

Ethics Class

Professional Home Cleaners

Introduction

Many professions require an ethics class as part of a certification or licensing process. Ethics is defined as the moral principles that govern a person's behavior or conduct of an activity.

Most people do the right thing every day, but temptation is always there. We all need to be reminded why we must do the right thing, even if no one catches us doing the wrong thing. Regardless if you work for yourself or on a team for a company, most of your cleaning is conducted by yourself and unsupervised. When you work unsupervised, no one is there to catch you in the act of doing the wrong thing, so the temptation and opportunity to do the wrong thing is always present.

Industries set their own code of ethics, which include the principles of conduct for their profession. There is a "code of ethics" for journalists, lawyers, doctors, law enforcement, just to name a few.

The Code of Ethics for Professional Home Cleaners:

*Complete all services purchased at acceptable quality standards,
while doing no harm to home, self, and others.*

Complete all services purchased. This is the first and primary responsibility to the customer for any business and not just maid service. If the customer purchased dusting baseboards, then you have to dust them completely, even if they look completely dust-free.

You will clean bathrooms where the toilet paper is still folded to a point from the last time you cleaned. Yes, you still have to touch everything in that bathroom. In your Level-1 training, we refer to these un-used bathrooms as "wipe-out cleans," which take ½ the time. You still have to touch everything, because the customer paid you to do that. You can ask the customer if they want to skip that room and not charge the customer, but if the customer paid for that service, you have to do it, or it is considered unethical. And yes it's like stealing the customer's money. WHAT? REALLY? Yes. If you paid for something and they didn't give you everything you paid for, and they did it on purpose, what would you call it?

Cutting Corners

Cutting Corners is a phrase used in the industry when a cleaner does not spend enough time on a task, resulting in low-quality cleaning or skipping a task entirely.

What are common corners cut on residential cleaning?

You can cut corners on any task, so this list could be endless. Evidence of poor cleaning comes from post-cleaning inspections from Team Leaders, Supervisors or Owners, customer complaints with pictures, and from other teams if they clean one of your customers and notice areas being skipped.

These tasks are either skipped or not completed at an acceptable quality standard

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dusting baseboards• Dusting blinds• High dusting• Dusting ceiling fans• Lifting or moving items on countertops or shelves to completely clean the area• Backsplash on counters• Cleaning the top of the Refrigerator• Dusting or cleaning chairs all the way to the bottom, including the glides• Dusting furniture to the very bottom	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moving items when vacuuming• Lifting rugs to mop or vacuum• Cleaning behind toilets• Cleaning under the entire lip of the toilet• Cleaning baseboards around toilets• Getting all the way under furniture• Cleaning areas that are hard to reach• Checking your work before you leave the room• Team Leader checking the entire home at the end of the job
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Some tasks **require more time or effort** to get the best results. These are some examples of cutting a corner by cleaning an area faster but not getting the best result or even acceptable results.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using only spray cleanser in a sink when it needs a powdered cleanser first• Using just a rag to clean a sink when you need to a sponge first, then a rag to wipe it clean• Using a duster on a flat surface when you need a dusting rag to pull all the dust off• Stop scrubbing a shower stain because it looks better than before, but it's not completely clean
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Cutting Corners doesn't always result in getting a customer complaint

This is the fuel that feeds temptation. If you skip a baseboard, blind, ceiling fan, or any area, you may not get a complaint. You may choose to dust the baseboards only when they are visibly dusty. You may get away with it for a while, but customers are not dumb or foolish. Maid service is expensive, and most customers check your work directly or indirectly.

Most customers are busy people. They may not have the time or interest in managing their maid service quality. It's like getting a few bad meals at a restaurant. Most people will not ask to speak with the manager or chef about the bad food or service, they just stop going there. It's much easier in this day and age to find another maid service who has great ratings and reviews.

Cutting Corners grows over time

Cutting a few corners here and there will grow into more and more areas being skipped or completed at low quality. It's almost human nature to keep pushing the envelope until someone complains.

It's common to hear new customers say they left their old maid service because they missed more and more tasks over time. It's a common reason why customers change maid service providers, which means it's a common problem. Customers are not dumb. They know what they purchased.

Customer's who have seen this problem in the past, look for it more diligently and are faster to fire their maid company because they are looking for it.

Why do cleaners cut corners?

Cutting corners is not always a conscious decision to do something bad.

- Disagreeing with a process or task

If you disagree with a process or task, you have a responsibility to question your employer. It's ok to ask your employer why you are required to do something. Every required task should have a reason behind it. Education is the key to all understanding, so ask questions.

In the end, you may disagree with the way something is being done, but you still have to do it because that's what you are being paid to do. And if you truly don't want to do it, then you should work someplace else. Sometimes that happens, and that's ok. You just can't use disagreement as an excuse.

- Not enough time to complete all the required tasks

Cutting a corner may feel justified because there is not enough time allocated for the job to get everything done. Even in that situation, cutting corners is wrong. If you need more time, tell someone. Call the office or speak with the customer directly if you work for yourself.

- Too tired or weak to complete all tasks

Some cleaners cut corners because they are physically tired and don't have the energy to complete all tasks. That may come at the end of a long day or week. You may be a little under the weather, but you try to make it through the day. You will have days like these.

Although your physical condition is real, it doesn't justify cutting corners. Ask your partner for a little help to finish up. You will do the same for your partner someday. And if you are too ill to complete all your tasks throughout the day, then don't come into work. You can do more harm by coming into work ill-prepared to do everything in your job. It's not uncommon for people to work if they are not feeling 100%, but you can't use that excuse to cut corners.

- Some cleaners will skip an area because it already looks clean.

Why would you clean something that is already clean? That may feel right, but it's still wrong.

Why should you clean an area that already looks clean or dust-free?

Some maid companies skip or rotate cleaning tasks like baseboards, blinds, and ceiling fans, but they also tell their customers, so they are within the code of ethics. We are not talking about what tasks are promised to customers or not. That is every cleaning company's prerogative. We are talking about skipping any area that is included, just because it already looks clean.

The first reason is that the customer is paying you to do that task. Never forget that promise to the customer. When you encounter a clean area, it's never as clean as you think it is because it is not yet showing enough dust to look visibly dusty. Every area in the home is constantly getting dusty, even if the homeowners are super clean or even out of the home on vacation.

Dust is always accumulating. If you skip ANY area on a bi-weekly customer, in two more weeks that area will have four weeks of dust and it will look dusty. Bi-weekly customers, (your most valuable customer), want their homes to be dust-free all the time. And with a few exceptions, you can keep the home looking dust-free with Bi-Weekly service if you do all your tasks.

If you skip an area on Bi-Weekly customer, it may start looking dusty within a few days after you skipped it. It will not look dusty starting at week 4; it will start looking dusty **before** week 4. Many customer complaints occur not after a cleaning, but when they get their upcoming service reminder email or text. They often reply saying, "It looks like they missed (fill in the blank) the last time they cleaned." And if you skip any surface on a monthly customer, those areas are going to look horrible in another month before their next service. That's when the customer will simply terminate service.

Your eyes can be fooled. What looks clean may not be clean. This is why we teach in your certification classes to feel surfaces with your hand to make sure they are clean. Your hand can feel grit and sticky areas that your eye thought was clean. The next few pages will prove this point.

Look at the baseboard on the next page.

A person's eyes are 5 feet, or more, away from the baseboards when standing in front of them. You cannot see dust at 5 feet away. This baseboard looks ok at eye level



This is about 3 feet away. Doesn't look too bad



This is the same baseboard just a few inches away. You're fired.



These are actual pictures submitted by a recurring customer. Was dusting baseboards on the list of services for this customer? Yes. Did the customer fire the maid service? Yes.

At Maid Training Academy we have run experiments and tested the effects of not dusting areas. Based on what we see in these pictures we believe the baseboards had not been dusted in the past 4-6 weeks. It doesn't take long for dust to accumulate to these levels and yet it can still be hard to see.

Dust accumulates on all flat surfaces, be it blinds, window sills, furniture, picture frames, decorations hung on walls or sitting on shelves, backsplashes, tops of refrigerators, and so on.

How do Employers manage cleaners to prevent cutting corners?

- Clock in and Clock out of a job to make sure you spend enough time on the job
- Conduct more checks by supervisors
- Ask for more customer feedback

Although these tactics work to a certain degree, none of them prevent all corner cutting. Anyone can milk the clock, no company can check all jobs, and not all customers provide feedback. This is an issue of ethics, and it rests on the shoulders of Cleaners and the Team Leaders that lead the team.

Getting out early is a possible indicator of missing something or cutting corners.

All jobs have time durations. These job durations are usually pretty accurate. If you get out early or your partner is done with their tasks early, it may be an indicator that something was skipped or not completed to a satisfactory quality standard.

As a Team Leader, you will have to check your partners work closer than normal if they are getting done much faster than expected. It's ok to ask your partner why they got done early.

Getting done early may be an indicator that you missed something on the work order. Always read the work order before you start a job, and if you get out early, it may be that you missed a task by accident.

Sometimes a team will get out of a job early...without cutting corners

There are several legit reasons why a team may finish early. Here are a few examples:

- A team that has been working together for a long time may get out of all jobs early
- The same team has been cleaning the same home for a long time, may get out early
- A very clean house may take less time
- A house with fewer Knick-Knacks, Decorations, or Furniture than normal may take less time

If you, or any team, is getting everything done on your checklist and getting out really early, you may have overestimated the job, and perhaps you should charge the customer less.

Acceptable Quality Standards

*Complete all services purchased at acceptable quality standards,
while doing no harm to home, self, and others.*

You hear the phrase, “High Quality” in the maid service industry. It can be misleading to think there is low quality, medium quality, and then high quality. There are only two levels of cleaning. It's either cleaned at an acceptable level, or it's not.

Rely on your training. You have just completed the world's best training class on how to clean homes at a professional level and the most efficient way. If you follow the flow and instructions in your training, build a routine to your cleaning, and stick to it, you will be fine. And as explained in your training; If you cannot get an area completely clean, leave a note for the customer explaining why.

Ethics in Maid Service goes beyond cleaning

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while doing no harm to home, self, and others.*

The code of ethics goes beyond cleaning. It extends to you as a cleaner, the people that work with you, and the home in which have you have been entrusted.

Treat your customer's home with respect

Use safe products and tools that will not damage anything in the home. Don't drop equipment on the floor, don't come in the home with dirty shoes, be very careful handling items in the customer's home. Even when the customer is not home, treat the home and everything in it with great care and respect.

Report all damages and accidents right away

Every professional cleaner has broken or damaged something. Although accidents should be rare, it will happen. Regardless if it's a \$1 soap dish or a major accident, report all damages to the office and customer right away. Customers will appreciate your honesty in reporting the problem, and your employer understands that it will happen from time to time.

Don't take anything from the customer's home

Theft is a serious issue for any home services company. If something goes missing, there is no doubt the customer will notice and report it. That is why you should never take a piece of candy, or fruit in a bowl or any items from the trash. People throw stuff into the trash that's in good shape; however, people can get very sensitive about taking anything from their home, even stuff they have thrown out.

Resist customers who want to hire you away from your company to clean their home on the side

The best way to handle a customer is to tell them, "*I appreciate your offer but I'm very happy working for (Your Company Name).*" A customer who asks this question is unethical so beware and prepared. It costs a lot of money for a company to get a customer. It's considered stealing to take a customer from your employer, even if the customer approaches you first.

Cutting Corners can really hurt the people you work with every day

Cleaning is a team effort, even if you clean by yourself. Everyone is impacted by your performance including the owner, office staff, and most definitely your cleaning partner(s) if you work on a team.

Never discuss a customer's personal situation, by name, outside of work

Being entrusted with someone's home requires the highest level of ethics, trust, and privacy. Not only are you responsible for taking great care of their home but also to keep their information private. Most cleaners and maids have interesting stories about strange customers. Never mention the name of the customer even to friends or family. Not only is it unethical, but it could also get you into legal trouble.

Never cut corners on safety. Safety is the #1 responsibility to yourself and your cleaning partners.

It's not easy to do the right thing every time

Doing the right thing may go unrewarded at first because no one may thank you for being ethical and doing your job as expected. You may be tempted because you may know cleaners who don't do the right thing AND get away with it. This is a great temptation because if other people are doing less without penalty, it can seem unfair that you have to do everything the right way.

If you haven't already, you will learn that people who don't do the right thing, usually don't last long and eventually run out of luck. If you know someone not doing everything they're supposed to do, you are probably not the only person that knows. That's why unethical people are eventually caught and pay the penalty.

Being Ethical is a rewarding way of life

Most people do the right thing every day and don't need to be motivated; however, there are benefits.

Being Ethical is Profitable. When you do the right thing every day, you will keep a higher percentage of your recurring customers, get more referrals, have more repeat business, you can charge more for consistent quality and dependability, and you get more tips. It pays big, across the board.

The greatest respect from customers, employers, and co-workers. Being a Professional Home Cleaner is not easy, and everyone knows it. There is no greater respect than having someone you can depend on to do the job right. People will notice your good deeds even if they don't mention it.

Good Energy and Joy. People who do the right thing are happier people and have less stress. This positive energy flows to other people in your life. It's powerful and influential in a big way.

Take your Ethics Test This concludes your reading requirements for Ethics. Return to your classroom page and take the Ethics Test. Take the Ethics Test until you score 100%.