



How to find the perfect cleaner.

(In nine easy steps)

A DIY guide from The Home Cleaning Company



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How To Find The Perfect Cleaner

Finding the right cleaner is a tricky business, and there is one complaint we hear from prospective clients all the time: “Why is it impossible to find a good cleaner?”

Why Good Cleaners Are So Hard To Find...

It's difficult to find a good cleaner for one simple reason. Very few people are 'career cleaners'. The role of a cleaner is typically one people adopt for short periods of time. This is usually because their current situation requires a job that will fit around other commitments, and it's hard to come by jobs of that nature. Domestic Cleaning happens to be perfect for that kind of flexible work.

The majority of cleaners are mothers with young children to care for, students, and other individuals who are training for a different occupation. The inevitable result is a high turnover with variable standards of work.

Experienced cleaners, who have been working in the role for extended periods of time, usually have all the existing clients they need. They seldom find themselves looking for new customers to take on, and when space does open up on their schedule, they often have waiting lists.

The good news is, all that said, it's not impossible to find a good cleaner (if it were, we wouldn't have a business!).

It's just not easy.

How To Find The Perfect Cleaner.

The search for the perfect cleaner can be frustrating for householders. We've spoken with enough of you over the years to understand exactly where you're coming from:

You've asked your friends and colleagues, checked local notice boards, scoured Gumtree, and despite the many people offering cleaning services, you still can't find one that fits your needs.

And your needs seem so simple: You want a reliable cleaner who has the high standards of work you expect from a professional.

These are not unreasonable expectations, but you will often struggle to find someone suitable.

We work very hard to find reliable, professional cleaners for our clients, but we understand that using an introductory service like ours is not everyone's cup of tea.

If you'd prefer to find your own just follow the process outlined below and you should soon have a splendid cleaner to keep your home fresh and sparkling clean.

Before You Start.

There's one crucial thing you need to understand: your perfect cleaner is out there, but you'll probably have to look at a fair few unsuitable candidates before you find them.

Be patient, be methodical, and follow these nine simple steps:

Step 1: Gather Your Candidates

There are several places you can find potential cleaning candidates, but they fall into two categories:

- Adverts From Existing Cleaners - You won't need to look very far to find people advertising their cleaning services. A quick search of Facebook and Gumtree will yield plenty of online options. Offline, you will still find many cleaners employing the time-honoured method of placing adverts on local notice boards and in shop windows (the Post Office and local coffee shops are a particularly good place to look).
- Advertising For Your Own Cleaner - You can use all the places where cleaners promote their services to advertise the fact you are seeking a cleaner. If you're using offline notice boards, make sure they are local and as close to your home as possible. If you're advertising online expect to receive a lot of unsuitable applicants.

Here are a few pointers to consider when advertising for a cleaner:

- Mention that you are looking for a reliable cleaner for your own home.
- Indicate the general location of your home, but not your address, and state that they should have their own transportation.
- Indicate whether you will be providing cleaning materials and equipment, or if they will need to bring their own.
- State the rate of pay per hour that you are offering (c. £10 is typical), how many hours they will be required for, and how frequently (i.e. weekly, fortnightly, etc.) they will be cleaning. You should also indicate if the position is permanent or temporary.
- Consider the things you can mention that will make you an appealing prospect. Regular weekly hours are good, as are a reasonable number of hours per visit (i.e. two or three). Cleaners also like a generous space-to-people ratio (lots of people crammed into a small space creates clutter and mess that's difficult to clean around). Houses with no pets often appeal because they don't come with pet hair. Highlight anything that makes you more attractive as a client.

Step 2: Whittle Down The List

Once you've compiled a list of possible candidates, have an informal chat with each of them over the phone, and whittle down the list to two or three. At this stage, the most important thing to consider is whether or not they have a coherent story explaining why they are working (or want to work) as a cleaner.

It's doubtful that working as a cleaner will yield a viable, full-time income. It's reasonable to ask the cleaner's circumstances, although you might like to phrase it as general conversation and small talk, rather than a formal inquiry. Are they a full-time cleaner, or do they work in another job, or career, that they are working on building? Are they studying, or spending time caring for children or other relatives? Are they single and supporting themselves, or do they have a spouse who supports them?

Does it **make sense** that they are working as a cleaner?

This is essential to understand. If you end up with a cleaner unsuited to the work they will soon quit, once something more suitable comes along, leaving you back at square one.

Ideally, you want to find someone who is specifically looking for occasional work that will provide pin money, while fitting in around other commitments in their life.

Take a little time to get to know the stories of your candidates. Select the ones that best fit these criteria and make the most sense to you. Once you have your short list, ask each cleaner for two suitable references. You don't need the full details at this stage, but it's important to ensure they have available references if you reach that stage.

Step 3: Make A Home Visit

Don't be embarrassed about visiting your prospective cleaners in their own house. Nothing will give you a better insight into the kind of cleaner a person is than the cleanliness of their own home. If you feel uncomfortable asking, consider that they are expecting you to welcome them into your home, and that trust should go both ways.

Once you're there find a subtle way to take a quick look around. If you can, check the ceiling, skirting boards, and in the corners. Is there dust or cobwebs? When you're going in and out, discretely have a look at the outside of the house and the garden - are they in a clean and tidy state?

You are searching for a cleaner who is well settled in their home, and has been for some time. Someone who relocates regularly isn't ideal. Are there boxes everywhere indicating they're in the middle of packing/unpacking? Can you find a way to ask them if they like the area, and how long they've lived there? While you're there, take the opportunity to confirm their identity. Ask for at least two forms of identification that verifies they are currently residing in the address you are visiting. This is useful as it not only confirms they are who they say they are, but it helps you determine whether or not they are settled in their home.

Step 4: Ask About Insurance

While there is no legal requirement for a cleaner or cleaning company to carry public liability insurance, it's an important question to ask. If a cleaner doesn't have insurance, it could potentially cost you a sizeable amount if your home (or anything in it) is inadvertently damaged while they are cleaning. The same goes if you or your family suffer any injury or ill-health as a result of their work.

We highly recommend you ask potential cleaners if they have insurance, and request to see a copy of their policy if they claim to have one. You should do this both at the outset and on an annual basis, to make sure their situation doesn't change.

If a cleaner you are considering doesn't have insurance, you'll need to decide if you're comfortable having them work in your home, knowing any damage they cause isn't covered by an insurance policy. It's important to establish if your household insurance policy will cover any damage or injury caused as a result of their cleaning activities. Also, it's important to verify your position with your home insurer in regards to having a cleaner on the premises. Some policies carry occupier's liability cover. However, it can be limited to visitors, and may not extend to individuals providing paid services within the property.

A claim from a cleaner alleging they sustained an injury in your home could prove costly regarding legal costs and possible compensation. It is your responsibility to provide a safe working environment for your cleaner while they are in your home. In the event they are injured by negligence on your part, you will be held responsible.

Step 5: Discuss your requirements.

The final step in narrowing down your short list is to ask your prospects round for a chat at your house. Discuss your requirements. It's helpful to have a list of tasks you will need completing handy to ensure they can do everything you need, and are capable of completing everything in a timely fashion. You should agree upon their rate of pay, and the number of hours they will need to work to complete all required tasks.

Get full details of the references you inquired about initially. This will give you an excellent idea of how organised they are - do they have their references written up, in anticipation of you asking for them, or do they have to get in touch with the relevant information when they return home? Are they searching for details on their phone as you speak with them?

Insist their references be from suitable individuals. For a reference to be appropriate the individual needs to meet the following criteria:

1. They are not a family member or related to the cleaner.
2. They have known the cleaner for a significant period - we suggest at least five years.
3. They are still in regular contact with the cleaner (i.e. not a childhood friend they currently only correspond with at Christmas!).

4. They have a full-time job or are in a position of responsibility within the community.

Step 6: Good References

After you have met with all your prospects, you should be able to narrow it down to a favourite candidate. Follow up on at least two references that meet all the above criteria. You can use the reference form on the final page of this book to ensure you obtain all the relevant information.

The references you receive will almost certainly be good - it's unlikely anyone would give you the details of someone they weren't certain would give a positive account of their character. This doesn't make them untrue or worthless. It does, however, mean you need to know how to read them.

Look for the small clues and subtle details that suggest the referee genuinely thinks the prospective cleaner is exceptional. Keep an eye out for a referee who has gone the extra mile in their recommendation, detailing an incident of the candidate doing something out of the ordinary, or giving you a precise detail of why they think they would make an excellent cleaner.

In an ideal world, this would be a statement that they have cleaned for the person giving the reference and did a sterling job. It may not be this specific, but it will give you a good indication that your cleaner is the kind of person who inspires others to go out of their way for them.

This is the kind of person you are looking for.

The flipside of this is the need to keep an eye out for any indications your referee isn't completely comfortable recommending the person. They've held back from giving the glowing reference you might expect. Checking 'good' rather than 'excellent' for reliability, for example, might not seem significant but it usually means the person in question isn't always reliable and has let the referee down at some point. Bear in mind the candidate will have given you the information of the best possible references. If they have let the referee down, it's likely they will let you down too.

Step 7: DBS Checks.

Consider asking your final prospect for a DBS check. They can organise their own check online for around £45. Alternatively, they might have a recent one that was carried out by, or for, another employer. Many cleaners have existing clients who will have asked for the same check, or work in schools, care homes, and other places at which DBS checks are required.

Step 8: A Trial Clean.

Arrange for your final choice to complete a test clean. This does not mean a free clean! If you have carried out every step in this process, you will almost certainly have found a splendid cleaner. Even if this is the case, you shouldn't ask them to come every week, right away.

Make it clear that the first clean is a trial to ensure you are entirely satisfied with them. Your new cleaner will usually be happy to do this, as they will want to make sure they are comfortable working with you before committing.

Make it clear to your cleaner that you value their time and will be paying for the trial, provided their work is up to a reasonable standard. The rate you pay them should be their normal rate.

Step 9: Employment Status.

Provided your trial clean goes well and you're ready to commit to your new cleaner, the final stage is ascertaining their employment status. A cleaner should operate on a self-employed basis. This means they run their own business, as a cleaner. They take responsibility for the success or failure of that business. Self-employed workers don't have the employment rights or the responsibilities of employees.

A self-employed cleaner can decide what work they do, as well as when, where, or how to do it (subject to practical arrangements with their clients). They're responsible for fixing any unsatisfactory work in their own time. Self-employed cleaners will typically provide their own equipment and cleaning materials unless otherwise agreed with the homeowner.

In this homeowner/cleaner relationship, it's tempting to agree on terms verbally. However, we recommend a simple written agreement to confirm your arrangement. If the cleaner provides their own terms and conditions, read them carefully before engaging their services. If the cleaner does not provide a written agreement (which is common), please consider putting in writing the arrangements you have made.

Failure to do this could result in a cleaner seeking employment rights, including minimum wage, paid leave and pension rights in future. A written arrangement also provides clarity regarding your requirements and can be amended with both parties' consent.

Things to consider including within the agreement are details of both parties, cleaning requirements, payment terms, holiday arrangements, notice and insurance.

And Finally....

You should now have a great cleaner, so pop your feet up, relax, and enjoy your wonderfully clean home. But remember, your cleaner likely won't stay forever. Be prepared to do this all over again sometime in the future. If you're lucky, it might not be for several years. Experience tells us it may be sooner!

REFERENCE



For:	
------	--

Completed By (name):	
----------------------	--

Address:	
----------	--

Occupation:	
-------------	--

In what capacity do you know this person:	
---	--

How long have you known this person:	
--------------------------------------	--

Where possible, please rate the applicant on each of the following:

(please tick)

	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
Responsibility				
Motivation				
Commitment				
Trustworthiness				
Reliability				
Working with others				

Do you know of any reason why we should not offer work to this person:

Yes No If yes, please comment below:

--

Any other comments you feel may be relevant:

--

Would you be happy for us to pass this reference on to our clients?

Yes No



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