

Window Cleaning After Reentry – Start Earning in 48 Hours — A no-license, low-budget guide to your first \$1,000

Introduction: Who This Is For (And Who It's Not For)

This guide is written for people who need income now and cannot wait for traditional hiring processes. If you have a criminal record, gaps in employment, or limited formal education, window cleaning offers a direct path to earning money without background checks or credentials.

This business works if you:

- Need to start earning within days, not months
- Can handle physical work and being outside in all weather
- Are comfortable talking to strangers and hearing "no" repeatedly
- Have \$50-\$100 to invest in basic equipment
- Can manage your own schedule without supervision

This business does NOT work if you:

- Cannot walk or stand for 4-6 hours at a time
- Struggle with basic communication or following instructions
- Expect steady income without consistent effort
- Are looking for passive income or "set it and forget it" systems
- Need immediate full-time wages (first month is typically part-time income)

No licenses. No background checks. Immediate pay.

You can start this weekend, and the low barrier keeps competition small.

The job is simple: turn dirty windows into clean ones. Customers judge results, not resumes. Many homeowners—especially older residents—will gladly pay \$100-\$300 for reliable help. **A fast way to get you going now!**

True Startup Costs: What You Actually Need

Bare minimum kit (\$50-\$80):

- 10-inch squeegee with rubber blade: \$8-\$12
- Scrubber/sleeve: \$5-\$10
- 5-gallon bucket: \$5
- Dawn dish soap or window cleaning concentrate: \$5
- 5-pack microfiber towels: \$10-\$15
- Small step stool (if you cannot reach second-story windows from ground): \$15-\$25

Total: \$48-\$82

You can buy all of this at Home Depot, Lowe's, or Harbor Freight in one trip. Do not buy expensive brands yet. Your first job will tell you if this business is viable for you.

What you can delay buying:

- Extension poles (\$30-\$60) – only necessary if you're doing two-story homes regularly
- Professional-grade squeegees (\$25-\$50) – standard ones work fine to start
- Business cards (\$20) – use a notepad and pen for first 10 customers
- Vehicle signage (\$50-\$200) – unnecessary until you have steady work

When insurance becomes necessary:

Most homeowners won't ask about insurance at first. Once you earn \$500+/month, get General Liability (\$30-\$60/month via Next or Thimble). A record doesn't disqualify you.

Deposit option:

If cash is tight, ask for a 50% deposit to buy supplies:

"I'm just starting out - half upfront lets me get the tools and clean today."

If they decline, thank them and move on.

Reality check:

Keep \$50 for tools and \$50-\$100 as a buffer. Aim to book your first job within 48 hours.

Equipment List – What to Buy First

Essential items (buy these first):

- 10-12 inch squeegee – The tool that removes water from glass. Rubber blade must be sharp and intact. Cost: \$8-\$15.
- Scrubber or sleeve – Soft material that applies soap and loosens dirt. Some people use a sponge. Cost: \$5-\$10.
- Bucket (5 gallon) – Holds your water and soap. A painter's bucket from Home Depot works. Cost: \$5.
- Cleaning solution – Dawn dish soap (3-5 drops per gallon of water) works perfectly. Some professionals use Windex or concentrated window cleaner. Cost: \$5-\$10.
- Microfiber towels (pack of 5) – For wiping edges, sills, and frames. Cost: \$10-\$15.
- Small step stool – Only if you are under 6 feet tall and need to reach higher windows. Cost: \$15-\$25.

Optional (buy after first \$200-\$300 earned):

- Extension pole for second-story windows: \$30-\$60
- Better squeegee with replaceable blades: \$20-\$40
- Small spray bottle for spot cleaning: \$3
- Knee pads if you're cleaning low windows or sliding glass doors: \$10-\$20

What NOT to buy yet:

- Water-fed poles (\$200-\$800) – unnecessary for residential work
- Expensive bucket systems with rollers and handles – you're carrying a bucket, not building a spaceship
- Pressure washers – different business, different insurance needs
- Vehicle wraps or magnetic signs – no one cares about your branding until you prove you can clean windows

COMMON MISTAKE: Spending \$300 on gear before you've cleaned your first window. Buy the minimum. Earn money. Upgrade tools only when the cheap ones break or limit your ability to take jobs.

Where to Find Customers: Neighborhood Logic

Target neighborhoods with these characteristics:

- Single-family homes (not apartment complexes – those usually have contracts)
- Well-maintained yards and clean driveways (indicates disposable income)
- Older residents (60+ demographic more likely to hire help)
- Retirement communities or 55+ neighborhoods (consistent demand, respectful interactions)

Why these areas work:

Older homeowners often cannot safely climb ladders or spend hours cleaning windows. They have disposable income and value their time. They are less likely to ask intrusive questions about your background because they care more about getting the job done.

Areas to avoid:

- Brand-new developments where everyone is young and does DIY projects
- Low-income areas where people wash their own windows
- Gated communities with strict vendor policies (you need credentials to enter)
- Areas where everyone uses professional services already (harder to compete on price)

The door-knocking strategy:

Pick a Saturday morning between 9am and 12pm. Choose one neighborhood. Walk up to 30-50 houses in a 3-4 block radius. You are not selling; you are offering a service people already need.

Your goal:

Book 3-5 jobs within 2-3 hours of knocking. If you knock 40 doors and get 3 jobs, that's a 7.5% conversion rate—perfectly normal.

PRO TIP: Look for dirty windows before you knock. If they're already spotless, skip that house—visible grime means the owner is already your best prospect.

The Human Sales Script: No Manipulation Required

Your 30-second introduction:

"Hi, my name is [First Name]. I'm helping a few neighbors clean their windows today. I can give you a quick price if you're interested."

That's it. No life story. No high-pressure tactics. You are offering a service. If they're interested, they'll engage. If not, thank them and move on.

If they say yes or "How much?"

"Let me take a quick count of your windows and I'll give you a price right now."

Walk around the house. Count windows (not panes—each window unit counts as one, even if it has multiple panes). Note second-story windows if accessible.

The show-and-tell method:

Point to one dirty window. "I'll wash the glass, clean the frames, and wipe down the sills. This window here will look like new."

State your price clearly: "For your house, that's \$120. I can do it today if that works, or we can schedule for another day."

If they hesitate:

"No problem. Here's my number if you change your mind."

Do not argue. Do not drop your price immediately. Leave your contact info and move to the next house.

If they say yes:

"Great. I can start now, or would [specific time] work better?"

Agree on timing. Confirm payment method (cash preferred to start, Venmo/Zelle/Cash App also work).

REALITY CHECK: Most people will say no. Some will be rude. This is normal. Your job is to keep moving until you find the people who need your service right now. Rejection is not personal—it's just part of finding your customers.

Pricing Without Hype: What to Actually Charge

Base pricing model (residential):

- Small home (10-15 windows, single story): \$60-\$100
- Medium home (16-25 windows, single story or split-level): \$100-\$150
- Large home (25+ windows, two stories): \$150-\$250

Factors that increase price:

- Second-story windows you can reach safely (add 30-50%)
- Extremely dirty windows (construction dust, hard water stains)
- Screens that need removal and cleaning (add \$2-\$5 per screen)

Factors that lower your effective rate:

- Long drive times between jobs (aim to book clusters in same neighborhood)
- Homes with difficult access (steep hills, no water source nearby)
- Customers who want extensive detail work on tracks and frames

Time per job:

- Small home: 45-60 minutes
- Medium home: 60-90 minutes
- Large home: 90-120 minutes

Your hourly equivalent:

If you charge \$120 for a job that takes 90 minutes, you're earning \$80/hour. But factor in drive time, finding customers, and occasional slow days. Realistic average: \$15-\$25/hour equivalent when you include all your time.

When to raise prices:

Raise prices once you're booked 2-3 weeks in advance or when you're turning down work because you're full. Until then, keep prices competitive to build your customer base.

COMMON MISTAKE: Underpricing because you feel guilty about your background or lack of experience. Your service has value. Charge what the work is worth. If someone objects to your price, they are not your customer.

Doing the Job Well: Step-by-Step Process

Before you start:

- Confirm with homeowner where outdoor water source is located
- Ask if they want screens removed (yes = extra time/money)
- Confirm they'll be home or if you'll lock up when done

Basic window cleaning process:

1. Fill bucket with water and 3-5 drops of Dawn dish soap. More soap = more streaks. Less is better.
2. Wet the window with scrubber. Cover entire surface. Scrub to loosen dirt, especially edges.
3. Squeegee from top to bottom in straight lines. Overlap each stroke slightly. Wipe squeegee blade with towel after each stroke.
4. Wipe edges with microfiber towel. Clean any water left on frames, sills, and corners.
5. Step back and check for streaks. Fix any spots immediately while window is still accessible.

For second-story windows:

Only clean what you can reach safely from the ground using an extension pole. If you cannot reach a window without a ladder, tell the customer you'll skip it or offer to do inside-only. Ladder work without insurance is a liability you cannot afford.

Leaving a good impression:

- Clean up any water drips on the ground
- Dispose of dirty water appropriately (not on their plants)
- Knock on door and confirm they're satisfied before leaving
- Collect payment immediately ("I prefer cash, but Venmo works too")

COMMON MISTAKE: Rushing through the job to move to the next one. Streaky or incomplete work guarantees you won't get referrals or repeat customers. Take your time. Do it right.

Risks & Reality: What Can Go Wrong

Weather will cost you money.

Rain cancels outdoor work. Extreme heat makes glass dry too fast (streaks). Cold weather (below 40°F) makes soap less effective. Plan for 2-4 lost days per month due to weather, especially in winter.

Complaints happen.

You will miss a streak. A customer will point it out. Fix it immediately and apologize. If they're unreasonable, apologize anyway, fix it, and never work for them again. Do not argue over \$100.

Physical strain is real.

Your shoulders, back, and legs will hurt after a full day. This is manual labor. Stretch before and after work. Take breaks. If you ignore your body, you will get injured and lose income.

Insurance responsibility.

If you break a window, crack glass, or damage property, you are liable. This is why General Liability Insurance matters once you're working regularly. A single broken window can cost \$200-\$800 to replace. Insurance covers this.

Cash flow discipline.

You will get paid in cash. It will feel like free money. It is not. Set aside 25-30% for taxes. Keep a separate envelope or account for business expenses (soap, gas, equipment). If you spend everything, you will have nothing when the work slows down.

REALITY CHECK: This business has a 30-40% attrition rate in the first 90 days. Most people quit after a few bad days or when they realize it's harder than it looks. If you can push through the first month, you're already ahead of most who try.

Scaling Slowly: From Solo to Small Operation

Month 1-3: Prove the model works.

Your only goal is to consistently book and complete jobs. Track every dollar earned. Build a list of repeat customers. Get referrals by asking at the end of every job: "If you're happy with the work, I'd appreciate you telling your neighbors."

Month 4-6: Add recurring customers.

Offer monthly or quarterly service to your best customers. "I can come back every 8 weeks and keep these looking great for \$100 each time." Recurring customers = predictable income.

Month 6-12: Hire help (carefully).

Once you're consistently earning \$2,500-\$3,500/month and turning down work, consider hiring someone to help. Pay them \$15-\$20/hour cash or as a contractor. You handle sales and customer relationships; they help you clean faster.

Warning about hiring:

Hiring someone with your background who you met in reentry programs is tempting. It's also risky. If they steal, break something, or don't show up, it's your reputation and business that suffer. Start with people you've known for at least 6 months outside of institutional settings.

Add services – later, not now:

When window cleaning is steady, you *can* add:

- Gutter cleaning (same customers, better margins)
- Pressure washing (new equipment + insurance)
- Screen repair (cheap, easy upsell)

Don't diversify before the core is predictable—too many services kill quality.

PRO TIP: Put your first \$10K into better tools, a 3-month buffer, and insurance. Skip the new truck and flashy gear until the business can handle 2-3 slow months.

14-Day Action Plan – First \$1,000

Day 1

Buy tools (\$50-\$80). Practice on your own windows. Set prices (small/medium/large).

Day 2

Pick a target neighborhood. Knock 40-50 doors (9-12).

Goal: Book 3-5 jobs.

Day 3

Complete jobs. Collect payment immediately. Ask for referrals.

Day 4

Return to same area. Knock 30-40 doors using social proof.

Goal: Book 2-4 more jobs.

Day 5-6

Finish jobs. Take before/after photos. Track income.

Day 7

Catch-up day. Restock supplies. Review results.

Day 8-10

New or proven neighborhood. Knock 30-40 doors/day.

Goal: \$500-\$700 total by Day 10.

Day 11-14

Complete all work. Follow up by text:

“Hi, this is [Name]. If you’re happy, I’d appreciate any referrals.”

Target: \$1,000 by Day 14.

REALITY CHECK:

If you’re under \$500 by Day 7—lower price ~20%, switch area, or improve your script.

Reentry Tips – The Background Question

Will they ask?

Rarely. Most only care: will you show up, do good work, and what's the price?

If asked, say:

"I'm rebuilding and focused on results. I can share recent references."

Don't:

- Overshare details
- Apologize too much
- Get defensive if declined

If they say no:

"I understand—thanks for your time." Then move on.

Cash Discipline

Split income:

- 25-30% taxes
- 20-30% business
- 50% personal

Use a separate account or envelopes.

Consistency Wins

Some days will be slow—keep knocking.

PRO TIP: Text one person your weekly income for accountability.

Field Checklists - Keep This With Your Bucket

Equipment (Before You Leave)

- Squeegee - sharp blade
- Scrubber/sleeve
- Bucket + soap
- 3 clean microfiber towels
- Step stool / extension pole
- Phone charged
- Customer address saved

First Visit (At the Door)

- Introduce yourself & confirm service
- Locate water source
- Ask about screens
- Count windows
- State price clearly
- Confirm payment method
- Start only after agreement

Job Completion (Before Leaving)

- All windows done as agreed
- Frames & sills wiped
- No streaks
- Drips cleaned
- Payment collected
- Asked for referrals
- Left contact info

Customer Follow-Up Script (3-7 Days After Job)

Text message template:

"Hi [Customer Name], this is [Your Name]. I cleaned your windows last [day]. Just wanted to check in and make sure you're happy with the work. If you know anyone else who needs windows cleaned, I'd really appreciate the referral. Thanks!"

If they respond positively:

"Thank you! I'll keep your name on my list for next time. Feel free to reach out anytime."

If they have a complaint:

"I'm sorry to hear that. I'd like to come back and fix it at no charge. When works for you?"

Next Steps: What to Do After Your First \$1,000

1. Get legal (basic version):

- Register a business name with your county if required (usually \$50-\$150)
- Get an EIN from the IRS (free, takes 10 minutes online at irs.gov)
- Open a business bank account (Novo, Relay, or local credit union)

2. Buy insurance:

- General Liability Insurance through Next, Thimble, or Hiscox (\$30-\$60/month)
- This protects you if you accidentally break something expensive

3. Build your customer list:

- Keep a notebook or spreadsheet with every customer's name, address, phone, and date of service
- Text them every 8-12 weeks to offer repeat service

4. Improve your tools:

- Replace your cheap squeegee with a professional model (\$30-\$50)
- Buy an extension pole if you're doing two-story homes regularly

5. Explore other opportunities:

- Visit SecondChanceGuide.com for guides on:
 - - Landscaping businesses
 - - Junk removal
 - - Pressure washing
 - - Other reentry-friendly business ideas

Window cleaning is one path. Once you've proven you can run this business, you can apply the same principles—showing up, doing good work, getting paid—to almost any service business.

Final Words

This business will not make you rich. It will make you independent.

You will have bad days. Customers will cancel. Weather will ruin your schedule. Your body will hurt.

But every job you complete is proof that you don't need someone's permission to earn money. Every customer who pays you is voting with their wallet that your work has value.

No background check. No HR department. No waiting for callbacks.

Just you, a bucket, and the choice to show up every day.

The rest is up to you.

Resources:

- SecondChanceGuide.com – State-by-state reentry resources
- IRS.gov – Get your EIN for free
- [Next Insurance](http://NextInsurance.com) / [Thimble](http://Thimble.com) – Business insurance with no background checks
- Local SCORE chapter – Free business mentoring (score.org)

Questions? Feedback?

Email: info@secondchanceguide.com

We built this guide based on real stories from people who've walked this path. If you have suggestions or want to share your experience, we want to hear from you.

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