



How to Start a Cleaning Business on a Budget



By Premier BusinessCare

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Introduction

If you take pride in your work and have a keen eye for detail, then starting a cleaning business could be the perfect career for you. The domestic cleaning market consists of around 820,000 people, and with nearly [one third](#) of all cleaning businesses owned and operated by a single person, it is relatively easy to get started.

Work through this comprehensive guide to see what you need to do to start your own cleaning business on a budget.

Advantages and Disadvantages of running a cleaning business:

Advantages	Disadvantages
Low start-up costs	Lots of competition
Few overheads	Potentially long hours
Flexible working	Highly physical job
No experience required	





Before you start your own cleaning business, you will need to choose whether you'd like to do domestic, commercial or specialised cleaning. The sector you choose will determine which stock and equipment you need to buy, any staff you may require, and which services you will need to train for. Differences are highlighted below:

Domestic cleaning

- Most domestic cleaners work alone or in small groups, depending on the type of work you take on.
- This usually requires low start-up costs, but jobs will generally be small-scale.
- No qualifications are needed.

Commercial cleaning

- Most of the cleaning work is done by others, whilst you oversee the work.
- The team will clean offices and other business premises.
- There is a greater outlay than domestic cleaning.
- A training course for commercial work may be necessary.

Stephen Munton, director and co-founder of the [Domestic Cleaning Alliance](#), offers his advice on starting up a commercial cleaning business:

Stephen Munton, Domestic Cleaning Alliance

“Anyone wishing to start a commercial cleaning business will need to target the types of businesses who might use them – for instance someone who wishes to clean offices or perhaps a small shop or showroom might want to consider finding out the name of the person responsible for the facilities management of buildings in the area where they wish to work, and then call or write to them to let them know what services they are offering”.

Specialised cleaning

- Most of the work will be done by yourself.
- The work will vary and you will likely be in different locations on a regular basis meaning you will need to travel.
- Specialist training may be required.
- You could offer bespoke services to clients and earn more for the specialist services you provide.

Business Type

Stephen Munton, Domestic Cleaning Alliance

“Specialist sectors will command a much higher fee for the work carried out, but it can sometimes be months –years even- before the same customer has the service carried out again, so a constant stream of customers is needed. Anyone entering these sectors will also need to invest heavily in training and in purchasing equipment”

For more information about the different business types, take a look at the [Cleaning Services Group](#).

Rune Sovndahl, Fantastic Services

“Never be too proud to get your hands dirty by being involved. It is important to be involved in the operations of your company, not to just be a boss but also a leader. You want to be able to connect with your employees and have them trust in your leadership”



Business status



Many self-employed cleaners will start out doing domestic work as either a [sole trader](#) or [limited company](#). Both have their own advantages and disadvantages:

Sole trader

If you're a sole trader, you run your own business as an individual and are self-employed.

You can keep all your business's profits after you've paid tax on them. You're personally responsible for any losses your business makes. You must also follow certain rules on running and naming your business.

Limited company

Limited companies separate the individual from the company, which also means the company's finances are separated from the individual. If you choose to form a limited company, you will need to nominate at least one company director and register the cleaning business via [Companies House](#).

You may wish to consider other business setups for your cleaning business. For further information the documentation provided by the [Central Government website](#) is particularly useful.

Once you have chosen the structure most relevant to your business, you must register with [HMRC](#).

Qualifications & Training

There aren't any specific qualifications you need to start your own cleaning business, but if you are looking to expand your business in the future, additional training can come in handy.

Stephen Munton, Domestic Cleaning Alliance

"The sectors which require the least amount of funding and training are often the chosen route, particularly general domestic cleaning, as not only is it easy to get started, there is so much work available for anyone who is prepared to do it. Not only this, very often the work is repeated for the same customers week after week, so no one should need to be chasing new customers on a regular basis. In this sector, word of mouth and personal referrals are often the only marketing needed"

You can hone your craft in a number of ways:

Apprenticeships

- If you are hoping to do specialist cleaning work, an apprenticeship is a good way to test the waters before committing full-time. [Intermediary courses](#) include window cleaning, street cleansing and industrial cleaning.

Online courses

- Although you won't get the same hands-on experience as you would with an apprenticeship, online courses give you the chance to expand your knowledge in just a few months. Some basic entry-level courses you can apply for include [Control of Substances Hazardous to Health \(COSHH\)](#), [Cleaning in Food Premises](#), and [Infection Control and Prevention training](#).

Louise Petty, technical author at [High Speed Training](#), highlights the importance of COSHH training for your specialist cleaning business:

Louise Petty, High Speed Training

"The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (or COSHH) is the UK law that requires all employers to control the risks associated with using harmful substances. As the owner of a cleaning business it's your responsibility to ensure that the chemicals you use are handled, stored and used safely so that they don't cause harm to you, your workers and your clients"

You can find a full list of available courses over on the [High Speed Training](#) site.



Licences



You do not need a licence to start a cleaning business. However, having a [DBS Check](#) (Disclosure and Barring Service) may prove a valuable asset when reassuring potential clients.

This is the same as a CRB certificate (Criminal Records Bureau), but is now called a DBS certificate.

There are three types of DBS check: basic, standard and enhanced. If any of your work requires you to clean in or near a school, or around children or vulnerable people, you will need to get an enhanced DBS check. If you are operating in Scotland or Northern Ireland the process is slightly different as they use different registered bodies: Scotland is administered by [Disclosure Scotland](#) and Northern Ireland is overseen by [Access Northern Ireland](#).

A Cleaning Operatives Proficiency Certificate (COPC) may make you a more desirable choice for prospective clients. There are 26 modules in total, which cover all three sectors of the cleaning industry. This is delivered by further education colleges and overseen by the [British Institute of Cleaning Science](#).

If you are looking to work specifically in the commercial sector, certain industry accreditations may be necessary. Graham Conway, Managing Director at [Maxim FM](#) explains what a cleaning company needs to do to instil confidence in their clients:

Graham Conway, Maxim FM

“Companies will often look for industry accreditations. Accreditations can help reassure buyers of a company’s ability to operate safely and effectively. In the cleaning industry these can be ISO 9001, ISO 14001, CHAS, and SafeContractor”.

Stephen Munton, Domestic Cleaning Alliance

“When starting any business, we believe the two most important things to purchase are the relevant insurances to do the job and membership to the trade association for the sector you will be working in”

Buying Stock

Some cleaning clients will provide their own cleaning equipment, but in some environments you will be required to use your own cleaning products. Many cleaning items can be found on the high street, but be sure to check the instructions. More specialist products can also be purchased from wholesalers who may also supply a [safety data sheet](#) with your purchase.

The downside is that your start-up costs are a little higher, but you can charge more for this additional benefit, meaning costs will usually be recuperated later down the line.

Recommended stock

Louise Petty from [High Speed Training](#) recommends the following basic cleaning products:

- Furniture polish
- Glass cleaner
- Multipurpose cleaner
- Disinfectant
- Mildew cleaner
- Descaler
- Degreaser
- Floor cleaner
- Bleach
- Sanitiser
- Toilet cleaner
- Washing up liquid
- Oven cleaner
- Laundry detergent
- Dishwasher chemicals
- Dusters and cloths

If you are a domestic cleaner, your start-up costs will mainly be spent on essential supplies. You can keep costs down by buying direct from manufacturers in bulk, so keep an eye out for any mail order catalogues that come your way.

There isn't a set amount of stock you should buy when starting up your cleaning business, but you should always make sure you are fully stocked with essential cleaning products. If you prefer to buy everything in one go, some specialist wholesalers offer starter packages which bundle essential items together.



Buying Stock



Specialist wholesalers

Some specialist wholesalers who offer bulk buy options are:

- [Lixall](#)
- [Click Cleaning](#)
- [Hygiene Supplies Direct](#)
- [Prochem](#)

Stephen Munton, Domestic Cleaning Alliance

“Consider having just three of everything you use most in case you run out or leave something behind. Having too much stock can tie-up money which might be needed elsewhere, particularly in the early days of running a business.

The beauty of domestic cleaning is that just about everything you could possibly need can easily be purchased on the high street and in supermarkets. Therefore, carrying a lot of stock just isn't necessary”

Uniform

Having a uniform not only portrays a professional image but can help to protect you when using harsh chemicals. The main garments you will need are tabards, latex gloves, tunics and aprons.

Some uniform providers you might want to consider are:

- [Cleaning Uniforms](#)
- [Simon Jersey](#)
- [My Workwear](#)



Equipment



Domestic Cleaners Equipment

If you are starting out as a domestic cleaner, you will only need basic equipment to fulfil your cleaning duties. Some essentials to consider are:

- Equipment trolleys: £250 – £400 each
- Vacuum cleaner – £100 upwards
- Steam cleaner – £50 upwards
- Vehicle – Second hand, anywhere from £2,000 upwards

Commercial Cleaners Equipment

Commercial cleaning may require you to bring in your own equipment. The main equipment you will need for commercial work includes:

- Industrial wet & dry cleaner - £300 upwards
- Rotary floor machine £400-£800
- Pressure washer - £1,700 upwards
- Ladders - £70 upwards
- Vehicle – Second hand, anywhere from £2,000 upwards

For more information about equipment, there is a handy checklist, [here](#).

Marketing

Cleaning companies rely heavily on word-of-mouth, as well as the repeat business they naturally build up over time. You can get the ball rolling by devising a good marketing strategy. Here are some ways you can get started:

Print marketing

Supermarkets and newsagents are a great place for displaying adverts to prospective clients in the local area. Alternatively, you can post sales letters through letter boxes, give out business cards, or call local businesses to see if they require your services. If you prefer to contact prospective clients directly, you can enquire at local estate agents; there is big demand for cleaning rental properties, where you could make up to [£200 for cleaning a single property](#).

Social media marketing

Setting up a Facebook, Twitter or Instagram account can be good for business, especially if you are working on a shoestring budget. They're free to create and can be useful for a number of reasons:

- Your rates and working hours can be found easily. Social media is also particularly useful for sizing up the competition and spotting weaknesses.
- Efficient responses to enquiries can help establish trust with clients.
- Word about your cleaning business can spread quickly if one person engages with your social page.
- Uploading before and after pictures of previous jobs can showcase your expertise.

Stephen Munton, Domestic Cleaning Alliance

"Carpet cleaning, window cleaning, and oven cleaning are other sectors in which it can be fairly easy to find work. Again word of mouth is essential, although some external marketing is also useful, such as having sign-written vehicles, sending out flyers, and of course in today's world – social media"





Cleaning agencies and contractors

Before you can become a member of an online cleaning marketplace, there are a few preliminary stages you will need to go through. These include background checks, proof of experience, references and face-to-face interviews. However, the upshot is that you will have more exposure to those who are in need of a cleaner, which could, in turn, lead to more clients. Plus, your membership with an established network will instantly set your business ahead.

Stephen Munton, Domestic Cleaning Alliance

“The advantage of joining a cleaning agency is that it combines the freedom of running your own business but without the worry of having to manage your own clients.”

Some cleaning marketplaces you can find online are:

- [Helping](#)

Once you’ve created a free profile on here, you simply need to do a brief interview with Helping to register. After that, you will receive cleaning offers online.

- [Handy](#)

This platform uses a 60-second booking process and conveniently books home services for you.

- [Housekeep](#)

Housekeep requires cleaners to have at least six months experience in the industry. Once signed up, cleaners can correspond with clients and book appointments through the Housekeep app.

Once you have generated interest, the key is retaining customers and encouraging repeat business. Graham Conway, Maxim FM, thinks that the best way to ensure customer satisfaction is through two mediums, technology and talking:

Graham Conway, Maxim FM

“Our Contract Managers perform regular audits using iPads to monitor cleaning standards at our client’s sites. This information is fed in real time back to head office for analysis. By analysing the data collected we can immediately identify any areas that require improvement and we react to this. By reacting quickly and resolving issues before they turn into real problems, and by communicating openly, we constantly improve standards at our customer’s sites”.

Insurance

As the owner of the business, you will be responsible for health and safety in your workspace, as well as making sure you, your staff, and your clients are safe. It is highly recommended that professional cleaning businesses get Public Liability Insurance to cover against any domestic or financial issues:

- [Public liability insurance](#) would cover you in case anything was accidentally broken in a customer's home during your working hours. It could also cover a claim for compensation if, for example, a customer tripped over your equipment and sustained an injury.

Stephen Munton, Domestic Cleaning Alliance

"At the DCA we consider it essential to have the minimum of a public liability policy in place and no one can join us without it"

- [Employer's liability insurance](#) is required by law to cover any members of staff you hire, whether that's on a full time, part time or temporary basis. It covers compensation claims made by employees if they are injured at work.
- [Commercial vehicle insurance](#) is required for anybody using a van or car for business purposes. Private motor insurance generally excludes business use meaning it could be invalid and you may not be covered if you're involved in an incident on the road.

For more advice on what insurance your cleaning company needs, you should speak to an insurance company. You can find out more about insurance on the [Premier BusinessCare](#) website.



Thank you to our contributors:

We would like to thank our contributors for providing us with their tips and comments:

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This guide has been compiled by Premier BusinessCare who specialise in arranging insurance for UK businesses.
If you have any feedback on this guide, or would like to contribute to one of our
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