



## NDWA Guidelines for Working with Cleaners



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### 1. Intro

The cleaner who takes care of your home is a critical partner in making a guest's stay a great experience, and we know you want to make sure you're treating the cleaners with the dignity and respect they deserve.

**The National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA)** is an association for cleaners, nannies, and home care providers. We've created this guide to help you be a good and fair cleaning client.

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## 2. Here are the 4 main areas of being a good and fair cleaning client:



### Fair Compensation

There are different interpretations of “fair,” but a living wage is the lowest wage that can adequately provide a living for someone to support themselves and their family.

For cleaners who are self-employed a living wage starts at \$25 per hour, and for cleaners paid by a cleaning company it starts at \$15 per hour.

Find out more about [Fair Compensation here.](#)



### Health, Safety, and Dignity

This means making sure the work environment--your home--is a place where the cleaner’s health and safety is protected. This includes avoiding exposure to toxic chemicals and that there’s no tolerance for harassment, discrimination, or disrespectful behavior.

Find out more about [Health, Safety and Dignity here.](#)



### Clear Expectations

When everyone knows what to do, things just work better! Clear, open communication between cleaners and hosts is important to a good working relationship.

Find out more about [Clear Expectations here.](#)



### Access to Association for Cleaners

The vital work of cleaning someone else’s home can be isolating and lonely work, but a peer network can help. At NDWA, cleaners have access to support, training and professional development as a NDWA member.

Click here for more information about [NDWA.](#)

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### 3. GUIDELINES



#### Fair Compensation

*A mutually agreed upon wage that takes into account industry norms, regional cost of living, work-related expenses, and experience.*

#### What should I pay the person who cleans my home for their service?

For cleaners who are self-employed a living wage starts at \$25 per hour and for cleaners employed by a cleaning company, a living wage starts at \$15 per hour. This is because self-employed cleaners have more out of pocket costs than cleaners employed by a company.

Self employed cleaners pay the employee and employer share of taxes and do not receive employer benefits such as health care, supplies or other expenses. Cleaning companies often cover such expenses for the cleaners they employ. If you hire a company, it's important to ask what the person who cleans your home is paid hourly and whether the company provides benefits.

In addition to a living wage, there are other considerations for establishing fair compensation. You should also consider the degree of difficulty of the work, such as the size of the home to be cleaned, and if there are any deep cleaning tasks such as cleaning an oven, fridge, baseboards, inside windows or in-between window panes or doing laundry. If you expect cleaning products to be provided by the cleaner this cost should be included in their compensation.

If you'd like, you could also take into consideration their level of experience, whether or not they have travel costs, and other life circumstances.

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#### What is the difference between minimum wage and living wage?

A living wage is the lowest wage that can provide a living for someone to support themselves and their family. Minimum wage is set by law and is the minimum an employer is allowed to pay a worker. Minimum wage is generally too low to live on.

Currently, the federal Minimum Wage is \$7.25. A full-time worker (working 40 hours/week) at \$15/hour has an annual salary of \$31,200. And a worker (working 40 hours/week) earning the federal minimum wage of \$7.25/hour earns \$15,000 per year.

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Should I give the person who cleans my home a bonus?

Yes!

It's usual to give cleaners a bonus equal to 1 or 2 cleaning jobs during the winter holiday season. You can also consider a bonus at the anniversary of when they started working for you, and International Domestic Workers' Day (June 16th). Don't forget to let them know how much you appreciate them!

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Should I give them a raise every year?

Yes!

It's common to give cleaners a raise every year; the longer they are with you the more valuable their service is and their compensation should always reflect the value they provide.

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What should I do if I need to reschedule or cancel a cleaning appointment or when I go out of town for a few weeks with no guests to clean for?

This is up to you and the cleaner so make sure you discuss it beforehand.

Many cleaners are flexible with rescheduling as long as you notify them within a reasonable amount of time, usually 48 hours before the scheduled job. Decide on a timeframe that works for both of you, and commit to pay for their time if you can't meet your notification commitment.

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What should I do if my guests don't depart by check-out time and my cleaner is waiting to clean?

Cleaners should be paid for their time, whether they are cleaning or waiting for your guests to leave.

To make check-out day run smoothly, make sure you are in contact with your guests to confirm their departure time, and notify the cleaner as soon as possible if check-out time changes. For the cleaner's safety, they should know not to remain in your home while guests are still there.

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## Health, Safety and Dignity

*A work environment free from the fear of harassment or discrimination, exposure to toxic chemicals, and requests to perform dangerous tasks.*

### Should I provide cleaning supplies?

It's up to you, but if you ask the cleaner to provide them make sure their compensation includes the cost of cleaning supplies.

If you provide cleaning supplies yourself:

- Choose non-toxic/green cleaning products for the safety of your cleaner.
  - If bleach or other strong chemicals are necessary, provide safety equipment (such as rubber gloves and a mask) and make sure that the area is ventilated.
  - If you need your cleaner to reach high areas make sure you provide an extendable duster so they don't need to stand on a chair or countertop.
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### How can I help prevent injuries on the job?

The first step is not to ask your cleaner to do anything that is dangerous. Some activities that could be dangerous are:

- living heavy objects such as furniture,
- cleaning high areas without equipment that can reach from the floor, such as an extendable duster, or
- using toxic cleaning chemicals in an unventilated area or without a mask.

Secondly, make sure that there is open communication with your cleaner so they feel comfortable letting you know when they don't feel safe. A great way to start this is on the walkthrough of your home before they begin working with you; make sure to ask them if they have any safety concerns as you discuss the job room by room.

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**How can I protect them from discrimination and harassment while working in my home?**

As the cleaner's client or employer you are prohibited from treating them differently or unfairly based on a personal characteristic or status, such as race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or national origin (not an exhaustive list). For example, employers are prohibited from refusing to hire a job applicant, firing an employee, or changing other terms and conditions of employment (such as pay or benefits) for reasons based on the employee or job applicant being a member of a particular sex, race, national origin or any other category.

You are also not allowed to harass your cleaner, such as doing or saying something that creates an intimidating, hostile, or threatening work environment.

To protect the cleaner from potential discrimination or harassment from guests, make sure they know never to be in your home while guests are there.

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### **Clear Expectations**

*Communication between cleaner and host that are clear, productive and fair.*

**How do I set clear expectations? I just want to make sure myself and the cleaner are happy with the job!**

**It's all about communication!**

Start with a walkthrough of your home before you decide to work together. Go through each room and discuss every task you need completed; this is a great opportunity for the cleaner to ask questions so that your instructions are clear. Make a checklist that you can both reference.

When you have both agreed on the work required for the job, you will need a work agreement to define the terms of your work engagement. Make sure you include:

- **Compensation:** You should pay your cleaner a living wage. For cleaners who are self-employed a living wage starts at \$25 per hour, and for cleaners paid by a cleaning company it starts at \$15 per hour. Learn more about [fair compensation](#) here.
- **Trial period:** A trial period of about three cleanings gives you enough time to evaluate whether the work is good for both of you. Check in with each other at the end of the trial period and address any issues that may have come up. This also helps to create an expectation of open communication and regular check-ins.
- **Scope of work:** A checklist of all the tasks you need completed for each job.
- **Sick or vacation days:** You can consider including a specific number of sick or vacation days in your work agreement; be sure you specify how many days you will pay.
- **Health Insurance:** You can consider contributing towards the cleaner's health insurance costs.
- **Payment details:** The cleaner should know when and how (cash, check or other) they will be paid.
- **Scheduling and hours:** Specify when the job needs to take place, and how flexible you each are with rescheduling. You might be flexible during business hours on a particular day of the week, or you might need the job done during a small time window. Clear expectations make it easier to adjust when things change.
- **Cleaning products:** Specify whether you need your cleaner to provide cleaning products, and commit to using non-toxic chemicals.
- **Termination of the agreement:** Define how much advance notice you will each provide if one party chooses to end the working relationship, and if any severance will be provided.

How should I go about giving the cleaner feedback on their work?

Open communication is the key to all good working relationships:

- Always make sure to express appreciation for their work; cleaning is hard work and it makes your life so much easier!
- It's always a good start to invite the cleaner to share what is - and is not - working out for them. This also gives you an opportunity to demonstrate that you are committed to the relationship being beneficial to you both, by hearing their concerns and addressing them.

- If there are areas of their work that need improvement, be specific and refer to the work agreement. If the tasks were not included in the work agreement be sure to update it. If they were, be clear about how the work differed from the way it was described in the list of tasks.

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It's not working out, how should I go about ending the working relationship?

Hopefully, you defined termination notice and severance in your working agreement. If you didn't, it's fairly standard to give two weeks notice and offer 1-2 weeks severance pay. If you are comfortable providing a good reference for the cleaner, it's always nice to offer.

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### Access to Association for Cleaners

*A peer network for cleaners with access to professional support and training.*

What else can I do to support the person that cleans my home?

Cleaning can be isolating work. The National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) is an association for cleaners, nannies, and home care providers across the country. Cleaners can connect with their peers and access training and professional development opportunities by becoming a member. You can connect them to [NDWA's Membership website](#) and, if they want to join, you can offer to pay for their first year of membership as a token of your appreciation.

Cleaners can [join NDWA here](#).

*[This FAQ is intended to provide general information regarding workplace policies. It is not intended to provide legal advice. The National Domestic Workers Alliance cannot ensure the information in this fact sheet is current or be responsible for any use to which it is put. Do not rely on this information without consulting an attorney or the appropriate agency about your legal obligations or rights in your particular situation.]*