

How to Set Up and Run a **Successful Window Cleaning Business**

*A practical guide for starting, pricing, marketing,
and growing your own business*

Trade Skills Hub Academy

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This book is intended as a general practical guide for individuals considering starting or growing a window cleaning business in the United Kingdom. It is not a substitute for professional legal, financial, tax, or health and safety advice, and should not be treated as such.

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About the Author

Trade Skills Hub Academy was founded with a single aim: to give people starting out in the trades the practical knowledge that experienced tradespeople take for granted but that no one ever writes down.

Too many people start a trade business with real skill and genuine ambition, only to struggle with the parts of running a business that were never explained to them – pricing work properly, finding customers, managing money, and building something that lasts beyond the first year. Trade Skills Hub Academy exists to close that gap.

Our guides are written by practitioners and business educators with direct experience of the trades they write about. They are deliberately practical, free of unnecessary jargon, and focused on what actually works for a small business starting from scratch in the real world – not the version of small business that works in a classroom or a boardroom.

This book draws on the combined experience of working window cleaners, small business advisers, and trade industry professionals across the United Kingdom. It was written for the person standing at the beginning of something and trying to work out how to make it succeed.

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Preface

This book was written because of a conversation that happens, in some form, at least once a week.

Someone has decided to start a window cleaning business. They have done some research. They know they need a water-fed pole and a van. They have a rough idea of what to charge, based on what they found on a forum or heard from a mate. They are ready to go.

And then comes the list of things they did not know they did not know. How do you actually find customers, beyond telling a few friends? How do you price a job you have never quoted before, without either losing money or scaring the customer off? What does a proper round look like, and how do you build one? What happens when a customer complains? How do you handle the tax? When does it make sense to raise prices? How do you stop the whole thing from consuming your life?

These are not stupid questions. They are the questions that anyone starting a business ought to ask, and they are the questions that experienced window cleaners often struggle to answer clearly – not because the answers are complicated, but because they learned them gradually, by doing, and have never had reason to set them out in order.

This book is the attempt to do exactly that. It is not a manual for experienced window cleaners. It is a guide for the person who has decided to start, and who wants to understand the full picture before they begin – not just the equipment, not just the technique, but the business: how to build it, how to run it, how to keep it healthy, and how to grow it if they choose to.

It is also an honest book. Window cleaning is a good business. The barriers to entry are low, the demand is consistent, and the potential for a stable and satisfying income is real. But it is not a get-rich-quick scheme, it is not entirely without risk, and it is not for everyone. We have tried to give you a realistic picture of what the work involves and what success looks like, rather than a promotional one.

If you read this book carefully and act on what it contains, you will be better prepared to start a window cleaning business than the large majority of people who go into the trade. That is the most we can honestly promise – and we think it is quite a lot.

Trade Skills Hub Academy, 2026

Introduction

Why Window Cleaning Is a Strong Small-Business Opportunity

There are very few businesses you can start for less than £3,000 and be earning a full-time income from within six months. Window cleaning is one of them.

This is not a claim that window cleaning is easy, or that success is guaranteed, or that the market is so underserved that customers will find you without any effort on your part. None of those things are true. What is true is that window cleaning offers a combination of characteristics that make it unusually attractive as a small-business opportunity – particularly for someone who wants to work outdoors, be their own boss, and build something real without years of training or large amounts of capital.

Low barriers to entry

Starting a window cleaning business does not require specialist qualifications, a large premises, or significant capital. A modest investment in a water-fed pole system, a suitable vehicle, and basic insurance is enough to begin trading. Compare this with most other trades – plumbing, electrical work, construction – where the training alone takes years and the equipment costs tens of thousands of pounds, and the accessibility of window cleaning becomes clear.

This low barrier to entry is both an advantage and a challenge. It means you can start quickly and affordably. It also means that competition exists in most areas, and that standing out requires consistent effort rather than the mere fact of being available.

Recurring income

The most financially attractive feature of a window cleaning business is its recurring nature. A customer who signs up for a regular four-weekly clean does not just pay you once – they pay you every month, indefinitely, as long as you continue to deliver a reliable service. This is fundamentally different from a business model where you must find new customers for every job.

A round of 80 domestic customers, each paying an average of £14 per four-weekly clean, generates approximately £1,120 per month before expenses. That same round, maintained and priced up modestly over three years, might generate £1,400 or more. The income does not require you to start again from scratch each month – it is already there, waiting for you to turn up and do the work.

Recurring income also has a compounding quality. Every new customer you add increases the baseline, and the investment you make in retaining customers – through good service and reliable communication – pays dividends indefinitely. A customer who stays for five years is worth five times as much as a customer who stays for one.

Strong and consistent demand

Windows get dirty. They do so regardless of the economic cycle, regardless of the season, and regardless of what is happening in the news. Domestic and commercial property owners have a consistent, year-round need for window cleaning, and the vast majority of them would rather pay someone else to do it than do it themselves.

The UK has approximately 28 million households, and window cleaning penetration – the proportion using a professional window cleaner – remains substantial. In many residential areas, the majority of households on any given street will either already

use a window cleaner or would consider doing so if approached by someone reliable and reasonably priced. This is not a market you need to create – it already exists.

Flexibility and autonomy

Running your own window cleaning round means setting your own hours, choosing your own customers, and deciding how large or small you want the business to be. Some window cleaners operate a compact, high-density round that is completed in four days a week and leaves a three-day weekend. Others build a business that eventually employs several people and turns over a significant annual income. Both are legitimate outcomes, and the business model accommodates both.

This degree of flexibility is rare in employment and unusual even among self-employed trades. It is one of the things that makes window cleaning particularly attractive for people who want to design a working life that suits them, rather than fitting themselves around someone else's requirements.

Room for professionalism to stand out

Window cleaning has a reputation, in some quarters, for unreliability. Stories of window cleaners who stop turning up, who are hard to get hold of, or who do inconsistent work are common enough that many customers have come to expect a below-average experience from the trade.

This is actually good news for a motivated new entrant. In a market where reliability is underdelivered, a window cleaner who turns up on time, communicates proactively, does tidy work, and handles the occasional problem with good grace stands out dramatically. The bar for being considered excellent in this trade is not as high as it might be in one where customers already expect high standards as a matter of course. Meeting a modest set of professional expectations – consistency, communication, care – is often enough to build a loyal and growing round.

A business worth building

A well-established window cleaning round has tangible value beyond the income it generates each month. Rounds are regularly bought and sold in the UK trade, typically at a multiple of monthly turnover. A window cleaner who builds a well-managed, well-priced, and well-retained round over several years is building an asset – something with real market value that could, if they chose, be sold as the basis of another person's income.

Not every window cleaner starts with the intention of selling their round. But the fact that the option exists – and that the discipline of building a sellable business is identical to the discipline of building a well-run one – is worth understanding from the beginning.

The opportunity is real. What determines whether you take advantage of it is not luck, not connections, and not unusual talent. It is the same thing that determines success in any trade business: the quality of the work, the reliability of the service, and the discipline of running the business well from the start.

This book gives you the framework. The rest is up to you.

How to Use This Book

This book is structured to follow the natural sequence of starting and growing a window cleaning business – from the initial decision to the long-term management of a mature round. You can read it from beginning to end, or use it as a reference, dipping into whichever chapter is most relevant to where you are right now.

The book is divided into seven parts:

Part 1 – Starting out (Chapters 1–2)

Covers what the business actually involves, whether it is right for you, and what a realistic picture of the work and income looks like.

Part 2 – Planning the business (Chapters 3–4)

Looks at the market, your potential customers, and the key decisions about what kind of business you want to build.

Part 3 – Tools, equipment and safety (Chapters 5–6)

Sets out what you need to buy, what can wait, and how to work safely and professionally from the first day.

Part 4 – Finding customers and pricing work (Chapters 7–8)

Covers canvassing, marketing, building a reputation, and pricing your work in a way that is sustainable and profitable.

Part 5 – Running the business day to day (Chapters 9–10)

Deals with delivering great service consistently, managing jobs and routes, collecting payment, and keeping the records you are required to maintain.

Part 6 – Growth and long-term success (Chapters 11–12)

Explores how to grow beyond a one-person operation, add services, take on commercial work, avoid burnout, and build a business that sustains you over the long term.

Part 7 – Templates and checklists (Chapter 13)

A complete set of practical tools: checklists, forms, planners, trackers, and action plans, ready to use from day one.

If you are at the very beginning of the process, we suggest reading Parts 1 and 2 before doing anything else. These chapters help you make the foundational decisions – about the type of business, the type of customers, and the model you want to operate – that shape everything that follows. Jumping straight to the equipment list or the pricing chapter without this context often leads to early decisions that need to be undone later.

If you have already started trading and are looking for help with a specific area – pricing, marketing, cash flow, growth – the chapter structure makes it straightforward to find what you need. Each chapter is designed to be useful in isolation as well as as part of the whole.

Part 7 is intended to be used rather than just read. Print the checklists, copy the forms, and adapt the templates to your own business. A tool you have in your hand is worth more than a page you have read.

A note on the examples in this book

The pricing figures, customer numbers, and income estimates used throughout this book are illustrations, not guarantees. They are based on realistic scenarios for a window cleaning business operating in the UK, but your results will depend on your local market, your pricing, your effort, and a range of other factors that cannot be predicted in advance.

Similarly, references to specific apps, platforms, and suppliers are included for illustrative purposes and do not represent endorsements. Prices, features, and availability change – always check current details directly with any provider before committing.

One final thing

This book contains a lot of information. It is tempting, when faced with a comprehensive guide, to read it all carefully and then wait until everything feels perfectly understood before taking action. Resist this temptation.

The most important thing you can do, after reading enough to be properly prepared, is to start. The experience of going out, knocking doors, quoting a job, and completing your first clean will teach you more in a day than a week of further reading. Use this book to prepare well – and then go and get on with it.

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Chapter 1 – Why Start a Window Cleaning Business?

Window cleaning might not be the first business idea that springs to mind when you think about self-employment. But for thousands of people across the UK, it has become the foundation of a reliable, well-paid, and genuinely enjoyable working life. The entry costs are modest, the work is recurring, and a good round – once built – can provide a steady income for years without the need for constant marketing.

Before you invest in equipment, register with HMRC, or knock on your first door, it is worth taking a clear look at what the business actually involves, why it can work so well, and what a realistic path forward looks like. That is what this chapter is about.

1.1 What the business actually involves

At its simplest, window cleaning is the regular cleaning of glass on residential homes, commercial premises, and specialist buildings. In practice, the work divides into three broad categories.

Domestic window cleaning

This is where the vast majority of sole traders start. Domestic work means cleaning the windows of private houses, bungalows, and flats on a scheduled basis – typically every four or eight weeks. Customers pay a fixed price per visit, and once a round is established the income becomes predictable. Many window cleaners build their entire business around domestic work and never feel the need to move beyond it.

Commercial window cleaning

Commercial clients include shops, offices, restaurants, schools, care homes, and small business premises. Work tends to be higher value per job but can be more competitive to win and may involve working outside normal business hours. Some commercial contracts also require public liability insurance at higher limits and written risk assessments.

Specialist and additional services

Beyond standard window cleaning, many operators add related services over time: conservatory roof cleaning, solar panel cleaning, fascia and soffit washing, gutter clearing, and pressure washing. These extras can significantly increase income per visit and make a business more resilient across seasons.

On a typical working day, a solo UK window cleaner might:

- Complete between 15 and 40 domestic cleans, depending on property size and route density
- Work a planned route to minimise driving time between jobs
- Use a water-fed pole system to clean from the ground on most properties, reserving ladders for specific situations
- Collect payment from some customers directly and manage others through a payment app or bank transfer
- Handle a small amount of admin in the evening – booking in new enquiries, messaging customers, and logging income

The work is mostly outdoors and physically active. On a good day with a well-planned route, the hours can be surprisingly short for the income generated. That efficiency is one of the reasons the business suits so many people.

1.2 Why window cleaning can be a strong small business opportunity

Not every self-employment idea suits a low-budget start. Many trades require years of apprenticeship, expensive specialist tools, or a large vehicle. Window cleaning is different. Here is why it consistently attracts new starters across the UK.

Recurring income, not one-off jobs

Most window cleaning work is scheduled on a regular cycle – every four, six, or eight weeks. Once you have a customer on a round, you do not have to re-sell your services every time. They expect you to return. This means your income becomes increasingly predictable as your round grows, rather than fluctuating with each new marketing campaign.

High demand and consistent need

Windows get dirty in every season. Rain, road dust, pollen, bird activity, and general grime mean that most homeowners who value the appearance of their property want them cleaned regularly. Landlords and letting agents also rely on window cleaners to maintain the condition of rental properties. The demand does not disappear during recessions in the way that luxury services might.

Low barriers to entry

A basic domestic window cleaning setup can be assembled for a few hundred pounds. More professional water-fed pole systems cost more, but are still within reach of someone starting on a modest budget – and can be upgraded over time as income grows. You do not need formal qualifications to begin, though good safety awareness and basic business knowledge are essential.

Room to grow at your own pace

Some people start window cleaning as a side income alongside other work and gradually build a full-time round over months or years. Others go full-time from the start and work hard to build their customer base quickly. Both approaches are viable. The business scales with your effort and ambition, without requiring major investment at each stage.

1.3 Low start-up costs compared with many other trades

One of the most practical reasons people choose window cleaning over other trades is the relatively modest cost of getting started. Compare this with, for example, an electrical or plumbing business, where tools, training, qualifications, insurance, and equipment can run to thousands of pounds before you earn your first job.

A basic starter kit might include:

- A water-fed pole with brush head (entry-level models from around £150–£300)
- A purified water tank or a backpack system for smaller properties (£100–£500)
- A squeegee and applicator for traditional cleaning (£ 30–£60)
- Buckets, microfibre cloths, and window cleaning solution (£ 20–£50)
- Public liability insurance (typically £100–£200 per year for a sole trader)
- Business registration and basic admin setup (minimal cost if done yourself)

A realistic starter investment for someone launching a domestic round is broadly in the range of £500 to £2,000, depending on the quality of the equipment chosen and whether a van or vehicle is already available. This is within reach for many people without the need for significant borrowing.

A note on spending wisely

It is tempting to buy the best equipment from day one, but the priority when starting is to get customers and begin earning. A modest setup that does the job reliably is almost always better than delaying your start while saving for premium kit. Equipment can be upgraded later, once the round is generating consistent income.

1.4 The appeal of recurring income and repeat rounds

Perhaps the single biggest commercial advantage of a window cleaning business is the round model. Once a customer joins your regular schedule, they do not go through a buying decision each time. They simply expect you to arrive, complete the clean, and return the following month. Unless something goes wrong, the relationship continues indefinitely.

This has a profound effect on how the business feels to run. Rather than constantly chasing new enquiries and converting prospects, your main job is to deliver a reliable, high-quality service to the customers you already have. Marketing becomes less critical over time, because satisfied customers refer others and rarely cancel.

Consider what this looks like in practice. A window cleaner with 200 regular domestic customers, each paying an average of £12 every four weeks, generates a monthly income of around £2,400 from those customers alone. That income is largely predictable, requires no advertising, and can be delivered in approximately three working weeks, leaving time for growth or commercial work.

Building a round to that level takes time and consistency, but for a motivated person willing to do good work and communicate well, it is an achievable goal within 12 to 24 months.

1.5 What success can look like in year one and beyond

Expectations matter. Going into a new business with an unrealistic picture of how quickly income will grow is a common cause of early discouragement. At the same time, underestimating what is achievable can lead people to set their ambitions too low.

A realistic picture of year one for a new window cleaning business might look like this.

Months one to three

Building the initial customer base. This is often the most effort-intensive period. You are doing door-to-door canvassing, posting in local groups, and completing first cleans to

convert new customers into regulars. Income will be modest but growing. The goal is to end month three with a working round of 40 to 80 regular customers.

Months four to six

The round starts to generate more consistent income as customers move onto their second and third cycles. Word-of-mouth referrals begin to arrive. You become more efficient with your routes, spending less time driving and more time cleaning. Monthly income may reach £1,000 to £1,500 depending on round density and pricing.

Months seven to twelve

A well-managed window cleaner with a growing round can realistically target £2,000 to £3,000 per month by the end of their first year. Some will exceed this, particularly those who add commercial work or additional services. Others may choose to stay at a comfortable level that fits their lifestyle.

Beyond year one

An established window cleaner with a dense, well-organised round and a professional reputation can earn a strong full-time income while keeping their working hours reasonable. The business can also be grown by hiring staff, purchasing an existing round, or expanding into commercial contracts. There is no fixed ceiling.

What experienced window cleaners often say

- The first three months are the hardest. After that, it gets progressively easier.
- Reliability is everything. Customers who trust you will stay with you for years.
- A dense round is more profitable than a large area. Spend less time driving, more time earning.
- Do not undersell yourself. Customers who pay a fair price are usually better customers.

1.6 Common myths about the industry

Several misconceptions put people off starting a window cleaning business, or create unrealistic expectations. It is worth addressing the most common ones directly.

Myth: Window cleaning is a dying trade

This concern has circulated for years, partly driven by the idea that everyone will eventually clean their own windows. In practice, the demand for professional window cleaning has remained strong across the UK. Busy households, elderly homeowners, landlords, and commercial premises all continue to use window cleaners regularly. The business is not in decline.

Myth: You need lots of customers before you can earn properly

This is partly true, but overstated. Even a relatively small round of 50 to 80 regular customers, priced correctly and cleaned efficiently, can generate a meaningful part-time income. The important thing is to price your work for the value it delivers, not to accumulate customers at low prices.

Myth: The market is saturated in most areas

While there are established window cleaners in most UK towns, saturation is rarely the problem it appears. Many areas have demand that outstrips the number of reliable, professional operators. Customers regularly move, change cleaner, or start using a window cleaner for the first time. There is almost always room for a well-run new business.

Myth: It is hard physical work with low pay

Modern water-fed pole systems have reduced the physical strain significantly compared to traditional ladder-and-squeegee methods. Well-organised window cleaners can complete a productive day without exhausting themselves. As for pay, the earnings potential on a properly priced, efficient round compares favourably with many skilled trades.

1.7 A realistic view of the work, the income, and the lifestyle

It would be dishonest to present window cleaning as a stress-free path to easy money. Like any self-employment, it comes with genuine challenges. Understanding them before you begin is the best preparation.

Building a round takes time and consistent effort

The early months of canvassing, marketing, and winning new customers require persistence. Not every door results in a customer. Not every first clean converts to a regular slot. You need to be prepared to put in the groundwork and wait for the round to grow, rather than expecting an immediate full diary.

Income is weather-dependent in the short term

Window cleaning is an outdoor job. Heavy rain, ice, or extreme conditions may mean postponing cleans, which delays income. Experienced window cleaners manage this through

route flexibility, sensible scheduling, and building a financial buffer. It is a manageable reality, not a reason to avoid the business.

Customer retention requires consistent quality

The recurring round model only works if customers are satisfied each time. A single poor clean or unreliable visit can prompt a cancellation. Standards need to be maintained consistently, even when you are tired, running behind, or dealing with difficult properties.

Self-employment requires self-discipline

There is no manager to keep you accountable. On a cold morning in November, the person who shows up anyway and does a good job is the one who builds the round. Self-motivation and reliability are not optional extras in this business; they are the foundation of it.

With those caveats in mind, it is also fair to say that window cleaning genuinely suits many people who want self-employment without massive upfront cost or lengthy training. The combination of physical outdoor work, a growing regular income, and real independence is hard to match in other entry-level trade businesses.

Quick self-assessment: Is this the right opportunity for you?

- Am I comfortable working outdoors in most weather conditions?
- Am I reliable enough to show up on schedule, week after week?
- Can I handle the physical demands of an active outdoor job?
- Am I willing to do the canvassing and marketing needed to build a round from scratch?
- Do I have the self-discipline to run my own business without someone managing me?
- Am I realistic about income growing gradually rather than immediately?

If you answered yes to most of these, window cleaning is worth serious consideration. Chapter 2 will take you through a more detailed self-assessment to help you make a confident decision.

Window cleaning is not a glamorous business, and it does not need to be. What it offers is something more valuable: a practical, proven route to self-employment that is accessible to

motivated people without specialist qualifications, with real earning potential that grows as your round grows. The rest of this book will show you exactly how to build it.

In the next chapter, we will look more closely at whether a window cleaning business is the right fit for your personality, lifestyle, and long-term goals – and help you decide with confidence how to proceed.