PROVE IT TO YOURSELF

Eight weeks to get your music moving.

BY PAUL MCBRIDE - THE MUSIC MENTOR



START HERE

You've probably got something you keep saying you're going to do.

Finish the song. Post yourself playing. Ask for a gig. Give your music a proper chance.

Then you think about everything involved, decide you need to learn a bit more first, and another week goes.

We're going to start finishing things.

Each week, you'll have one clear job. I'll explain it, show you an example and tell you what needs to be done before moving on. Keep what you make. We'll use it to see how far you've come.

You don't have to feel confident before starting. Give yourself something to be confident about.

Come on. Let's prove it.



BEFORE YOU START

This is a follow-along guide. Read the current week, book time for the work and complete it. You don't need to read the whole thing before taking the first step.

Choose one project. Keep using it through the eight weeks. The examples show how the same steps can fit paid live work or your original music; you aren't being asked to do both.

Set a goal you can work on directly. You can prepare a set, finish a song, publish a performance and approach suitable people. You can't make somebody book you, buy a ticket or offer you a record deal. We will record those responses honestly when they happen.

Keep a folder called PROVE IT. Save recordings, drafts, links, messages and the weekly proof pages. A phone, a place to write and the tools you already need for your music are enough to begin. This guide doesn't require paid ads or new equipment.

If a task is too large for your actual time or current skill, make it smaller without removing its purpose. An interrupted week can be restarted. Don't tick something off because the calendar says you should have finished it.

This PDF is self-guided. Personal calls and feedback from Paul are separate services. Current options: www.themusicmentor.co.uk.

01 WEEK ONE

What are you actually trying to do?

"Be successful in music" doesn't tell you what to do on Tuesday.

Neither does "get more followers". What do you want those followers to do? Listen to your songs? Buy tickets? Book you to play?

Choose something specific enough that we can work towards it.

> THIS WEEK'S FINISH LINE: **one clear goal and one finished action towards it.**

1 Choose your goal

> **Finish this sentence: Over the next eight weeks, I want to _____ .**

For example:

- Prepare two 45-minute cover sets so I can approach venues for paid gigs.
- Finish and record one original song so I can start sharing performances of it.
- Show people what my live performance looks like and test whether they're interested in seeing more.

Choose one. You can have other ambitions. This is the one we're working on now.

2 What's stopping you?

Write the actual obstacle. "I need more confidence" might be how it feels. What is it stopping you doing?

Are you avoiding recording yourself? Unsure which songs to learn? Unable to finish a verse? Posting regularly but getting little response?

> **The thing I'm stuck on is _____ .**

If you don't know, write down your last attempt and where you stopped. That gives us somewhere to look.

WEEK ONE — CONTINUED

3 What can you already use?

I can already: _____

I've already made: _____

I can realistically give this: _____ **hours a week.**

Work with your actual starting point. If you know 15 covers, write 15. If you've never posted a performance, write that.

4 Finish one useful action

Choose an action that addresses your obstacle.

Want paid gigs? List the songs you can perform from beginning to end. Time them. Find out how much usable material you actually have.

Want to finish a song? Record its current version from beginning to end, including unfinished sections. Mark exactly what's missing.

Want people to see you perform? Record and publish one clear performance clip. Use a song you can already play.

Put a time in your diary and do it before the week ends.

My action: _____

I'll do it on: _____

It's finished when: _____

Notes

KEEP THE EVIDENCE

WEEK ONE / YOUR PROOF

What I finished:

Where I can see or hear it:

What I learned:

What needs work next:

A post with few views is still a published post. It proves you posted; it doesn't yet prove people want more. Keep that distinction clear.

Keep the evidence. We'll build from there.

02 WEEK TWO

What would someone actually want from you?

You know what you want. Now look at the person on the other side.

A venue wants a performance that fits its room. A listener needs a reason to give your song attention. Wanting to earn money or get heard doesn't tell either of them why they should choose you.

> THIS WEEK'S FINISH LINE: **one clear description of who your work is for, backed by three relevant examples.**

1 Name the person

Be specific enough to find them. "Everyone who likes music" won't help.

For paid live work, that could be the person booking acoustic acts for local bars. For original music, it could be listeners who already enjoy the kind of songs and performances you make.

> **The person I want to reach is _____ .**

2 Look for evidence

Find three real examples relevant to your goal. Use actual venue listings, public performances, posts, conversations or enquiries. Look at what the person is choosing and what the work offers them.

For a venue, note the acts it books, repertoire, format and setting. For listeners, examine relevant performances and their responses. Don't assume a large view count means sales, or that every follower wants to attend a gig.

For each example, record: **what it is; who it serves; what suggests demand; what remains unknown.**

3 Describe the fit

Finish: **I want to reach [person] with [work] because [specific reason it fits].**

Example: "I want to approach local bars already booking solo acoustic acts. I can offer familiar songs in a format suited to a small room. I still need to prepare the full set and a clear live example."

If there is no obvious demand yet, write that. Your job is to test it, not make it sound better on paper.

DO THE WORK

Save your three examples and write your fit sentence. Use them to choose the work you'll make in week three. Learn from examples without copying another person's identity or material.

KEEP THE EVIDENCE

WEEK TWO / YOUR PROOF

Who I'm trying to reach:

My three examples:

What they show:

What they don't prove:

My fit sentence:

Done when you can explain who the work is for and show why you think it might fit.

03 WEEK THREE

Make something they can judge

Someone can't hear a plan in your head. Give them a useful example of what you do.

> THIS WEEK'S FINISH LINE: **one complete, usable example relevant to your goal.**

1 Choose the right example

Use the person and purpose from week two. If you want people to see you live, show yourself performing. If you want feedback on a song, make the song clear enough to assess.

For a live booking, record a representative performance with clear sound. A strong short clip can introduce you, but it doesn't replace the full repertoire a venue needs.

For an original song, record a complete working version. It can be a simple demo. If the verse is missing, write it before spending the week designing cover art.

> **My example will show** _____ **to** _____ .

2 Agree what finished means

Write three requirements before you start. They should describe the job the example needs to do.

Example for a live clip: the voice and instrument are audible; the selected section is performed from beginning to end; the viewer can see the performance they're considering booking.

Choose a realistic recording session. Practise the section, make a few takes, choose one and check it. Avoid turning every new idea into another requirement.

3 Check one obvious weakness

Watch or listen without stopping. Where does the example fail its purpose? An inaudible vocal, broken link or unfinished chorus matters. A different font may not.

Fix the biggest issue you can identify. If you need a skill you don't yet have, name it and work on that part. Finishing doesn't mean pretending a problem isn't there.

DO THE WORK

Save the finished example and test that it opens properly. Don't spend the week buying equipment to avoid making the recording.

KEEP THE EVIDENCE

WEEK THREE / YOUR PROOF

What I made:

The three requirements:

The main issue I fixed:

File or link:

What still needs improving:

Done when someone else can assess the actual work. If you're preparing a full set, keep building it alongside this example; one clip doesn't prove you're ready for a whole booking.

04 WEEK FOUR

Put it in front of someone

This is the part where planning has to meet another person's response.

> THIS WEEK'S FINISH LINE: **one relevant test completed, with the actual response recorded.**

1 Choose what you want to learn

Ask one question the test can help answer.

"Can someone understand what I offer?" "Does this clip make them want to hear the song?" "Is this performance ready to show a booker?"

"Am I good enough to have a career?" is too big for one recording and one response.

2 Choose a suitable test

If your goal is to get heard, publish one performance with a short, accurate caption and one relevant invitation. For example: "Here's the chorus of a song I'm working on. Would you want to hear the full version?"

If you're preparing paid live work but the set isn't ready, show your recording to someone who understands that setting. Ask a specific question about the performance. Don't sell a complete show you can't deliver yet.

Don't demand approval from friends or pretend a friendly compliment is a buying decision. Choose people who can meaningfully assess what you're testing.

3 Make it easy to respond

Give enough context and one good link. No long explanation of why they ought to love it.

Example: "I'm preparing a solo acoustic set for bars like [example]. Does this clip show a performance you'd consider suitable? What's the first thing you'd improve?"

DO THE WORK

Publish or send the example. Save the exact version, caption/message and date. Set a review date that allows a reasonable response window. A day's silence from a busy person isn't a final verdict.

KEEP THE EVIDENCE

WEEK FOUR / YOUR PROOF

What I wanted to learn:

Who saw it / where I posted:

What I actually sent or published:

What happened so far:

My review date:

Done means the test happened. No response yet is a result to record, not a reason to invent interest or declare yourself a failure.

05 WEEK FIVE

Fix the thing the evidence points to

You've put something out. Now use what happened.

> THIS WEEK'S FINISH LINE: **one meaningful improvement, saved as a before-and-after.**

1 Separate facts from your interpretation

"Two people asked for the full song" is a fact. "Everybody loves it" is an interpretation.

"The venue hasn't replied" is a fact. "I'll never get a gig" isn't.

Write down the responses accurately. For a post, look at relevant actions such as replies, follows, full-song requests or enquiries. For a performance, look at specific feedback and whether the example suits the intended job.

2 Find the next useful change

If people couldn't hear the vocal, improve the recording. If they didn't understand the offer, explain it clearly. If they saw an artwork loop when you wanted live bookings, show the performance.

If the same criticism keeps appearing, investigate it. If one person dislikes your style, that doesn't automatically mean changing your whole project.

With little or no response, check the basics first: did it reach anyone relevant, did the link open, was the purpose clear? Sparse information calls for another sensible test, not a sweeping conclusion.

3 Change one meaningful thing

Choose the improvement most likely to help the example do its job. Keep a copy of the starting version. Make the change, then compare them under similar conditions.

Example: keep the performance section but replace an unclear opening with the strongest moment. Or practise one difficult transition and record the same section again.

DO THE WORK

Save both versions. Explain what changed, why you chose it and how you'll find out whether it helps.

KEEP THE EVIDENCE

WEEK FIVE / YOUR PROOF

What actually happened in week four:

What I'm tempted to assume:

The change I chose and why:

Before / after:

What the new version does better:

Done when there's a change you can point to. Feeling more positive is welcome; the work still needs to improve in a way that matters.

06 WEEK SIX

Do it again on purpose

One attempt tells you something. A second useful attempt helps you see whether you're learning or guessing.

> THIS WEEK'S FINISH LINE: **a second relevant test, using what you learned.**

1 Keep the purpose

Return to your week-one goal. Don't abandon it because another musician's latest post made their direction look easier.

Use the improvement from week five. Publish the revised clip, test another strong section using the same approach, or share the improved performance with a suitable person.

If new evidence shows the original plan doesn't fit, you can change it. Write down the reason. That's different from starting over every time an attempt feels uncomfortable.

2 Choose a pace you can repeat

Book time for the actual making, practising and sharing. Choose a workload you can keep alongside your life. A reliable weekly session is more useful than planning daily posts you never make.

For live work, continue rehearsing the full set and time a run-through. For originals, keep making the music while testing how you present it. The promotion shouldn't consume all the time needed to make the thing you're promoting.

3 Compare without pretending it's a laboratory

Record the example, audience, date, what changed and the response. Different audiences and timing can affect results, so don't attribute every difference to your edit.

Look for something useful: a clearer performance, fewer repeated questions, more relevant replies or a process that's easier to deliver again.

DO THE WORK

Complete the second test. Write the shortest repeatable process that would let you do another: prepare, record/make, check, share, review.

KEEP THE EVIDENCE

WEEK SIX / YOUR PROOF

What I tested again:

What I kept / changed:

What happened:

What I still can't conclude:

The process I can repeat:

Done when you've made another informed attempt and recorded what it taught you. You don't need a viral result to learn something useful.

07 WEEK SEVEN

Make the next real move

If someone is interested, make the next step clear. If nobody is interested yet, don't pretend that building a shop or asking for a deal will solve it.

> THIS WEEK'S FINISH LINE: **one appropriate next-step request, or a completed fix to the specific thing blocking it.**

1 Check what you're ready to deliver

For a paid cover gig, can you perform the agreed repertoire for the required duration? Is the example representative? Can you explain your setup and availability?

For original music, is there a complete version to hear? Have people shown enough interest to justify the next step you're asking for?

Interest can be small and still useful. Someone asking for the full song is a reason to give them a clear way to hear it. It isn't proof you can sell a room of tickets.

2 Make one matched request

Live-work example, once you're ready: "Hia [name], I saw you book solo acoustic acts for [specific setting]. I perform [accurate description] and have [actual set length] prepared. Here's a live example: [link]. Are you considering acts for [period]? I can send availability and a quote. [Name]"

Original-music example: "A few of you asked for the full song. Here it is: [working link]. If you'd like to hear the next one, you can [real available follow/join option]."

Replace the brackets. Don't invent demand, availability, testimonials or a buyer's interest. Use the person's stated booking/contact process and agree the job, fee and practical details before committing.

3 If you're not ready, finish the blocker

If you still can't play the full set, name the exact missing part. Complete a rehearsal, remaining arrangement or other realistic milestone. Don't ask someone to book a service you can't provide.

DO THE WORK

Send or publish the matched request, then record the response and a sensible next date. If not ready, save the completed readiness task and name what remains. A clear no is a no, not an invitation to keep chasing.

KEEP THE EVIDENCE

WEEK SEVEN / YOUR PROOF

The next step that fits my current position:

Evidence I'm ready / the blocker:

Request sent or readiness task finished:

Response so far:

Next action and date:

Done when you've taken the honest next step. An enquiry isn't a booking; a booking isn't money received. Record each for what it is.

08 WEEK EIGHT

Look at what you can prove

Open the folder. Start with week one. Look at the actual work before deciding whether the eight weeks "worked".

> THIS WEEK'S FINISH LINE: **a review backed by your work and one clear plan for the next four weeks.**

1 Compare your starting point

Read the original goal and obstacle. What couldn't you do then that you can do now? What did you finish? What did you put in front of people? What response did it get?

You might have a stronger song, a usable performance video, a complete set, a clearer offer or a booking conversation. Those are different results. Name yours accurately.

If you haven't earned money or built demand yet, don't rename practice as commercial success. Keep the progress you made and identify the next missing piece.

2 Make your evidence list

For each week, record one finished item and where to find it:

- Week 1: goal and first action.
- Week 2: intended audience/buyer and evidence of fit.
- Week 3: usable example.
- Week 4: first relevant test.
- Week 5: before-and-after improvement.
- Week 6: second test and repeatable process.
- Week 7: matched request or readiness milestone.
- Week 8: review and next plan.

Leave a gap if something isn't done. That's the place to return to; you don't need to conceal it to keep going.

3 Decide what deserves another month

Choose one thing to keep, one to change and one to stop. Use the work and responses to explain why.

Example: "I'll keep recording live performances because they show the thing I want people to book. I'll improve the vocal balance because it was hard to hear. I'll stop redesigning the poster before I've finished the set."

WEEK EIGHT — CONTINUED

4 Write the next four weeks

Choose one result within your control. Give each week one useful finished action and book time for it. If the obstacle requires specialist feedback, get help with that actual issue rather than buying another broad plan.

Next month, I'm working towards: _____

Week 1 / finish line / time booked: _____

Week 2 / finish line / time booked: _____

Week 3 / finish line / time booked: _____

Week 4 / finish line / review date: _____

Notes

KEEP THE EVIDENCE

WEEK EIGHT / YOUR PROOF

What I can do now:

The strongest evidence:

What people actually responded to:

What I need help with:

My next finished action:

You don't need to pretend you're certain about everything. You've got work to look at, decisions you've tested and a clearer idea of what needs doing.

Keep going. Give yourself more evidence.



WHEN YOU NEED A HAND

If you've reached a specific obstacle you can't work through, bring the actual example. A recording, a post, a pitch or a decision gives us something useful to discuss.

For current calls and ways to work with Paul: **www.themusicmentor.co.uk**.

Tell him what you're trying to do, what you've done so far and where you're stuck.

Paul McBride / The Music Mentor