circles

meetings for people interested in writing their own music

a bunch of people

a group of people

take (someone) under your wing

protect or guide someone

busking

performing in a public place for money

busker

someone who performs on the street or in public places

main earner

main source of income

gigs

musical concerts

owe a lot (to someone or to something)

have success or happiness because of that person or thing



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