Mobile Detailing Business Startup Checklist

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Key takeaways

- Keep your menu to three packages priced by vehicle size
- Get garage keepers coverage to protect customers' cars in your care
- Plan your water and power setup, or use waterless and rinseless products
- Sell monthly maintenance plans for recurring revenue

1. Plan

- [ ] Choose your niche and the services you'll offer first
- [ ] Define your service area (keep it tight to cut drive time)
- [ ] Write a one-page plan: who, where, what you charge, how you'll get 10 clients
- [ ] Check local competitors' services and prices

2. Register & insure

- [ ] Pick a business name and check your state registry, trademarks and the .com domain
- [ ] Choose a structure (sole proprietor or LLC)
- [ ] Get a free EIN from the IRS (irs.gov)
- [ ] Check city/county business license requirements
- [ ] Open a separate business bank account
- [ ] Get general liability insurance before your first paid job
- [ ] Look for garage keepers coverage, which protects customers' vehicles in your care, in addition to general liability. Some cities restrict washing runoff, so a waterless or rinseless wash setup can help.

3. Equipment

- [ ] Portable pressure washer and water tank (or waterless wash products)
- [ ] Generator or power source if needed
- [ ] Shop vac and carpet extractor
- [ ] Microfiber towels, wash mitts and brushes
- [ ] Quality soaps, polishes, interior cleaners and dressings
- [ ] Dual action polisher (once you learn paint correction)

4. Pricing

- [ ] Track your real job times on your first jobs
- [ ] Set a target hourly rate that covers pay, taxes, insurance, fuel and admin time
- [ ] Create a simple price menu and a minimum charge
- [ ] Use estimate and invoice templates for every quote

Full guide: https://servicestartkit.com/guides/how-to-start-a-mobile-car-detailing-business/

General information, not legal, tax or insurance advice. Rules vary by state and city.

- [ ] Check your numbers with the free calculator on ServiceStartKit.com

5. Get online

- [ ] Register a short domain and set up a professional email
- [ ] Launch a 4-page website: home, services & prices, reviews/photos, contact
- [ ] Create a Google Business Profile with photos and your service area

6. First clients

- [ ] Before/after photos and videos on social media
- [ ] Partner with offices to detail employees' cars in the parking lot
- [ ] Google Business Profile with photos and reviews
- [ ] Approach local businesses with vehicle fleets
- [ ] Referral discounts for existing customers
- [ ] Ask every happy client for a review and a referral

7. Money

- [ ] Invoice every job and log every expense
- [ ] Keep a mileage log for business driving
- [ ] Set money aside for taxes each month
- [ ] Review prices at least once a year