

# Car Detailing Business — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into the numbers, menu, and systems you need to run a profitable detailing business. Work each section as you go: choose your model, time your own production, calculate your true cost per producing hour, build a three-tier menu and a membership, and prepare a fleet pitch. The templates are built to be filled in with your own figures and reused every week as your real operating tools.

## Choosing Your Model and Doing the Work Profitably

Commit to mobile or shop with eyes open, then time your own production so every future quote is a calculation instead of a guess.

### Worksheet: Mobile vs Shop Decision Sheet

Fill in honest figures for your situation and let the numbers, not your enthusiasm, point to a model. Use real local lease quotes and a realistic count of how many cars you can finish per day.

Cash available to start (dollars)

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Estimated mobile startup cost (vehicle prep, tank, pressure washer, generator, kit)

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Estimated shop startup cost (lease deposit, build-out, equipment, signage)

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Local monthly commercial rent for a 2-bay space (dollars)

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Realistic cars per day, mobile (after drive and setup time)

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Realistic cars per day, shop (with current help)

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Share of expected demand that is correction/coating (needs controlled space) (percent)

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Market type (dense urban / suburban spread / rural)

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Chosen model (mobile / shop / hybrid)

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Single biggest constraint this model imposes

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## Exercise: Time Your First Production Run

Detail one car of each major size with a phone timer running and record actual minutes per stage. Do not estimate; measure. These numbers become the backbone of your pricing in Section 2.

- For a sedan, how many minutes did each stage take (foam/pre-rinse, wheels, contact wash, decon, dry, polish, protect, interior)?

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- How much longer did the same stages take on a mid-size SUV and on a full-size truck or van?

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- How much extra time did soiling (pet hair, mud, food) add versus a clean commuter car?

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- For mobile, how many minutes did setup and pack-up take, and are you currently counting that as billable time?

## Checklist: Startup Kit Readiness Check

I own a dual-action polisher plus cutting and finishing pads and compounds

I have the two-bucket wash system, foam cannon, and dedicated wheel brushes

I have an extractor or wet/dry vac and interior brushes for vents and seams

I have core chemicals (APC, iron remover, clay, glass, leather, tire dressing, ceramic spray)

If mobile, I have a water tank, pressure washer, power source, and enough hose and cord

I have deferred non-essential purchases (steamer, canopy, second extractor) until revenue justifies them

## Building the Service Menu and Pricing for Profit

Calculate the hourly floor under your business, then build a three-tier menu and add-on prices that sit deliberately above it.

## Worksheet: Cost Per Producing Hour Calculator

Add up your true monthly fixed costs and divide by the hours you can actually bill, not the hours you work.

This single number is the floor under every price you set.

Vehicle payment or shop lease (monthly dollars)

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Insurance (monthly dollars)

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Software and phone (monthly dollars)

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Water, power, and other utilities (monthly dollars)

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Your target owner salary (monthly dollars)

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Other fixed costs (monthly dollars)

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Total monthly fixed costs

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Realistic producing hours per month (after driving, quoting, admin)

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Cost per producing hour = fixed costs / producing hours

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Target profit margin to add (percent)

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Billing rate = cost per producing hour + margin (dollars per hour)

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### Exercise: Build Your Three-Tier Menu with Anchoring

Use your billing rate and your timed production data to price three packages, then check that the gaps push buyers toward the middle tier. Name the packages clearly and decide which one you will mark as recommended.

- What hours, included steps, and price will define Tier 1 (Maintenance Wash), Tier 2 (Full Detail), and Tier 3 (Correction + Coating)?
  - Is the price gap from Tier 1 to Tier 2 smaller than the gap from Tier 2 to Tier 3, so the middle upgrade feels cheap?
  - Which tier are you highlighting as recommended or most popular, and why is it the one you most want to sell?
  - What size surcharge will you add for SUVs, trucks, and vans based on the extra time you measured?
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### Worksheet: Add-On Price Sheet

Price each add-on individually so every one sits comfortably above your hourly floor. Base the time on your own measured work, not a competitor's list.

Add-on name

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Your time to perform (hours)

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Material cost (dollars)

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Price = (time x billing rate) + material, rounded

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Best moment to offer it (when customer feels the value)

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Is the price above my cost per producing hour? (yes / no)

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### Checklist: Margin Protection Habits

- Every package price = (time x billing rate) + variable cost, not a copied competitor number
- I charge a condition/soiling surcharge and quote it before the job, never after
- I hold my prices and compete on quality and reliability, not on being cheapest
- Any discount is traded for something (membership, referral, slow-day slot), never given free
- Job scope is in writing so 'while you're at it' requests become billable add-ons
- I recalculate my cost per producing hour every quarter and after any major cost change

## Recurring Revenue, Memberships, and the Coating Profit Engine

Design a membership that smooths cash flow, then scope and price the correction and coating work that carries your highest margin.

### Worksheet: Membership Plan Builder

Design a recurring maintenance plan and project the monthly revenue it adds. Aim for a price that beats ad-hoc booking for the customer while guaranteeing you the slot.

Plan name and tier (basic exterior / wash + interior / premium)

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Visits included per month

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Monthly recurring price (dollars)

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Your time per visit (hours) and cost at billing rate

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Target number of members

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Projected total recurring monthly revenue (price x members)

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Billed automatically on autopay? (yes / no)

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Target monthly churn (percent)

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### Exercise: Scope and Quote a Correction + Coating Job

Walk a real or hypothetical car through the inspection-to-quote process so the highest-value service on your menu is also the most accurately priced. Inspect under proper light before you commit to a number.

- Under a bright light, does the paint need a one-step enhancement, a two-step correction, or multi-step work, and how many panels?

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- What total hours does the correction take, and what is that at your billing rate?

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- Which coating tier (1-2 year vs 3-5+ year durability) fits, and what is the material cost?

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- What is the all-in package price, and how many maintenance washes does that single job equal?

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### Checklist: Coating Job Protection Checklist

- I documented the car's condition with photos before starting
- I never apply a coating over uncorrected paint without telling the customer in writing
- I inspected with proper lighting and (where possible) a paint-depth gauge
- I used a reputable, professionally backed coating brand so warranties hold up
- Any coating warranty is tied to ongoing maintenance through my membership
- The scope, stages, and price are in writing and signed before work begins

## Getting Customers and Winning Fleet Contracts

Build the free local-marketing assets that convert, then prepare a fleet pitch and a contract that fills your slow weekdays without losing money.

### Checklist: Local Marketing Foundation Check

- My Google Business Profile is complete, photo-rich, and getting steady new reviews
- I ask every satisfied customer for a review at the moment of delight, automated through my software
- I photograph every car in the same spot and light for a consistent portfolio
- I post before-and-after results at least a few times a week
- I reply to every review, positive and negative
- I have a simple give-and-get referral offer running with members and happy clients

### Worksheet: Fleet & Dealer Target List

List the B2B accounts in your area worth pitching and capture what each one needs and what you would charge. Prioritize the ones whose schedule fills your slow weekdays.

Account name and type (used-car lot / new-car dealer / commercial fleet / property manager)

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Decision-maker name and role

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Number of vehicles and rough frequency

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What they care about most (turnaround / consistency / price / one vendor)

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Proposed per-vehicle volume rate (must stay above cost per producing hour)

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Trial offer to prove quality (e.g., 2-3 vehicles)

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Proposed payment terms (net-15 / net-30)

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Status (researched / contacted / trial / signed)

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### Exercise: Draft Your Fleet Pitch

Write the pitch you will deliver in person to a fleet or dealer decision-maker. Lead with the problem you solve, not your price list, and bring proof.

- In one or two sentences, what reliability problem do you solve for this account (scheduled, lot-ready, consistent vehicles)?

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- What proof will you bring (before-and-after photos, current clients, a no-risk trial)?

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- What is your standardized per-vehicle service and price, and is it above your hourly floor?

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- How will you schedule their work on your slow weekdays so it fills capacity instead of crowding out retail?

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### Checklist: Scaling Readiness Check

- My workflow, pricing, and quality standards are written down, not only in my head
- I have a first hire plan to offload low-skill work (wash, vacuum, setup)
- I have a training checklist and will inspect every car until the hire is reliable

- [ ] Recurring and contract revenue are growing as a share of my total
- [ ] My average ticket is holding or rising as volume grows
- [ ] I am shifting my own time toward selling, scheduling, and managing

## Your Action Plan

1. Commit to a model (mobile, shop, or hybrid) using the Decision Sheet and name the single biggest constraint it imposes.
2. Assemble the essential startup kit and defer non-essential purchases until a paying calendar justifies them.
3. Detail one car of each size with a timer and record minutes per stage to build your production time standards.
4. Calculate your cost per producing hour and set your billing rate by adding your target margin.
5. Build a named three-tier menu with anchoring, size surcharges, condition fees, and individually priced add-ons.
6. Design and price a maintenance membership on autopay and set a target member count and churn ceiling.
7. Set up booking, scheduling, reminder, and payment software and bake your pricing rules into it.
8. Build the free marketing foundation: a complete Google Business Profile, a review-request habit, and a before-and-after feed.
9. Build a fleet and dealer target list, draft your pitch, and offer a no-risk trial to two or three accounts.
10. Sign at least one fleet or dealer contract scheduled on your slow weekdays, with terms and per-vehicle pricing in writing.
11. Review your three core numbers weekly: average ticket, recurring monthly revenue, and churn.
12. Once the calendar is consistently full, write down your standards and make your first hire to grow past solo capacity.











