

Window Cleaner interview questions

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What to expect

Window cleaning interviews are usually practical rather than formal. Whether you're applying to a cleaning company or subcontracting to one, the person hiring wants to know you can work safely at height, get a finish that stands up to daylight, and handle a client without them having to step in. Expect a short chat about tickets and experience, then some version of a working trial.

- **Safety and compliance:** Questions about working at heights, ladder setup, harness checks, SWMS and when a job should be knocked back rather than attempted.
- **Technical and equipment:** How you get a streak-free finish, water-fed pole and pure water systems, squeegee technique, and dealing with hard water spots, bird droppings and paint overspray.
- **Client-facing and dispute handling:** How you deal with a complaint, a refused payment, an access problem or a tenant who wants you to clean something outside the scope.
- **Behavioural:** Tell-me-about-a-time questions about damage you found, a job that went wrong, or a difficult customer.
- **Commercial and self-management:** Quoting, route planning, invoicing and how you'd keep a run profitable, which matters most if you're coming on as a subcontractor.

Most roles start with a phone call covering your tickets, licence and availability, then move to a face-to-face or on-site chat with a supervisor or the business owner. From there you'll usually do a paid trial or working interview, often half a day on a real run, where they watch your setup, your ladder work and your finish. Subcontractor arrangements may skip the formal interview and go straight to a paid trial job and a chat about rates and insurance.

1. Walk me through how you approach a job from arrival to pack-up.

Why they ask

This is the standard opener. It shows whether you work to a system or just improvise, and it covers safety, quality and time management in one answer.

How to structure your answer

A step-by-step walk-through in the order you'd actually do it: arrival and site check, setup, working order, quality check, pack-up and record keeping. Keep it chronological and concrete.

Example answer

"I start by parking safely and walking the property before I pull any gear out. I work out which windows are ground level, which I can reach with the pole, and which need a ladder or a platform. Then I set up, checking the ladder feet and the ground underneath, and putting out cones or signage if I'm on a footpath. I work top down and glass first, then frames, sills and tracks, because dirt from a sill will run back onto glass if you do it the other way. Bird droppings and hard water spots get scrubbed with the applicator before the squeegee goes near them. At the end I do a walk around in daylight, inside and out where I have access, and take photos for the job record. Then I pack the van, rinse the squeegees, and check the next address in ServiceM8."

2. How do you decide whether a window is safe to reach from a ladder, or whether it needs a pole or an elevated work platform?

Why they ask

Working at heights is the main risk in this job. Employers want to hear a clear decision rule rather than confidence, because confidence without judgement is how people get hurt.

How to structure your answer

A risk hierarchy answer. State the rule you work to, then apply it to a couple of concrete situations so it isn't just policy talk.

Example answer

"My rule is that the ground decides before the height does. If the surface under the ladder is uneven, soft, sloping or on a public footpath with traffic, I'm already looking at the pole or a platform rather than a ladder. For anything I can reach comfortably with a water-fed pole from the ground, I use the pole, because feet on the ground is the safest option and it's usually faster. If I do need a ladder, it's the three points of contact rule, one metre of ladder above the landing point, and someone footing it if the surface is at all questionable. Anything above what a ladder can safely reach, or anything over a shopfront awning or a sloping roof, gets an EWP. If none of those options work safely, I tell the client the window isn't getting cleaned and explain why."

3. Tell me about a time you found damage to a client's property while you were cleaning.

Why they ask

It tests honesty and how you protect both the client and yourself when something is already broken before you touched it.

How to structure your answer

STAR: the situation, what you were doing, what you found, and what you did about it.

Example answer

"I was doing a fortnightly clean on a first-floor office suite and noticed a cracked pane near the corner, with a hairline running down from the frame. It wasn't something I'd caused, and it had probably been there a while, but I knew if I cleaned it and it failed later, the conversation would be about me. I stopped on that pane, took photos with a timestamp, and finished the rest of the job as normal. Then I rang the building manager the same morning, sent the photos through and noted it on the job record in ServiceM8. She had it repaired within the week and asked me to flag anything else like that directly to her rather than the tenant. It ended up being the reason she moved two more of her buildings onto my run."

4. A client says the windows you cleaned still look streaky and refuses to pay. How do you handle it?

Why they ask

This is a real scenario for anyone doing residential or shopfront work. They're checking whether you can stay calm, inspect your own work honestly and resolve it without escalating.

How to structure your answer

A de-escalation and resolution structure: acknowledge, inspect together, fix or explain, then agree on the next step.

Example answer

"First thing, I don't argue about it over the phone. I thank them for telling me and ask if I can come back and look at it with them, because a lot of the time it's something specific, like a window I couldn't reach properly or a mark that's actually on the inside of the glass or on a blind. When I get there, I ask them to show me exactly which panes. If it's my work, I redo those panes on the spot and don't charge for the return. If it's something else, like hard water etching or a failed seal that's gone cloudy between the panes, I explain what I'm seeing, show them the difference between the surface and the glass itself, and suggest who can fix it. Either way I leave them with a clean job and an invoice, and if they still want to hold payment I ask them to put their concern in writing so we both have a record."

5. How do you get a streak-free finish, and what do you do about hard water spots or bird droppings?

Why they ask

This is the technical check. It separates someone who has been shown once from someone who actually understands what causes the marks.

How to structure your answer

Explain the cause first, then the method, then the exceptions. Technical questions reward cause and effect, not a list of products.

Example answer

"Streaks usually come from two things, dirty water left on the glass and working in direct sun so the water dries before you squeegee it. So I keep the applicator and the rinse water clean, and I work in shade or early in the day where I can. For a squeegee finish it's a wet edge, one pull per pane where the size allows, and wiping the blade between pulls. Hard water spots have actually bonded to the glass, so soap alone won't touch them. I use a mild acid-based spot remover, let it sit for the time on the label, agitate with a white pad and rinse thoroughly, and I test on a corner pane first if the glass looks old. Bird droppings I soak rather than scrub, then remove with a scraper at a shallow angle so I don't scratch the glass. On high-rise I use pure water through the pole and let it dry naturally, because the filtered water leaves nothing behind."

6. If you were running your own round, how would you quote a job and plan your day?

Why they ask

Even employees are often hired as subcontractors, so the business wants to know you can price work sensibly and not lose money on travel.

How to structure your answer

A commercial reasoning answer: the factors you price on, then how you group the work. Show you think about time and travel, not just the window count.

Example answer

"I quote on how long the job will actually take, which means window count first, then access, then condition. A place with twenty easy ground-floor windows is a very different quote to a place with ten windows over a tiled roof, because the second one needs a pole or a platform and more setup. I add on for travel, for anything that needs a deep clean rather than a maintenance clean, and for difficult glass like leadlight or old panes I'd have to be careful with. Once I've quoted, I plan the week so jobs in the same area sit together, usually commercial work early before offices open and residential in the middle of the day when people are home. I keep a buffer in the afternoon for quotes, follow-ups and wet weather rescheduling, and I invoice through ServiceM8 the same day so nothing sits unpaid."