

# WINDOW CLEANING FAQs: Residential vs. Commercial

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Photo courtesy of Rick Kadletz, Mid Missouri Window  
Cleaning Co. LLC, Moberly, Missouri, [www.mmwindowcleaning.com](http://www.mmwindowcleaning.com)

I cleaned commercial properties for almost 20 years before I got into residential. I switched over about 12 years ago. It has been one of the best moves I ever made in my company, and meant less stress in my life. There are many reasons that you may feel “at home” with residential window cleaning.

## **Q : What are the benefits of residential window cleaning vs. commercial?**

**You get paid faster.** With typical commercial window cleaning contracts, you have to wait 30 to 60 to 90 days for payment. Another benefit is that you don't have “all your squeegees in one bucket.” With commercial, you could have 20 chain stores on your commercial window cleaning schedule that represent a major source of your profits. You think you're doing fine until some national contractor shows up and makes them an offer they can't refuse.

**You have many more individual customers with whom you can develop personal relationships.** If there's a disagreement with one of those customers, you can walk away if you feel that's best. It's different in commercial. If somebody's not happy, even if it's not your fault, you could risk losing a much larger percent of your business.

**You have more opportunity to use a wider range of professional window cleaning skills.** Plus you could do add-on services like gutter cleaning and power washing and make more money.

## **Q : What kinds of things are important to know when taking on residential jobs?**

**You always have to be neat whether you're working indoors or outdoors.** Wearing booties indoors to help protect the carpets is a sign of respect for residential customers. Remember to take the booties off when you're using a ladder.

Having good communication with your individual residential customers is key for your success, repeat business and referrals.

**There are so many different kinds of windows!** That's obvious to someone who's been doing residential window cleaning for a while. But if you're just starting residential, it's impossible to know all the “ins and outs.” Especially when you're working on high windows where you have different ways to maneuver and safety is an issue. You have to teach members of your team.

That's why it's important to go out and observe your teams at work. You can see what they're doing and help turn it into a learning experience when they need help. It's good to have a member “on call” for residential. So they can answer questions and help members of your team through a task.

## **Q : What are some of the things that you've done that have gotten the best response from residential customers?**

When people get their home's windows professionally cleaned for the first time, they can't believe the difference. They personally experience the value of cleaning windows. Their neighbors do, too. When they come over for a party everybody says, “Who did this?” “How come your house looks different?” After that experience, residential customers swear they're going to get those windows cleaned every six months.

Realtors know prospects can really see the difference, when the windows are clean.

They say homeowners should have had this done before putting their property on the market.

## **Q : What are some safety issues unique to residential work?**

**Hardwood floors and tile floors are very slippery when you're using a ladder.** Putting a mat under the ladder helps stabilize it. When you're working high up on the ladder, take your time and don't rush.

**Watch out for drips.** If you're cleaning a skylight, use a product like Dirtex® to wet a chamois or microfiber cloth so dirt doesn't drip onto the carpet or floor like it could using a squeegee.

**Moving expensive furniture can be an issue.** Always make sure the residential customers move their own valuables whenever possible to avoid damage and liabilities.

Safety's the number one thing when you're doing residential. If you can't do it, don't do it. It's better to leave the window dirty than to risk somebody getting hurt.

**Q : Are there any techniques or strategies that make residential jobs easier or more efficient to complete?**

**Set up a team with two or three people so the work goes efficiently.** You could have one guy pull out the screens, another one start cleaning the inside and maybe a third outside. With that systematic team approach, the work gets much more smoothly, efficiently. It's also a lot easier than working by

yourself. Residential customers like seeing that teamwork, too. That provides a high level of customer satisfaction.

**Schedule residential customers geographically – with homes that are in the same neighborhood where possible.** That saves time (and gasoline) on travel expenses. When you have good signage on your trucks, neighbors driving by can jot down your name and phone number. That's inexpensive marketing that gets results.

*Larry Miller is the owner of Larry Miller, Inc., and a director for the International Window Cleaning Association (IWCA). The IWCA is a non-profit trade 501(c)(6) association committed to raising the standards of professionalism within the window cleaning industry. The IWCA represents all facets of the window cleaning industry, from high rise to route work, residential to industrial. Through its various programs, the IWCA promotes safety, training and a highly professional, responsible image of the window cleaning professional. For more information, call 1-800-875-4922 or visit them at [www.iwca.org](http://www.iwca.org)*

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