



Aunty Kaz's

Guide To  

Pet & House Sitting



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WELCOME!

Are you in the prime of your life and thinking about becoming a house sitter?

You might be wondering, *“Could someone like me actually do this?”*

Maybe you're in your late 40s, 50s, or 60s and currently looking for a new adventure, or planning ahead for the future. Perhaps you're retired, semi-retired, or you've already created a more flexible, digital nomad lifestyle. Maybe your children have grown up and moved on, or perhaps you simply want more freedom, flexibility, and adventure at this stage of your life.

You might want to travel without paying for accommodation. You might want to make your money stretch further. Or you might simply love the idea of waking up somewhere different, with a dog on the sofa and a cat judging your life choices from across the room.

Whatever your reason, **you're in the right place.**

And if you're wondering whether you're too old, too inexperienced, or not tech-savvy enough to get started, let me reassure you: **you're not.**

You don't need to be young. You don't need dozens of five-star reviews. You don't need to be a technology genius. And you definitely don't need to pretend you're something you're not.

I started full-time house sitting at 56.

What you do need is to be **trustworthy, responsible, realistic about what you can handle, and prepared to learn** how the house sitting world works.

House sitting isn't free holidays – despite what certain platforms tout it as. You're taking responsibility for someone's home and, quite possibly, their beloved animals. But done well, it can be an incredibly rewarding way to travel, save money, meet wonderful people and animals, and create a lifestyle with a lot more freedom.

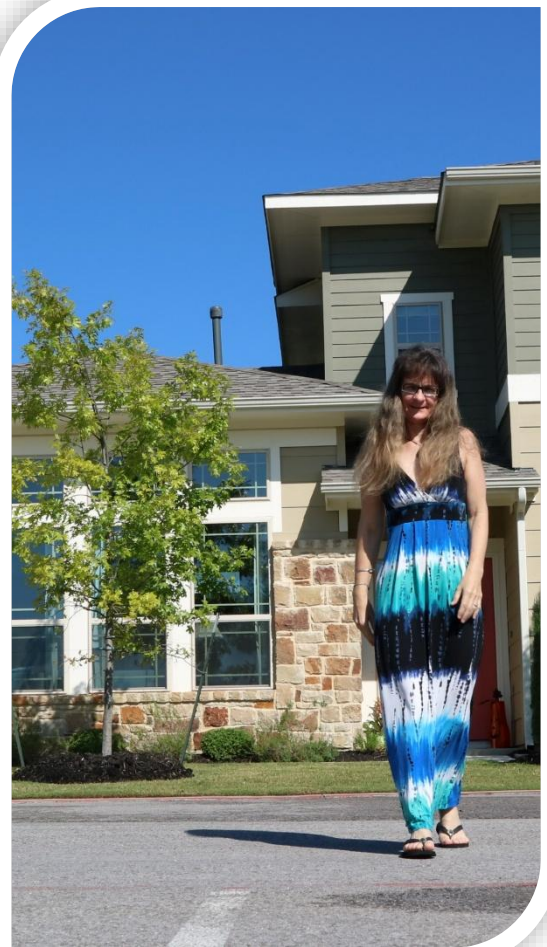
So, this *Guide* is **not** going to promise you a villa in Tuscany next Tuesday with Sergio the pool guy feeding you grapes and keeping the champagne topped up.

No hype. No magic formulas. No bullshit.

Just practical advice from someone who's actually done it, and is still doing it.

Welcome to house sitting.

Let's get you started. ❤️



FOR SITTERS GETTING STARTED & FINDING GIGS

How do I become a house sitter with no experience?

The good news is that you don't need a *Diploma in House Sitting*, a special uniform or a certificate proving you can locate the kettle. What you do need is a homeowner's confidence that you are trustworthy, responsible and capable of looking after their home and their much-loved pets.

And if you're worried that you're too old to get started, don't be.

Homeowners aren't necessarily looking for the youngest sitter they can find. They're looking for someone they can trust. Your life experience, experience managing a home, caring for animals, dealing with problems, and simply being a responsible adult can all work in your favour.

You don't have to compete with a 25-year-old backpacker. **You're offering something different.**

If you have no formal house sitting experience, start by thinking about the experience you *do* have. Have you owned pets? Looked after someone else's animals? Managed a home while friends were away? Been responsible for plants, gardens, pools or property?

All of that counts.

How do I escape the Catch-22?

Your first few sits may be the hardest to get because you don't have reviews yet. That's the annoying little chicken-and-egg problem: people want experience, but you need someone to give you experience before you can get it!

Start with shorter, manageable sits. Offer to house-sit for friends or family, or look for opportunities where the homeowner can get to know you before committing. Build a detailed profile, use good-quality photos and be honest about what you can and can't do.

Most importantly, remember that house sitting is about trust. Do not think of it as you are applying for free accommodation. You're asking someone to hand you the keys to their home and possibly their furry children. Act accordingly.

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

For my part, I started with the Trusted Housesitters platform (who I'm no longer with – more on that later) back in about 2010. Having said that, I house-sat for friends and family for years.

I can't remember exactly when that journey started, but I do remember I was house sitting a gorgeous floofball Persian kitty called Cappuccino when my Dad passed away, and that was 2002.

Tao get started on a platform, I sought out short, immediate sits in my hometown. The first one was a weekend sit I applied for on a Wednesday – and they were leaving on the Friday! They needed me far more urgently than I needed them.

They offered me the sit immediately, I took it, did an exemplary job, and scored my first five star review. I did that for two other local sits, earned two more five star reviews – and was then approached by a homeowner who wanted me to sit for them.

I was quite staggered at the difference just two or three five star reviews made.

What's the difference between house sitting and pet sitting?

Although people often use the terms interchangeably, house sitting and pet sitting aren't quite the same thing.

House sitting generally means staying in someone's home while they're away and looking after the property. That might include collecting mail, watering plants, putting bins out, keeping the house secure and generally making sure everything carries on as normally as possible. There may or may not be pets involved.

Pet sitting is specifically about caring for someone's animals. That could mean staying overnight, visiting once or several times a day, feeding pets, walking dogs, cleaning litter trays, giving medication and providing companionship.

There's plenty of overlap. A house sit with three dogs, two cats, chickens and a vegetable garden is definitely not just "sleeping in someone else's house"! Conversely, a pet sitter might simply pop in twice a day to feed a cat without staying overnight.

The biggest difference is really **what you're being asked to take responsibility for**.

If you're just starting out, think about what you actually want from house sitting. Do you want to travel and live in different places while caring for someone's home and pets? Would you prefer shorter local sits? Or are you interested in building a paid pet sitting business?

You don't have to decide everything at once. Start with the type of sitting that suits your lifestyle, experience, and comfort level.

Before agreeing to anything, make sure you know exactly what the homeowner expects. "*Looking after the house*" can mean very different things to different people. One person means "*please don't burn it down*" Another means "*the orchids require a humidifier at 7:15 every morning*".

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

Strictly house sitting gigs (i.e. no pets to look after) are extremely rare. I once looked up available house sits in the US on the Trusted Housesitters website. There were 3,514 sits across the US. When I put the "No Pets" filter on – the results dropped to just 3 sits. Like I said – **extremely** rare.

Do house sitters get paid, or is it just free accommodation?

This is one of those questions where the answer is: **it depends on the arrangement**.

Traditional house sitting, particularly through house sitting exchange platforms, often involves an exchange rather than payment. You provide care for the home and pets, and in return you get somewhere to stay. The homeowner isn't paying you a daily wage, and you're not paying them rent.

This is where house sitting can become particularly useful if you're looking to travel without blowing through your savings.

You aren't earning money from the sit, but you're potentially removing one of the biggest costs of travelling: **accommodation**.

Paid pet sitting is different. A professional sitter may charge for overnight stays, daily visits, dog walking, feeding, medication, or other services. Neither arrangement is automatically better; it depends on what you're trying to achieve.

If you're travelling and want somewhere to stay while exploring new places, an accommodation-for-care arrangement can be fantastic. If you're building a professional pet sitting business, you may instead want to charge for your time and expertise.

But here's the important bit: house sitting doesn't make everything else free. You'll still need to budget for food, transport, insurance, phone, internet if there's no wifi (it does happen!) platform memberships, flights/buses/trains if you're travelling to the sit, and all the other exciting expenses involved in being a functioning adult. So, think of house sitting as a way to **dramatically reduce your living or travel costs**, rather than a magic way to make money.

The important thing is to agree on the arrangement before the sit begins. Don't assume you're being paid because you call yourself a "*professional*" and don't assume everything is free because someone called it "*house sitting*".

And remember that "*free accommodation*" isn't free if you're spending your days looking after someone's animals, cleaning up after them, watering gardens and dealing with unexpected problems. There is always an exchange of value. The trick is making sure both sides understand what that is.

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

I keep my sitting as an exchange of services – but that's my personal choice. I have nothing against people who make a business out of it and charge a fee. And who knows – maybe one day I will charge too. But as a digital nomad I currently have other, far more lucrative, income streams.

How do I write a house sitting profile that gets me noticed?

Your profile needs to answer the homeowner's biggest question: "***Can I trust this person with my home and my pets?***"

If you're worried that your age puts you at a disadvantage, remember: **you aren't selling youth. You're selling trust, experience, reliability, communication, and common sense.** Your life experience is part of what you're offering.

A homeowner isn't necessarily looking for the youngest person available. They're looking for someone who will look after their home and animals responsibly, communicate if something goes wrong, and do what they said they would do. **Your life experience can be a genuine advantage.**

Have you owned pets? Managed a home? Travelled independently? Looked after animals? Dealt with unexpected problems? Held down a responsible job? All of that helps demonstrate that you're capable of looking after their home and pets.

Don't make your profile all about what **you** want. Yes, you may be looking for somewhere interesting to stay, but the homeowner wants someone who will make leaving home feel safe.

Tell them who you are, what experience you have, what animals you're comfortable with, and what sort of sitting you're looking for. Be specific. "*I love animals*" is lovely, but "*I've cared for dogs, cats, and elderly pets, and I'm comfortable administering medication*" tells a homeowner much more.

Use clear, recent photos where you look approachable and trustworthy. If appropriate, include photos with animals you've cared for. Do not include photos of you partying, drinking alcohol, or pulling duck lips at the camera!

Don't pretend you're capable of things you're not. If you've never cared for horses, don't tick the horse box because the property looks gorgeous.

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

I was approached by a homeowner to do a sit with four horses even though I'd had nothing to do with them, other than riding a Shetland Pony when I was 10.

But I was honest and upfront, and the homeowner was happy to teach me what I needed to know. At time of writing, I've completed three sits there, and am booked for a fourth.

Your profile should sell **reliability, communication, and genuine care**, not make you sound like you're auditioning for an episode of *House Hunters International*.

A homeowner doesn't need the world's most exciting sitter. They need someone who will notice that the dog is limping, the toilet is leaking, and the front door isn't locking – and actually **have enough common sense** to do something about it.

Honestly, some of the house sitting groups I'm in on Facebook are full of panicking people saying, "The toilet is leaking – what should I do?", "The dog is sick – what should I do?", or "The letterbox fell over – what should I do?".

If you can't manage those situations, or at least have the common sense to contact the homeowner rather than asking a group of strangers on Facebook, house sitting might not be for you.

Your profile doesn't need to make you look exciting. It needs to make a homeowner think, "I could trust this person with my home".

BAD SITTER PROFILES

These are public profiles I've found for sitters online.

About Me

Hey! I'm a digital nomad looking for a free place to stay in Sydney for a few months while I work on my startup. I love luxury apartments and need fast Wi-Fi and a dedicated workspace. Ideally looking for somewhere close to the beach and the nightlife scene.

Pet Care

I'm cool with dogs or cats as long as they don't require too much work or bark while I'm on Zoom calls. I don't really want to do any gardening or mail collecting, just looking to keep to myself and enjoy the city! Hit me up if you have a cool spot.

About Me

Hi, I am John. I am 28 and I am clean. I need a house sit from November onwards.

Pet Care

I like animals. I have looked after dogs before.

About Me

Hi everyone! I'm recently divorced and looking for a fresh start, so I'm turning to house sitting to figure out my next steps. I am a very spiritual person and like to burn sage to clear out negative energy in new spaces. I smoke occasionally but *only* outside on the porch, I promise!

Pet Care

Animals love me because I have a very calm aura. I don't believe in using leashes for dogs because it restricts their freedom, so I prefer sitting for pets that are well-trained enough to just follow me around.

How do I write an application that gets results?

Your application is your opportunity to turn your profile from ***“This person looks good”*** into ***“I think this is the person I want”***.

And remember, **you are not applying for every house sit**. You’re applying for **this** house sit, with **these** pets, on **these** dates.

Start by actually reading the listing. Yes, I know. Revolutionary. But so many applicants don’t do it.

If the homeowner has taken the time to tell you about their pets, their routine, their home, and what they’re looking for, show them that you’ve read it. Mention something specific from the listing rather than sending the same generic application to every homeowner you see.

Instead of:

“Hi, I love animals and would love to look after your pets. I’m reliable, trustworthy, and available for your dates.”

Try something more personal:

“Hi Sarah, your two Labradors sound gorgeous, and I’d love the opportunity to look after them. I noticed that Max needs his medication with breakfast, and that Bella is nervous around other dogs, so I’d be happy to keep to the routine you’ve described.”

Show them that you have already started thinking about their animals, not just their location.

Keep your application reasonably concise. Although some platforms limit applications to five at a time, Facebook posts may have a dozen or more applications to read, so don’t make them wade through your entire life story before they reach the important bit.

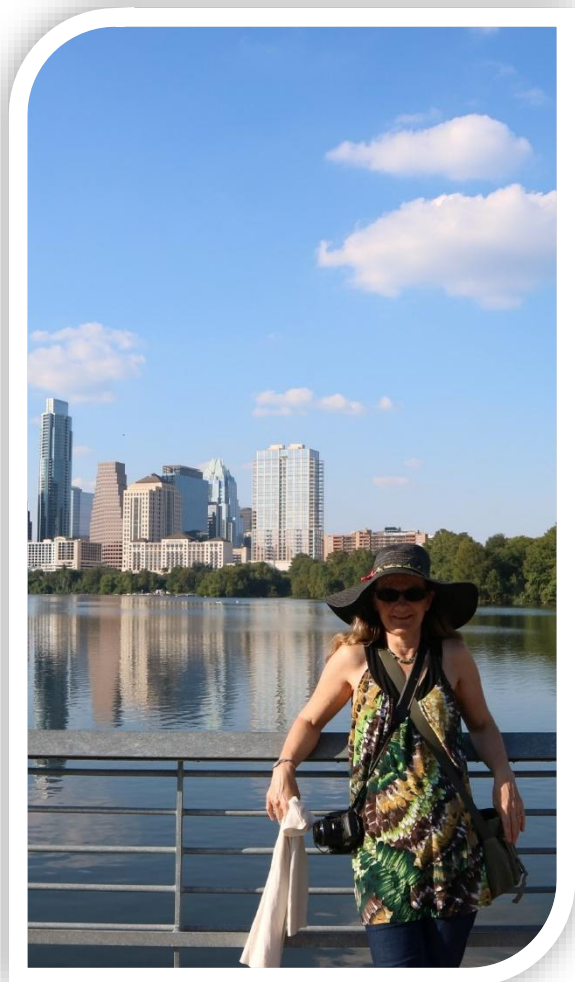
Tell them:

- why you’re interested in **this particular sit**
- the relevant experience you have
- anything in their listing that particularly caught your attention
- and why you think you’d be a good fit.

If you’re new and don’t have many reviews yet, **don’t apologise for it**. Instead, give the homeowner other reasons to trust you. Talk about your experience with animals, homes, travel, work, or responsibilities that demonstrate that **you are reliable and capable**.

And don’t pretend you’re an expert when you’re not.

If they’ve got three Great Danes and you’ve only ever looked after cats, don’t suddenly become a Great Dane specialist because the house has a swimming pool.



Be honest about what you can do, and enthusiastic about what you're willing to learn.

Finally, don't be afraid to let your personality show.

Your application doesn't need to sound like a job application written by a lawyer. You're going to be living in someone's home and caring for their beloved animals. They need to feel comfortable with you, not simply impressed by your résumé.

A warm, thoughtful, personalised application will usually do far more for you than a perfectly polished paragraph that could have been sent to any homeowner on the platform.

And one important mindset shift: You are not begging to be chosen. You're showing a homeowner why you could be a great fit for their particular sit. And you're also deciding whether **they** sound like the right homeowner for you.

BAD SITTER APPLICATIONS

These are applications I've seen from people for sits advertised in Facebook groups.

"Hi. We're two 18-year-old girls coming to Sydney for a few days. We're going to Taylor Swift on Friday night (OMG!!! So excited!!!), want to check out the Kings Cross nightclubs on Saturday night, and during the days we want to go to Taronga Zoo, The Rocks, and Bondi Beach. We would love to look after your home and pets for you while we're there."

"Hi. We're a couple from the UK whose daughter has just had our first grandchild in Brisbane. We want to come over for several weeks and help them manage a newborn, especially as our daughter endured a rough delivery so needs someone with her during the day while her husband is at work, and in the evenings to help out. Unfortunately, they do not have room for us to stay with them. So, we're giving a homeowner the opportunity to have us take care of your home and pets."

"Hi. I love dogs and cats and want to visit your area. I am very clean and reliable. Let me know if I can stay at your place. Thanks."

What questions should I ask a homeowner before agreeing to sit?

Ask lots of questions. Seriously.

This is not the time to worry about appearing difficult, fussy, or overly cautious. You're considering staying in a stranger's home and taking responsibility for their beloved animals. You need to know exactly what you're agreeing to **before** you accept the sit. And remember, **you are interviewing the homeowner, too.**

If you're new to house sitting, you might feel that you have to say yes to everything because you're desperate for that first review. You really don't.

A beautiful house in a fabulous location isn't worth accepting if the responsibilities, pets, or expectations aren't right for you.

Start with the pets:

- How many are there, and what are their ages and personalities?
- What are their feeding and exercise routines?
- Do any need medication?
- Are there behavioural issues I should know about?
- Are they escape artists?
- How long can they safely be left alone?
- What happens if they become sick or distressed while you're there?
- Are there any special routines or quirks?

Then ask about the house.

Are there security systems, pools, gardens, fireplaces, or anything else that requires regular maintenance? What happens with rubbish, mail, deliveries, and packages?

Ask about overnight stays and visitors. Can you have a partner or friend visit? Can someone stay overnight? Are there rooms or facilities you aren't allowed to use?

If you work remotely, **ask whether you can work from the house and what the internet connection is like.** If you're planning to travel by car, ask about parking. If you're relying on public transport, check that the location actually works for you.

Most importantly, ask about **how long the pets can be left alone.**

A homeowner saying, "The dog is fine for a few hours" is not nearly specific enough. Is that two hours? Six? Eight? Overnight?

Also discuss:

- emergency arrangements
- vet contacts
- payment or exchange arrangements
- cancellation
- who is responsible for unexpected expenses
- and what happens if something goes wrong.

If you're travelling to the sit from somewhere else, also make sure you understand **exactly when you can arrive and when you need to leave.** Don't discover on arrival that "the afternoon" means 2:00 p.m. to them and 6:00 p.m. to you.

And **trust your gut.** If the homeowner is vague, dismissive of your questions, reluctant to have a video call, or keeps adding responsibilities after you've agreed, those are warning signs.

I often see people complaining in Facebook groups about something they've encountered on a house sit, and my thought is usually, **"Did you not think to ask about that before you agreed to do the sit?"**

It's much easier to say "No thanks" **before** accepting a sit than halfway through it.

One final thing: Don't be embarrassed to ask questions.

A responsible homeowner should *want* a sitter who asks sensible questions. It shows that you're taking the responsibility seriously.

And if asking a perfectly reasonable question makes a homeowner uncomfortable, **that tells you something, too.**

Remember: being new doesn't mean you have to accept everything.



Which apps or websites are best for finding house/pet sitting jobs?

There isn't one magical website that is "the best". The right platform depends on **the kind of sitting you want, where you want to sit, and whether you're looking for an accommodation exchange or paid work.**

If you've found yourself staring at a dozen house sitting websites thinking, "*Which bloody one am I supposed to join?*", take a breath. **You don't need to join all of them.**

For many house sitting websites, or platforms, the basic model is generally an exchange: the sitter provides pet and home care and receives accommodation rather than a normal sitting fee.

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

I left Trusted Housesitters after many years as a member. As with Airbnb, I felt the move from private ownership to being owned by an equity company didn't do them any favours. I felt that while membership fees went up (and a new "per sit booking fee" was introduced, member support and customer service went down. It felt like the new company motto was, "Let's make money!"

I'm now exclusively with [Aussie House Sitters](#) and [Kiwi House Sitters](#), and I've had some great sits through both. My referral codes (so you get to sign up a little cheaper) are:

* **M2Y43H** for Aussie House Sitters

* **M9ZLDJ** for Kiwi House Sitters.

Should I venture overseas again, their sister sites include [House Sitter America](#), [House Sitters Canada](#), and [House Sitters UK](#).

For paid pet sitting, platforms such as Rover operate differently, connecting pet owners with people offering services such as boarding, house sitting, dog walking, and drop-in visits.

There are also local Facebook groups, community groups, independent pet sitting businesses, and word-of-mouth opportunities. **Don't underestimate word of mouth.** A happy homeowner can become your best marketing department without you having to pay them a cent.

I've also scored some amazing sits through Facebook groups. The drawback is that, unlike dedicated platforms, you generally won't have search filters for destinations, pets, dates, and other criteria.

So, where should you start?

Choose platforms based on the kind of sitting you actually want.

If you're primarily interested in travelling and reducing your accommodation costs, look at house sitting exchange platforms. If you're looking to earn money by providing pet-care services, investigate paid pet sitting platforms and local opportunities.

And if you're not sure yet, **start with one platform** rather than signing up for everything at once. Before joining, read the fees, insurance arrangements, cancellation rules, identity-verification requirements, and terms carefully.

And remember: **a website is only the introduction.** Once you're communicating directly with a homeowner, you're still responsible for asking sensible questions and deciding whether the particular sit is right for you. The fanciest platform in the world won't save you from accepting a sit involving six dogs, a swimming pool, and a 47-page care manual when you just wanted a quiet cat and a cup of tea.

BEFORE YOU SAY YES TO A HOUSE SIT

How do I know if a homeowner is trustworthy?

Remember: **you're interviewing the homeowner, too.**

Yes, the homeowner is deciding whether they trust you with their home and pets. But you're also deciding whether you're comfortable staying in their home and taking responsibility for their animals.

Start by reading the listing carefully. Does it clearly explain what's expected, or is it suspiciously vague? Are the number and type of pets, dates, location, and responsibilities clear?

Look at the homeowner's reviews if the platform provides them. Don't just count the stars. Read what previous sitters actually said.

Look for comments about communication, accuracy of the listing, cleanliness, the animals, and whether the homeowner was reasonable when something unexpected happened.

A bad review does not necessarily mean a bad home (or sitter)

If you're looking at a sit that has a bad review – look at their other reviews. If they have 10 x 5* reviews, and 1 x 3* review – that “bad rating” says more about that sitter than it does about the homeowner.

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

I once had a homeowner who insisted on me providing her with two contactable referees **after** we had a **one hour** video interview. I kind of knew from the first time she contacted me that if I took this sit, I would not get a 5 * review. And ... I didn't. It does my head in that I still took it primarily because the dates suited me perfectly.

But, yes, I was right – she gave me 4* for “House Care”, pretty rude considering I arrived to a house full of mould and peeling paint (carefully missing from the online photos). And she gave me 4* for “Garden Care” because I did not mow the lawns in the 10 days that I was there with a mower that didn't exist. You win some, you lose some.

Have a proper conversation before committing.

A video call is particularly useful. You're not conducting a police interrogation under a bare lightbulb, but you should get a feel for whether you can communicate comfortably.

Pay attention to how they respond to your questions.

A good homeowner should be happy to explain their expectations. If they become irritated because you want to know how often the dog can be left alone, who pays the vet if something goes wrong, or whether you're actually expected to mow two acres of lawn, that's worth noticing.

And listen to your gut.

If something doesn't feel right, you are allowed to say no. **A beautiful house, a great location, or a desperate need for a sit doesn't make a bad arrangement a good one.**

Trust works both ways. You're not just trying to convince someone that you're the right sitter.

You're deciding whether they're the right homeowner for you, too.

What should I agree with the homeowner before the sit?

You don't necessarily need a terrifying 19-page legal document written in language last used during the reign of Henry VIII, but you **do** need to know what you're agreeing to.

At a minimum, make sure you and the homeowner are clear about:

- **The dates and times** – including exactly when you arrive and when you're expected to leave. Many sitters stay overnight before the homeowners leave if they're caring for dogs – it makes a much easier transition for the animal.
- **The pets** – how many, their names, routines, feeding, exercise, medication, and any quirks or behavioural issues.
- **The house** – what you're expected to look after, including gardens, pools, plants, bins, mail, or anything else that isn't obvious – like the fuse box hidden in the back of a wardrobe stuffed with clothes.
- **Your responsibilities** – including how long pets can be left alone and whether you're expected to work from home or be at the property most of the time.
- **Guests or partners** – whether anyone else is allowed to stay or visit.
- **Emergencies** – who to contact, which vet to use, and what happens if something goes wrong.
- **Unexpected expenses** – particularly veterinary costs or urgent repairs.
- **Cancellation arrangements** – what happens if either of you needs to cancel or circumstances change (see Appendix 3 for further advice on cancellations.)

If you're using a house sitting platform, understand their terms and cancellation rules, too. But don't assume that ticking a box on a website means you understand what the homeowner expects.

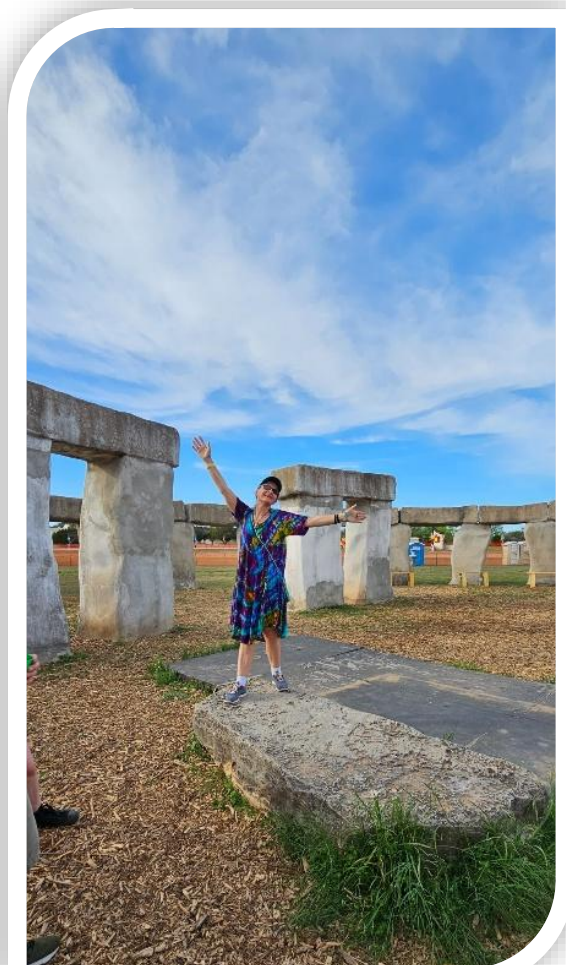
Get important details **in writing**. It's much easier to sort out a misunderstanding when you can refer back to what was actually agreed.

The golden rule?

If you'd be annoyed to discover it halfway through the sit, ask about it before you agree.

Because, "Oh, by the way, the three-acre paddock needs mowing every Tuesday" is information you really want **before** you arrive, not after you've unpacked your suitcase. 😊

If money is changing hands, specify the amount, payment dates, deposits if applicable, and what happens if either party cancels.



For more complicated arrangements, particularly paid professional services, consider getting appropriate legal advice about your agreement and local requirements.

The purpose isn't to create an atmosphere of suspicion. Quite the opposite.

A good agreement protects **both people** because nobody has to rely on memory when a disagreement arises. "I thought you said..." is not a particularly robust legal document.

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

I once had a homeowner who cancelled a confirmed sit after receiving my house sitting agreement. She took exception to the fact I requested a house free from mould and dust due to my allergies.

How far in advance should I book a sit?

There isn't a magic number. Some homeowners plan their holidays months ahead, while others seem to discover they're going away approximately five minutes before they leave. Some sitters look for a sit a few days before heading off; others are booked months, and even years in advance.

School holidays, Christmas, Easter, and major public holidays can be particularly competitive. Popular sitters may be booked well ahead, especially if they have regular homeowners who come back to them.

For an ordinary weekend, you may have much more flexibility. And when you're starting out, **last-minute sits can actually be a great way to get your first few reviews**. Remember, that's how I got my first sit. I applied on the Wednesday for a Friday departure, and they needed me far more urgently than I needed them.

There's another thing to consider: **a sit isn't just about the dates**. You need time to have a conversation with the homeowner, ask questions, meet the pets where appropriate, discuss expectations, and make sure the arrangement feels right.

If you're planning to travel somewhere specific, particularly popular locations during a busy period, start looking early. But don't assume that because you're looking at short notice, you've missed your chance. Sure, all the sits posted six months ago for Bondi Beach might have been snapped up the same day they were posted, but you never know when someone in the area has to suddenly go away for work, a funeral, or another unexpected event.

The important thing is to balance planning with flexibility.

You don't need your entire calendar filled six months in advance, although many of us do. You just need to know what works for you – and communicate it clearly.

Good planning makes everybody's life easier.

What information should I expect from a homeowner?

A good homeowner should give you enough information to manage an ordinary day without having to message them every 20 minutes.

Before they leave, you should know:

- **About each pet:** their name, age, food, feeding times, exercise routine, medication, quirks, and any behaviour you need to be aware of.

- **Emergency information:** their vet's details, preferred emergency vet, and who to contact if the homeowner can't be reached. Ideally, you should also know who has authority to make decisions in an emergency.
- **About the house:** security arrangements, Wi-Fi, heating and cooling, rubbish collection, appliances, pool or garden maintenance, and anything else you're expected to look after.
- **Where important things are:** the fuse box, water shut-off, cleaning supplies, pet carriers, leads, spare keys, and anything else you might suddenly need.
- **What NOT to do:** particularly anything that could put a pet, the house, or you at risk. If the dog must never go through the front gate, for example, you really want to know that before the front gate is accidentally left open!
- **How to contact the homeowner:** their preferred method of communication and what they consider urgent enough to call about.
- **How often they want updates on their pets:** Some homeowners expect hourly updates, most expect once a day or every two to three days, and some say, don't bother with updates, we'll see you in three weeks.

A written welcome guide is fantastic, but it shouldn't be your only source of information. Ask the homeowner to walk you through anything important before they leave, and ask questions if something doesn't make sense.

If information is missing, ask before the homeowner heads off. It is much easier to clarify something while they're standing in front of you than to discover at 9 pm that nobody told you where the dog food is!

What should I know about cameras in the home?

Cameras can be a bit of a minefield when you're house sitting, so it's worth finding out what you're dealing with **before you agree to the sit**.

External security cameras are one thing. They can be perfectly reasonable for monitoring entrances, driveways, gates, or other outdoor areas.

Indoor cameras are a different matter. They raise obvious privacy concerns, and there may also be legal requirements around recording, consent, and audio.

House sitting platforms such as Trusted Housesitters and Aussie and Kiwi House Sitters (and their sister sites) usually ban indoor cameras altogether. Check your preferred platform for their policy.

If a homeowner has cameras, they should be transparent about them. You should know:

- where the cameras are located
- what they record
- whether they record audio
- whether they are continuously recording or only activated at certain times
- what areas they cover.

Bedrooms and bathrooms are an absolute no-go. You should never feel as though you're living inside a reality television show while you're looking after someone's home!

If you discover cameras that the homeowner didn't tell you about, **stop and raise the issue with them**. Depending on the circumstances and the platform you're using, you may also need to contact the platform for advice.

The important thing is that you know about cameras **before you agree to the sit**, rather than discovering them halfway through your first night when wandering naked from the bathroom back to your bedroom because you forgot your towel.

What should happen before I'm handed the keys?

Before you arrive with your suitcase and the homeowner heads off into the sunset, there should be a proper conversation (and often more than one) about the sit.

A good homeowner should have had a chance to look at your **profile, reviews, references, and experience**, and you should have had the opportunity to ask questions about the home, pets, and what will be expected of you.

Don't be afraid to ask questions. You want to know what you're walking into **before you have the keys in your hand**, not after.

And remember: the homeowner is deciding whether they trust you with their home and pets, but **you are deciding whether you trust them, too**.

If something doesn't feel right, you don't have to accept the sit. It's much easier to say, *"Thanks, but I don't think I'm the right sitter for you"* before you've arrived than to discover you've made a terrible decision after the homeowner has gone.

A house sit should feel like a good fit for both sides. If it doesn't, walk away. There will be another sit.

What does a meet-and-greet involve?

Ideally, you should have a **meet-and-greet** before the sit. Logistically, an in person meet-and-greet might not be possible, but at the very least a video chat gives both of you a chance to work out whether you're comfortable with each other.

An in-person meet-and-greet isn't just about letting the pet sniff your shoes. It's an opportunity for **everyone** to work out whether the arrangement feels right.

You can see how the animal responds to you and learn about its personality. Is the dog enthusiastic? Nervous? Protective? Does the cat disappear underneath the furniture and refuse to acknowledge your existence?

The homeowner can see how you interact with the animals too.

It's also an opportunity to discuss practical things that don't always come across in a profile: how the dog walks, where the cat hides, whether medication is easy to administer, and what happens when someone rings the doorbell.

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

For dog-sits, whenever practical, I stay the night before the homeowner goes away – it makes the transition much easier on the dogs.

Rather than Mummy & Daddy walking out the door with their suitcases packed and dumping them with a stranger, they get to know me the day before, I stay the night, and by the morning, we're best buds and the sit is much easier for both of us.

Cats generally only want to know that you know where the food is.

Can I realistically handle this sit?

Before you get excited about the gorgeous house, the swimming pool, or the fact that it's five minutes from the beach, look carefully at what you're actually being asked to do.

Can you comfortably manage the number and type of animals? Are you physically able to do the required walks, garden work, pool maintenance, or other tasks? Are you confident handling medication or a dog who pulls on the lead? Can you cope with the amount of time the pets need company?

And be honest about your own preferences and limitations. You don't get extra points for accepting a sit that you're going to struggle with.

The right sit is one you can do well, not the one with the prettiest house.

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

After I accepted a house sit for two cats and seven chickens, after an in-person meet-and-greet in a spectacular house with incredible water views, the homeowner contacted me to say she'd also now have an eight-month-old Great Dane puppy when I did the sit.

Despite having years of sitting experience, and generally considering myself to have good common sense, I didn't even think to Google, "*How big is an eight-month old Great Dane puppy?*", I just read "*puppy*" and thought ... cute!

I arrived to 64 kgs of untrained "puppy". I pointed out a gap in the fence to the owner. She said it was nothing to worry about. He got out on day 1. He pulled me off my feet with ease. I messaged the homeowner to say I was increasingly worried about his behaviour towards the chickens. She said it was nothing to worry about. He then killed two chickens. After that, her daughter came and took him to her house.

In hindsight, I was too starstruck by the location, magnificent house, and incredible views to have stopped for a minute after she added the "puppy", and think, is this really going to work?

What are the red flags that should make me say NO?

Trust your gut: you are allowed to say no. Here are some red flags when asking about a sit:

- the homeowner won't properly discuss the pets/home
- they are vague or dismissive of questions
- responsibilities keep being added
- expectations aren't clear
- you don't feel comfortable
- something doesn't feel right
- you discover something important wasn't disclosed.

You don't need to prove that someone is a terrible person before deciding they're not the right homeowner for you.

A house sit is a two-way arrangement. You are trusting someone with your time, your safety, and sometimes your money and travel plans.

If it doesn't feel right before you accept, don't accept it.

Remember my story from the section *How do I know if a homeowner is trustworthy?* Yeah, there were red flags all over that sit, right from the get-go. **There will be another sit.**

LOGISTICS & PRACTICAL CONCERNS

Should I ask the homeowner for a welcome guide?

Absolutely – if they have one.

A good welcome guide can save you from having to remember a million little details on the first day of a sit. It might include information about the pets, emergency contacts, the house, security, Wi-Fi, rubbish, appliances, gardens, pools, mail, local services, and all those other things you suddenly need to know when the homeowner has driven off.

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

All the house sitting platforms I've been a member of offer free templates – although, to be honest, I'm yet to encounter a homeowner who's given me one – or even knows where to find it on the house sitting website.

So, don't panic if the homeowner doesn't have a beautifully formatted 14-page document with colour-coded tabs. The important thing is that you have the information you need. If they don't have a welcome guide, you can ask them to provide the relevant information in whatever format works for them.

And if they're struggling to know what to include, you can make life easier for everyone by giving them a template.

You can use the template in **Appendix 4: House sitting Agreement Template** to help make sure you've covered the important stuff before they leave.

Can I bring a guest or partner while house sitting?

Never assume. Ask first.

Whether another person can stay depends entirely on the homeowner, the platform rules, and the specific agreement. All the membership-based platforms I've belonged to say it's not allowed – **unless agreed to by both parties.**

A homeowner may be perfectly happy for your partner, friends, or family to stay. Another may have deliberately chosen a solo sitter because they don't want an additional person in their home.

There may also be insurance, security, or occupancy considerations.

The same applies to visitors. *"Can my friend pop over for dinner?"* is very different from *"Can my three friends stay for the weekend?"*

Discuss this before accepting the sit. Don't arrive with another person and announce, *"Surprise!"*

And if circumstances change after the booking – perhaps your partner suddenly needs somewhere to stay – ask rather than assuming.

This is one of those areas where common courtesy prevents enormous amounts of unnecessary drama.

Nobody wants to discover through the security camera that their carefully selected solo sitter has apparently moved in an entire football team.

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

As a full-time sitter, I always ask if I can have visitors – otherwise I'd never be able to have anyone over for lunch or dinner. I've never had anyone say no.

One homeowner even sent me a panicked text message a few days after I agreed to the sit saying, *"OMG! I just realised your Aunt and Uncle will be staying in our room. I've ordered new sheets online!!! Ours have holes in them where the dog chewed them. That would have been so embarrassing ha ha ha"*. Aussies! 🐾

I did once have my 81-year-old Mum arrive unannounced on my sitting doorstep on Christmas Eve for a week – a wonderful surprise but, obviously, not pre-approved by the homeowner.

But it was a third time repeat sit, their son was staying weekends on the premises (which they required my permission for), and he also had two friends turn up unannounced – so it was all good all round! And a GREAT Christmas!

DISCLAIMER

I sit mostly in Australia, and sometimes in New Zealand. Aussies & Kiwis are pretty friendly and welcoming, and often say something like, *"Sure, invite who you like"*.

Other countries and cultures may not be so open when it comes to allowing strangers visit their house while they're away.

However, if they do allow visitors, that doesn't mean throw wild parties for 50 friends!

What happens if something breaks or a pet gets sick while I'm sitting?

Things break. Pets get sick. Cars develop mysterious noises. Toilets occasionally choose violence.

The important thing is **how you respond**

For a minor household problem, contact the homeowner promptly and explain what's happened. Don't wait three days hoping the leaking tap will somehow develop a conscience.

For a pet emergency, the animal's welfare comes first. Follow the emergency instructions the homeowner provided and contact the appropriate veterinary service.

If you're unable to reach the owner, use the emergency contact or follow whatever authority you've previously agreed upon.

Keep the homeowner informed, particularly if the situation is serious.

If something breaks because of normal wear and tear, that's different from something being damaged through negligence or misuse. This is another reason written agreements matter.

Take photographs where appropriate and keep receipts for legitimate expenses.

And don't be embarrassed to tell the homeowner something has gone wrong. Most sensible people would rather hear, *"The washing machine has started making a noise that sounds like a helicopter"* than discover it themselves when they return.

The key thing is: don't panic, don't hide the problem, and don't wait and hope it fixes itself.

Communicate promptly and deal with the situation efficiently.

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

I've had a downpipe burst down the side of the house; a rabbit die of stroke / old age; a dog escape through a gap I pointed out to the homeowner that they absolutely guaranteed me he wouldn't get out; the automatic water troughs for the horses not filling up (on two sits!); the automatic gate not working and trapping me on the property; tripped over a Pomeranian and smashed a 20-year-old nautilus shell brought back 20 years ago from Malta by the homeowner; and many more ... incidents. Things happen!

How do I handle mail, plants, and packages while house sitting?

This should be discussed before the homeowner leaves.

Ask what they want you to do with their mail. Are you expected to bring it inside? Put it somewhere specific? Does anything need to be forwarded or opened?

The same applies to packages. Find out whether deliveries are expected, where they should be left, and whether you need to bring them inside.

If there's a pool, garden, vegetable patch, or other outdoor area you're expected to maintain, make sure you understand exactly what's involved. "Look after the garden" is not a particularly useful instruction.

Does that mean water the pot plants? Mow the lawn? Keep the entire vegetable garden alive through a Queensland summer? Those are rather different jobs!

If you're unsure about anything, ask before the homeowner leaves. It's much easier than trying to work out what they meant after they've boarded a plane.

Do I need to sign an NDA or liability waiver?

An NDA (non-disclosure agreement) deals with confidentiality. It may make sense in unusual circumstances where the homeowner has genuinely sensitive information, but most ordinary house sits shouldn't require one.

A liability waiver is different. It may attempt to limit responsibility for particular risks or losses. Whether such a document is valid or enforceable depends heavily on local law and the wording involved. Do not assume that putting something in a document automatically makes it legally bulletproof.

For ordinary house sitting, a straightforward written agreement covering responsibilities, pets, property, payment, emergencies, cancellation, and expectations is generally much more useful than burying everyone under legal paperwork.

If there are significant financial, business, or legal risks involved, get proper local legal advice.

And as a sitter, **don't sign something you don't understand simply because you're worried you'll lose the booking.**

Ask questions. A reasonable homeowner should be perfectly happy to explain what they're asking you to agree to.

A document designed to protect everyone is one thing. A document that basically says, "*You accept responsibility for anything that happens anywhere, ever, including acts of God, war, and possibly the neighbour's lawnmower*" is another.

What if I need to work while I'm house sitting?

If you work from home, run a business, freelance, or simply need to get some work done while you're sitting, **discuss this with the homeowner before accepting the sit.**

Ask whether there is reliable Wi-Fi and somewhere suitable for you to work. More importantly, find out what the homeowner expects in terms of your availability for the pets.

"Can I work from the house?" and *"Can I leave the pets alone for 8 hours while I work?"* are two very different questions.

If a dog needs company most of the day, for example, you may not be able to spend all day shut away in a home office. Likewise, if you have work calls or meetings, you need to know whether the environment will allow you to do that without interruption.

Be honest about your work requirements, too. If you need to be online at particular times, tell the homeowner before agreeing to the sit.

Working from the house doesn't automatically mean you're available to provide constant pet care, and being there doesn't automatically mean you can work uninterrupted.

The trick is to make sure **everyone's expectations match before you say yes.**

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

I've been a full-time house sitter since early 2023 and have worked remotely since 2013. The nature of my work as a technical writer and instructional designer, and the fact that my brain couldn't function for 8 hours straight meant I would often spread my 8 hours over a 14 or 16 hour day.

This allowed me plenty of time to take care of the animals, have cuddles, playtime, and go for walks during the day. Someone who's working strictly 9 to 5 might not be able to take house sits with animals that involve a lot of care and attention.

I always check if a home has Wi-Fi before accepting a sit. I arrived at one sit on an offshore island (where the technologically challenged homeowner had said she had Wi-Fi), to discover that no, she didn't have Wi-Fi.

She had no idea of the difference between Wi-Fi and mobile data. No worries, I thought, I'll just buy some extra data.

And ... my first week there, the cell tower for my provider was down. I get paid by the hour. I couldn't work for a week. That sit cost me \$3000 in lost income 🤦🏻.

I won't make that mistake again!

What if I become sick or injured during the sit?

Sometimes **you're** the one who gets sick or injured.

It's not something anyone likes to think about before accepting a sit, but you need to have a plan – particularly if you're looking after animals that can't simply be left alone.

If you become unwell, injured, or otherwise unable to carry out your normal responsibilities, **tell the homeowner as soon as practical.** If it's an emergency, deal with your own health and safety first and get appropriate medical help.

If you're still able to care for the pets but need to take things a bit easier, let the homeowner know what's happening. They may be able to arrange someone to help with walks, medication, or other tasks.

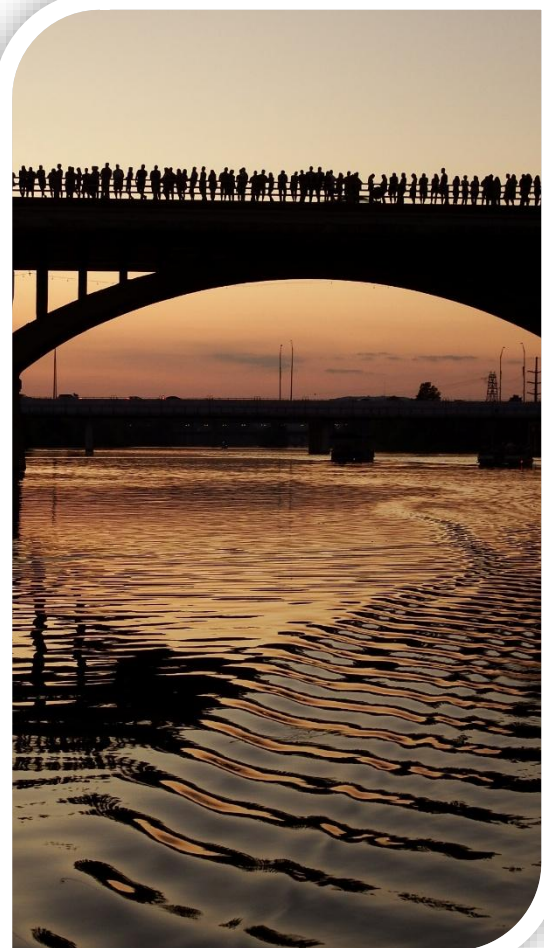
If you're too sick or injured to continue the sit, you may need to arrange alternative care for the animals. Contact the homeowner, any emergency contact they've provided, and the platform if you booked through one.

Don't simply disappear because you're feeling like death warmed up.

And this is another reason to ask questions **before** accepting a sit. If you're looking after three energetic dogs that need long walks twice a day, being laid up with a dodgy back is going to be a considerably bigger problem than if you're sitting for an elderly cat who spends 23 hours a day asleep.

Your health matters too. **You are not failing as a sitter because you've become genuinely sick or injured.** The important thing is to communicate promptly and make sure the animals are safe and properly cared for.

And, ideally, have a Plan B before you need one. Knowing who could step in, where the pets could go, and how to contact the homeowner can save an awful lot of panic when you're lying on the couch feeling like a wet noodle.



PET-SPECIFIC CONCERNS

How much time a day does a pet actually need?

There isn't one magic number because the answer depends on the individual animal.

A healthy, independent adult cat may cope well with one or two pats a day, depending on its routine and circumstances. But some cats need more companionship, medication, or monitoring.

Dogs generally need more frequent care because they need toilet breaks, exercise, and human interaction. Puppies, elderly dogs, dogs with medical problems, and dogs with separation anxiety may need substantially more attention. Yes, I'm looking at you my beloved Pomeranians and Cavoodles!

And of course, not all pets come with four legs and a wagging tail. You might find yourself looking after rabbits, guinea pigs, birds, fish, reptiles, horses, or other animals. Their needs can be very different from those of cats and dogs, so don't assume that a "*low-maintenance*" animal requires no care.

Ask the homeowner **exactly what is involved**: feeding, cleaning, exercise, handling, medication, temperature requirements, enclosure maintenance, or anything else that needs to happen while they're away.

A rabbit may not need a walk, but that doesn't mean you can forget about it until Tuesday. And if someone asks you to look after a horse, you probably want to establish exactly what "*looking after the horse*" involves before you enthusiastically say yes. 🤪

I heard of one couple who arrived at a farmhouse sit to find there was around 6 hours of work a day required to look after all the animals. Thankfully they were retired city dwellers and had "*the best time ever*" – but that situation certainly wouldn't suit all sitters.

The important question isn't simply, "*How much time?*" Ask: "*How long can this particular animal safely and comfortably be left alone?*"

That's the number that really matters.

A 20-minute play twice a day isn't automatically adequate if the dog spends the other 23 hours and 20 minutes miserable, bored, or lonely.

Likewise, some animals genuinely are perfectly happy sleeping most of the day and giving you a brief look of contempt now and then.

The sitter and homeowner should agree on the routine before the booking.

Consider age, health, temperament, exercise requirements, weather, medication, and any special needs.

And remember that "*the dog has a dog door*" doesn't necessarily mean "*the dog doesn't need you*".

You're not just providing access to a backyard. You're providing care and companionship.

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

There are no "normal" attention requirements for cats and dogs – each animal is different.

I've sat a very aloof Boxer who only accepted the occasional pat and didn't need walks as he had 12 acres to run on. Then straight to two Pomeranians, both quite needy, and one who would be happiest if I spent all day lying on the couch having cuddles.

I've had two cats of my own (plus lots of family cats). My two darlings were a Chocolate Burmese and a Maine Coon, and both required (demanded!) lots of attention and cuddles. Oh, I loved those cats! On the other hand, I've house sat an older cat who slept 23.5 hours a day, and 3 cats of whom 1 would happily cuddle, while the other 2 I barely saw in 3 weeks.

How do I handle a pet with separation anxiety?

First, understand that separation anxiety is not the same thing as a pet simply missing its owner.

Some animals experience genuine distress when their person leaves. They may bark, howl, pace, destroy things, try to escape, or become extremely anxious.

The most important thing is to follow the owner's established routine. Don't suddenly introduce a whole new training programme because you watched a pet-training video at 11pm.

Ask what normally helps. Does the dog sleep in a particular room? Need background noise? Have a favourite toy? Use medication prescribed by a veterinarian? Have restrictions around being left alone?

Keep the environment calm and predictable.

If the animal becomes significantly distressed, contact the owner and follow their instructions. If medication or veterinary intervention is involved, follow professional guidance.

Don't punish anxious behaviour. The animal isn't being naughty because it has decided to ruin your holiday. It's struggling.

And be realistic when accepting the booking. If the pet cannot be left alone for more than 30 minutes, that is an important requirement – not a minor footnote. You can not take that sit and then go sightseeing for 8 hours a day.

Separation-anxiety cases can be very rewarding, but they can also be demanding.

Sometimes the best thing you can offer is simply calm, consistent company.

And yes, this may mean discovering that your quiet afternoon at the café has been cancelled because your new four-legged supervisor has other ideas.

MAINTAIN THE ANIMAL'S REGULAR ROUTINE WHERE POSSIBLE

I heard of a sitter who left in the middle of a sit because he couldn't cope with "the totally untrained, howling dog". He complained in a Facebook group about it. The dog's owners were also in the group and gave their side of the story. The dog's regular routine (carefully spelled out in the sit listing) included a long walk at 6am followed by breakfast, noon and a snack, and 6pm followed by dinner, and many cuddles throughout the day. The dog slept between the owners in their bed at night.

The sitter got up around 10am, fed the dog, walked her around the block, went out sightseeing all day and often went to a restaurant for dinner, arriving home 9pm. He gave the dog dinner, then shut her in the lounge while he binge watched Netflix in the master bedroom and then went to sleep.

Thankfully the owners complained to the platform and this "sitter" (i.e. tourist bludging free accommodation) was removed from the platform.

I know of several sitters who are horrified at the thought of a dog sleeping in the bed with them – yet they apply to sits where it is clearly stated that is where the dog sleeps. If you don't want the dog sharing the bed – don't apply for the damn sit. It's totally unfair on the dog.

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

While a regular routine should be maintained, I don't believe "no routine" should be maintained while you are sitting.

On some of my house sits the homeowners are quite lax about any kind of routine for the dog. One sit stated: a couple of walks a day, breakfast between 7 and 10, dinner between 3 and 6. Whatever worked with their busy lifestyle juggling pet care with three kids and their sports activities.

I establish a routine as quickly as possible for the dog. They generally thrive on, and feel much more secure with, a predictable daily routine. Yes, they went back to chaos when their people returned, but that's fine. Being in the care of a stranger is cause for anxiety for many dogs – quickly establishing a regular routine helps them settle with "the stranger" who is now looking after them.

How do I administer medication to a pet I don't know well?

Medication should be treated as a serious responsibility.

Before accepting the sit, make sure you understand exactly what medication is required, the dose, timing, and method of administration. Ask the owner to demonstrate it rather than relying on a hurried verbal explanation.

If possible, practise while the owner is still there.

Some medications are simple tablets hidden in food. Others require liquids, eye drops, ear medication, or injections, and may require specific training.

Never guess a dose or alter medication instructions yourself. If you're uncertain, contact the owner, veterinarian, or other appropriate professional.

Keep a written record of when medication was given, particularly if more than one person is involved in the animal's care. Accidentally giving a second dose because nobody remembers who gave the first one is exactly the sort of mistake you want to prevent.

Store medication securely and follow any instructions about refrigeration or handling.

If the pet refuses medication, vomits after receiving it, or behaves unusually, contact the owner or vet for advice rather than improvising.

And be honest about your abilities before accepting the booking.

"It's only a tiny injection" is not something you want to hear after you've already agreed to look after someone's diabetic pet.

If the animal requires specialised medical care, the right sitter may be someone with appropriate experience or veterinary support – and that's absolutely okay.

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

I once sat a Cavoodle who required a daily tablet for her anxiety. The owner warned me that you had to lie her on her back on your lap and rub her throat until she swallowed, then check in her mouth to make sure the tablet went down.

On the last day of the sit I was vacuuming, tripped over the damn thing, and slammed into the couch that was on coasters. It rolled forward a foot – and there, under the couch, were 14 spat out tablets. Clever little minx.

What do I do if a pet escapes on my watch?

Pets can be accomplished escape artists, and I've known several who can squeeze through a gap half their body size – especially the floofy ones. One time on my watch a dog escaped when a workman left the front gate wide open, and another time a dog escaped through a gap the owner assured me he wouldn't fit through.

If a pet escapes and you notice straight away:

- secure other animals/property immediately (shut gates/doors etc). – you don't want Spot running off while you're getting Fluffy back inside
- don't chase a frightened animal blindly – coaxing works best (and often, food!).

If a pet escapes and there's no sign of it:

- contact emergency/local contacts
- contact local council/pound/lost-pet groups
- call police/animal control if a road or public safety issue is involved.

When to contact the owner depends on the circumstances. If it's midday where you are and 1am where they are, there's no point phoning the hotel's reception and demanding to speak to them when there's nothing they can do from there in the middle of the night except worry themselves sick.

On the other hand, don't post in the local Community Group about a lost dog and forget to inform the owners. They're probably in that same group and don't want to be sipping their G&Ts in Bali scrolling through Facebook and seeing Fluffy on the Lost Dogs page!

What do I do if a pet gets injured or sick on my watch?

Treat it as an emergency until you know otherwise.

First, assess the situation without panicking. If the animal is seriously injured, struggling to breathe, unconscious, bleeding heavily, has been poisoned, or otherwise appears critically ill, contact an emergency veterinarian immediately.

Follow the homeowner's emergency instructions and contact them as soon as practical.

If the situation isn't immediately life-threatening, contact the owner's nominated vet and get professional advice. Don't diagnose the animal yourself because Google told you that the symptoms could mean 17 different diseases.

Keep the owner informed. If they can't be reached, use the emergency contact they provided.

This is why a good handover matters so much. You should know the pet's vet, medical history, medications, allergies, and insurance information before the owner leaves. If veterinary treatment is required, find out in advance who has authority to approve treatment and what financial arrangements apply.

As a sitter, document what happened and keep receipts and veterinary paperwork.

Most importantly, **don't delay necessary care because you're afraid the homeowner will be angry about the bill.**

A responsible homeowner would rather have a healthy pet and a large vet bill than a cheap vet bill and a very sick animal.

Pets don't understand budgets. They just understand that something hurts.

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

I once rushed a dog to the vet with a very deep gash in her paw. The time zone the owners were in meant they wouldn't see a WhatsApp message for hours. It cost \$502. I paid. When I did manage to contact her, the owner said she wouldn't have bothered with the vet, but did reimburse me the money. However, they then did **not** tip me \$500 at the end of the month-long sit like they usually did, so essentially, I paid the vet bill.

What do I do if a pet dies on my watch?

This is one of those things nobody really wants to think about before a sit – but sadly, it can happen, particularly with elderly animals or pets with existing health problems. If it does happen, it's important to know ahead of time how the homeowner wants it managed.

If a pet dies unexpectedly, **don't panic and don't assume you did something wrong.** Animals can die suddenly, just as people can.

If there is any doubt about whether the animal has actually died, contact a veterinarian immediately rather than assuming. If the death is confirmed, contact the homeowner as soon as possible and follow their instructions about what to do next.

If the homeowner has previously given you instructions about what to do in the event of a pet's death, make sure you know where those instructions are before they leave. This might include who to contact, which veterinarian to use, or what arrangements they have made.

An important point: some homeowners might say to you, if Fluffy dies while we're away, this is how to manage it and please don't tell us till we get back. But in the next breath, "Please send a photo of Fluffy every day". Then they head off for a month. What are you expected to do if 19-year-old Fluffy pops his clogs on Day 2, and they're expecting you not to tell them but to send a photo every day? That's why my house sitting agreement explicitly states I will inform them.

If the death is unexpected, document what happened and when you discovered the animal. Keep any relevant veterinary paperwork or receipts.

And be prepared for the emotional side of it, too. **You may be the person who has to tell someone that their beloved pet has died while they were away.** That's a horrible conversation, and there's no magic way to make it less awful.

Sometimes, despite doing everything right, **things happen that are completely outside your control.**

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

I was house sitting for my sister and noticed one morning that one of the ears on the old rabbit was flopped over all funny.

I sent her a photo and asked if that was normal. She replied, "No, hang on ..." then "Okay, Google says she's probably had a stroke".

I took the rabbit to the vet, he confirmed a stroke, said if she's still alive tonight, pop her to sleep in the hot water cupboard and she'll likely pass peacefully in the night. That's what I did, and that's what happened.

I buried her in the back yard and stripped my sister's camellia bush to cover her with pink flowers.

Oh my gosh, that was years ago, and I'm crying now as I type!

How do I handle a pet with behavioural problems or aggression?

This is something you need to know about **before you accept the sit**, not after the homeowner has driven away and you discover that Fluffy has opinions about strangers, other dogs, the postie, and anyone who comes within three metres of her food bowl.

Ask the homeowner about any behavioural issues **before** agreeing to the booking.

That includes aggression, biting, fear, resource guarding, destructive behaviour, escaping, problems with other animals, or anything else that could affect your ability to care for the pet safely.

Ask what triggers the behaviour, what normally happens, and how the homeowner manages it. If possible, see the behaviour for yourself during a meet-and-greet.

Be particularly clear about whether the pet has ever bitten or injured someone. "*He's a bit funny around strangers*" can mean very different things to different people.

And be honest about what you can handle. You don't have to accept a sit involving behaviour that makes you uncomfortable or that you don't have the experience to manage.

If a pet displays unexpected aggression or seriously concerning behaviour while you're sitting, prioritise your safety and the safety of others, keep your distance, contact the homeowner, and seek appropriate professional help if necessary.

Never assume you can fix a behavioural problem during someone else's holiday. You're there to care for the animal, not become its unpaid behaviourist.

WHEN TO GET OUT

Online pet sitting forums will sometimes have posts from sitters reporting owners who withheld or misrepresented critical information regarding **aggression, severe separation anxiety, destructiveness, or medical issues** just to secure a booking.

If a situation becomes unsafe or unmanageable, sitters booked through a platform are advised to contact support or emergency contacts to cancel the booking immediately for their own safety.

For privately arranged sits, contact the homeowner or, if you can't reach them, their emergency contact.

Not all bad situations mean you should get out – see my story on the next page.

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

On one sit, after I came home from the supermarket the first time I could not find the dog anywhere. I was starting to panic, so decided to take 5 mins to put the groceries away to calm myself down. When I removed the last bag from the bench, I found I'd plonked it down on a note from the homeowner's sister, who lived next door and had a house key.

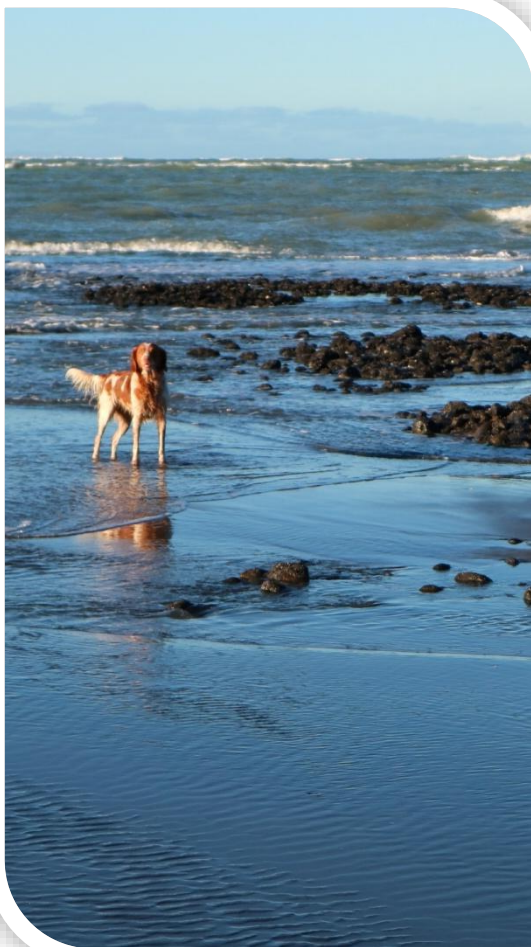
"Hi, I've got Dawn. She was howling blue murder."*

The homeowners hadn't mentioned this behaviour because – they had never encountered it. They got her as a puppy during lockdown, and she had never been without one or both of them. Being alone was not something she'd ever encountered before – and she was experiencing it for the first time on top of Mummy and Daddy going away and leaving her with a stranger. I couldn't even go to the letterbox without her or the howling would kick off.

Now, I'm pretty much a homebody on my sits – but – I did need to at least be able to go to the supermarket. So, I contacted the owner, and she arranged for me to text her sister any time I needed to go out for a short while. Then I'd simply pass the dog over the fence. They also arranged for me to drop the dog off for an entire day once a week two houses up the street, although I only took that offer up once (day trip to Currumbin Sanctuary!).

And yes, I'm going back to sit her again! It's a stunning house on the Gold Coast canals, and other than the supermarket, all my outings are to the park (with the dog) or to the beach (with the dog).

* Not her real name 🌈



TRUST, SAFETY, & REVIEWS

What should I look for in reviews when choosing a house sit?

A good review gives you evidence that another sitter had a positive experience with that homeowner.

But don't look only at the star rating. **Read the actual comments.** Look for patterns. Do sitters repeatedly mention good communication? Clear expectations? Accurate information about the pets and house? Did the homeowner respect the sitter's time and boundaries? Did they deal well with helping the sitter through any unexpected problems?

Also look at whether the reviews are relevant to the sit you're considering. A homeowner with 20 excellent reviews from sitters looking after their old cat isn't necessarily the right fit if you're considering a sit with their current three high-energy dogs. Likewise, a homeowner with glowing reviews may still have expectations that don't suit you.

And remember that reviews are written by humans. They're subjective and occasionally influenced by expectations, misunderstandings, or personality clashes. Also, even though the house sitting platforms operate their reviews under a blind system (i.e. the sitter and homeowner don't see each other's reviews until both are written, or 14 days has passed) many sitters still fear a bad rating if they don't give a 5* review, so dole out 5* reviews at less than salubrious sits.

One negative review among dozens of excellent ones isn't necessarily a deal-breaker. There are, unfortunately, entitled sitters out there who will give a homeowner a bad review because they left a few dishes in the dishwasher when rushing out the door at 4am to catch their flight.

Look at the circumstances and whether there's a pattern. Also check whether they responded to that bad review. If they calmly told their side of the story, which makes you realise they had a nightmare sitter, then all good. If they attack back and abuse the sitter, perhaps look for another sit.

Ultimately, **reviews are evidence, not a guarantee.** Your own conversation with the homeowner still matters. And what matters to you might not matter to other sitters. I personally couldn't give a toss if I arrive to find dishes waiting to be put away, or a towel in the laundry basket. But hoo boy, I've seen some sitters kick off about the most minor of "issues" in Facebook groups.

How do background checks work, and should I get one?

A background check can be useful, particularly if you're trying to reassure a homeowner that you're trustworthy. But it isn't a magical certificate declaring you to be a Perfectly Trustworthy Human™ who won't steal the silverware. Honestly, a background check just proves someone never got caught doing anything shady, it doesn't mean they haven't done anything shady.

And people change. Criminal record does not = bad person. Would you be willing to house sit for Reese Witherspoon, Winona Ryder, Tim Allen, or Danny Trejo? They all have criminal records.

Different platforms and services offer different types of checks. They may verify your identity or search certain criminal or court records, depending on the country and the service being used.

If you're using a house sitting platform that offers background checks, it's worth understanding **what the check actually covers**, how current it is, and whether it's optional or required.

But don't assume that having a background check means you automatically have a trustworthy profile. It's just one piece of the picture.

Your profile, references, reviews, communication, conversations with homeowners, and the way you conduct yourself all contribute to building trust.

And the same applies in reverse: **a homeowner asking sensible questions about you isn't necessarily being suspicious.** They're considering handing a stranger the keys to their home and responsibility for their pets. That's a **huge** thing to trust a stranger with.

My best advice is always do a video chat (or an in-person meet-and-greet) with a potential host and trust your gut.

How do I stay safe when meeting a homeowner for the first time?

Most people you meet through house sitting platforms will be perfectly ordinary people looking for someone they can trust with their home and pets. But you're still meeting a stranger, so a few sensible precautions are worthwhile.

Whenever practical, have a video call before agreeing to the sit. It gives you an opportunity to talk properly, see the homeowner, ask questions, and get a feel for the arrangement.

If you're meeting in person, tell someone you trust where you're going and who you're meeting. You might also arrange to check in with them afterwards.

Pay attention to how the homeowner communicates. Are they happy to answer reasonable questions? Do their answers match what was in the listing? Do they respect your boundaries?

And trust your gut. If something feels wrong, **you don't have to accept the sit.** It is much easier to say no before you have committed than to try to get yourself out of an uncomfortable situation after the homeowner has gone away.

A meet-and-greet isn't an audition where you have to "win". It's a compatibility check.

You're deciding whether you trust them, just as they're deciding whether they trust you.

And if your gut is screaming "**RUN!**", please don't silence it because you really wanted that lovely beachside sit.

What should I do if a sit goes wrong?

House sitting doesn't always go perfectly. Maybe the homeowner's instructions weren't as clear as you expected, communication breaks down, something in the house isn't working, or you discover that the reality is rather different from what you agreed to.

First, **make sure you and the animals are safe.**

If something goes wrong, stay calm and document what's happening. Take photos if appropriate, keep relevant messages, and make a note of important conversations or events.

Contact the homeowner as soon as practical and explain the problem clearly. Give them an opportunity to help resolve it.

If you booked through a house sitting platform and the problem involves the booking, agreement, safety, or platform rules, contact the platform's support team as well.

If an animal's welfare is at risk, **deal with that first.** Follow the emergency arrangements you were given and seek appropriate veterinary help if necessary.

There's also a difference between an awkward or disappointing sit and an unsafe one. Not every disagreement means you need to abandon the booking – but you should never feel that you have to remain in a situation that puts you, another person, or an animal at serious risk.

And remember: **no house sit is worth putting yourself in danger.**

If something feels seriously wrong, trust your judgement, seek appropriate help, and get yourself somewhere safe.

GET OUT IF YOU NEED TO

I've never had a sit turn bad ... partly because I do my research before the sit, and partly because I've never encountered any lying homeowners. They're not common, but they do exist. They either lie, or don't tell the whole truth, because they're desperate to find a sitter. Here are several examples I've seen in online forums.

An American couple arrived at a lovely French farmhouse to sit for two dogs – only to discover the owner's 92-year-old grandmother, who the woman and her husband provided full-time care for, was staying at the property. The owners expected the sitters to take on those duties – including toileting and showering the old woman. The sitters left promptly.

A widely shared nightmare scenario involved a sitter discovering that the homeowners left no care notes for the animals, but did leave active surveillance cameras pointed directly at the bedroom and bathroom, completely eliminating any expectation of privacy.

A user on RoverPetSitting shared a story of a sit where they meticulously took care of a poorly behaved dog and constantly sent photo updates. Despite doing a great job, the owner left a scathing, entirely fabricated review claiming the sitter never even showed up, using the lie to dispute the credit card charges and get a free vacation

On forums like Quora, sitters have shared stories of “scope creep”, where homeowners leave a massive, hidden list of intense chores (like deep cleaning or polishing shoes). Worse, if anything goes wrong with the house naturally, like a pipe leaking or an old appliance breaking, hostile owners have been known to turn aggressive and unfairly blame the sitter.

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

Encountering a bad situation doesn't always mean you need to get out. On a sit in Seattle, I arrived at the one bedroom apartment to find it spotlessly clean. After the homeowner left, I went to use the ensuite and nearly choked.

The indoor-only cats had a deep dish kitty litter in there ... and it was soaking wet through all six inches of litter. The smell of ammonia was quite overpowering. I went across the road to QFC, bought a large garbage bag, fresh kitty litter and liners, and room deodoriser, and spent an hour cleaning it all out.

The smell was still so strong I had to close the door to the bedroom/ensuite, open the sliding doors to the veranda from the bedroom, and sleep on a La-Z-Boy in the living room for two nights until the room aired out.

AUNTY KAZ FACEBOOK * AUNTY KAZ TIKTOK

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Getting paid for house sitting

How much should I charge for house sitting per day/visit/pet?

There isn't one universal pet sitting price, because you're not really charging for "a day". You're charging for a combination of time, responsibility, location, number of animals, and services provided.

A quick drop-in visit to feed a healthy cat is obviously very different from spending 24 hours with three dogs, administering medication, walking them twice a day, and sleeping at the property.

When setting your price, consider how much time the job actually takes, whether travel is involved, how many pets you're caring for, whether there are special requirements, whether you're staying overnight, and whether you're providing additional services.

Established house and pet sitting platforms or people who call themselves "professional" house sitters can give you a useful starting point, as you can see what other sitters in your area are charging for similar services.

Don't simply choose the cheapest price because you're worried nobody will book you. Extremely low prices can actually make people wonder whether you have much experience. And remember – while you might pay \$50 for a pair of jeans, some people in the world pay \$20,000.

If you're making a business out of house sitting, don't forget the hidden costs: petrol, transport, supplies, insurance, taxes, platform fees, and the opportunity cost of committing yourself to someone else's schedule.

Most importantly, be crystal clear about what your standard fee includes and what costs extra.

A good pricing structure makes life much easier. You don't want to discover halfway through a two-week booking that "pet sitting" apparently also means mowing three acres and cleaning the pool.



Appendix 2: House sitting as a business

Do I need insurance or certification to pet sit professionally?

You may not need a specific qualification just to call yourself a pet sitter, but that doesn't mean you should operate without protection.

Insurance requirements and available policies vary depending on where you live, the services you're providing, and whether you're operating as a business.

Public liability insurance can be particularly important because you're working with animals and inside other people's homes.

You should also understand exactly what any platform's insurance or protection arrangements cover. Platform protection isn't necessarily the same thing as having your own comprehensive business insurance.

Certification can be useful, too.

First-aid training for pets, animal-care courses, and relevant experience can make you more confident and may make potential clients more comfortable. But a certificate isn't a substitute for common sense.

If you're running pet sitting as a genuine business, also look into your local requirements around business registration, taxation, and record keeping.

My general rule would be: **take the responsibility seriously before you take the money.**

You're potentially responsible for someone's beloved animal, their home, and their possessions. That's a lot more serious than being paid to pop in and refill a food bowl.

And if something goes wrong, *"But I've been on the internet for six months and watched 17 dog videos"* probably isn't going to impress an insurer.



Appendix 3: Cancellations

Plans change. Life happens. Always have a Plan B.

THE SOCIAL MEDIA NIGHTMARE OF ENTITLED SITTERS

From some of the entitled sitters kicking off online, you'd think everything in life always has to go 100% smoothly. I copped comment after comment from one entitled sitter (I'll call her Letitia – not her real name) on Facebook after I commented, "Plans change. Life happens. Always have a Plan B." until I eventually blocked her.

Letitia believed there was not a single circumstance in which a homeowner should cancel a sit. Ever. I gave her several real-life examples – these are just two, and her responses.

The husband died on holiday and the wife had to come home to manage the return of his body and organise the funeral. Letitia believes the wife should have allowed the sitter to stay in the home while she was dealing with all that.

A homeowner broke their leg on week one of a month-long ski trip and had to come home early. Letitia said they should have paid for the sitter to stay in a hotel for three weeks.

She only saw this as a one-way thing. When I pressed her about whether a sitter who cancelled at short notice should pay for a sitter for the homeowners, she scoffed, of course not – they can go away another time.

First, we'll look at cancellations for exchange-based sits, then we'll address paid sits.

What should you do if you need to cancel a sit?

If you need to cancel a house-sit, the most important thing is to tell the homeowner as soon as possible. The earlier they know, the more time they have to find a replacement sitter or make other arrangements for their home and pets.

If the sit was through a membership-based platform, make sure you cancel the sit in the app or on the website as soon as possible, so it frees up their listing for new applications. They can't have an open listing or receive new applications while you're still booked in.

Contact them directly by phone or message rather than leaving it to email alone, and be honest about why you can't go ahead. You don't need to share every personal detail, but a clear and sincere reason goes a long way.

Apologise for the inconvenience and take responsibility. Homeowners often plan trips, book flights and arrange pet care around a confirmed sitter, so cancelling affects them more than it may seem.

Where you can, offer to help find a solution. This might mean recommending a trusted sitter from your network, sharing the listing in house sitting groups, or offering to speak with the owner about alternatives. If you've already received keys, instructions or gifts, arrange to return them promptly.

If you're using a house sitting platform, update your calendar and notify the platform if required, since last-minute cancellations can sometimes affect your profile or reviews.

Finally, learn from the experience. A respectful, prompt and helpful cancellation can protect your reputation and may even leave the door open for future sits with the same homeowner.

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

I cancelled three sits in 2025 after being diagnosed with breast cancer and given dates for surgery, radiotherapy, and allowing time for recovery. I contacted all homeowners immediately, and all were very understanding and kind, and all, ultimately, found replacement sitters easily.

What do you do if the homeowner cancels the sit?

If a homeowner cancels your house-sit, the first thing to do is stay calm and professional.

Cancellations happen for many reasons, such as changed travel plans, illness, or an emergency, and responding graciously protects your reputation and your chance of future sits.

If the sit was through a membership-based platform, ask the homeowner to cancel the sit in the app or on the website as soon as possible so it frees up your availability for other applications. **This is particularly important** as the booking systems **prevent you from applying for other sits** that clash with existing booked dates.

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

I had a repeat sit booked at the house of the over-anxious dog for 2024. The owners were leaving on a Monday. The wife phoned in a flood of tears on Friday having just been rushed into hospital with suspected double-pneumonia, and they'd had to cancel their overseas holiday. She felt terrible cancelling on me, and I was like, OMG woman, you're in the hospital! Don't worry about me. Ironically enough, this was one of the homeowners I cancelled on the following year when I was diagnosed with breast cancer. But we have a repeat sit going ahead next year, fingers crossed.

Next, update your own plans. Let anyone relying on you know, adjust your calendar, and cancel any bookings you can still get refunds on.

Then work on filling the gap. Reach out to other homeowners, check listings for last-minute sits and let your network know you have availability. Flexible sitters are often in demand at short notice.

MY HOUSE SITTING JOURNEY

I've had several sits cancelled over the years and, without exception, I've always found replacement sits – including for the example above cancelled at three days' notice. Often, the replacement sits have been better, like the time I had a booking for a month-long sit with no car on a remote island cancelled and replaced it with two fortnight sits on the same island in two different towns and both left me a car to use.

Whenever I see an entitled sitter ranting on Facebook about “these inconsiderate homeowners” who've cancelled the sit because they got sick or sold the house or someone died, I think, in the time it took you to write that rant publicly showing everyone that you don't have an ounce of compassion, you probably could have found a listing and applied for a replacement sit.

Finally, leave the door open. Thank the homeowner for letting you know, wish them well, and mention you'd be happy to help another time. A positive reaction can lead to future sits and a strong review.

What if money is involved?

If money is changing hands, you should have a cancellation policy that is **clear, fair, and agreed before the booking**.

The closer a client cancels to the sitting dates, the harder it may be for you to replace that booking. That's particularly true during Christmas, school holidays, and other peak periods when savvy homeowners have already booked their sitters months ago.

A policy might, therefore, have different rules depending on how far in advance the cancellation occurs.

For example, an early cancellation may receive a full refund, while a last-minute cancellation may result in some or all of a deposit being retained. A fairly similar cancellation policy to what hotels have.

But don't blindly copy someone else's policy. Consider your circumstances, local consumer law, and any rules imposed by the platform you're using.

Also distinguish between **cancellation** and **emergencies**.

A genuine family or medical emergency may need a degree of flexibility that an ordinary change of mind doesn't.

You might have a policy in place that says you don't give refunds for last minute or after-sit-start cancellations, but you also might show some compassion and waive that if someone dies.

Whatever policy you choose, put it in writing. The worst possible time to negotiate cancellation terms is after someone has cancelled.

That's when everyone suddenly develops very strong opinions about what the words "non-refundable deposit" mean.



Appendix 4: House sitting Agreement Template

Feel free to copy and paste my template below and adjust to suit the requirements for your sit.

DISCLAIMER

This is not a legally binding contract or intended as legal advice. It is simply a practical template to help a homeowner and sitter agree on the important stuff before the sit.

HOUSE SITTING AGREEMENT

Homeowner's details

Name
Address
Email
Phone
Departure date
Departure time
Return date
Return time
Flight Details
OR Not Applicable

SPECIAL NOTE: If flying back from overseas, please book me until THE DAY YOU RETURN, not the day you leave the country you're visiting – which is often a date one (or even two) days before you arrive home.

Homeowner's Emergency Contact(s)

Contact 1 Name
Relationship to you
Phone number
Contact 2 Name
Relationship to you
Phone number

Sitter's Contact Details

Name
Address
Email
Phone

Sitter's Emergency Contact(s)

Name
Phone
Name
Phone

Services Emergency Contacts

Vet

Name
Address
Phone

Council/Pound for lost dogs

Phone

Any local Lost & Found Pets/Community Groups on Facebook

URL

Police (local station number)

Phone

Plumber

Name
Phone

Electrician

Name
Phone

Snake catcher

Name
Phone

Gardener/lawnmower

Name
Phone

Pool technician

Name
Phone

Alarm/security company

Name
Phone

Property manager/building super

Name
Phone

Daily mealtimes/amounts

Breakfast
Lunch
Dinner
Snacks

Sleeping arrangements

Please let me know where you would like the pets to sleep. I will adhere to their regular routine.

Are there any additional details I need to know about sleeping arrangements?

Are your pets allowed on the furniture? YES NO Some furniture as detailed below

Pet Updates

How often would you like to receive updates/photos of your pets while you are away?

Several times a day Once a day Once every 2-3 days Once a week No updates required

What is your preferred method of contact while you are away?

Email Messenger Phone Text WhatsApp

Please note, if selecting 'Text' I can only send short updates and no photos.

Home and surrounds information

Unlimited Wi-Fi available YES NO

Please note: If I arrive and find there is no Wi-Fi, I cannot stay at the sit. I cannot work without Wi-Fi.

Wi-Fi Network

Wi-Fi Password

Parking

Rubbish day(s)/colours

Red

Yellow

Green

Blue

Home and surrounds care and maintenance

Location of cleaning supplies

Plant/lawn care instructions

Pool care instructions

Location of water mains

Location of fuse box

Location of gas cylinder

Any other notes about home and surrounds care and maintenance?

Home appliances

When I arrive, please ensure we cover (if necessary) how to operate all the following appliances: Washing machine, Dryer, TV, Stove/oven, Microwave, Heat pump, etc. Some of those new fangled ovens – oh my gosh darn!

In case of Rainbow Bridge

Please see the last page for the Rainbow Bridge poem if you don't know it

If the worst case scenario happens and your pets leave for Rainbow Bridge, **I will let you know while you are away.** In the event of a tragedy, it is too difficult for me to lie and pretend everything is fine.

How would you like me to take care of your passed pet?

Is there a Rainbow Bridge Contact Person that is different from your Emergency Contact Person?

Are there any additional details about laying your pet to rest?

If you would like anyone local to be informed of their passing, please supply their contact details.

Name

Phone

Pre-arrival requests

[Rewrite this section to suit your own requirements – and with your own examples where necessary]

I will take exceptional care of your home while I'm living in it. In return, I'd appreciate it if your place is clean and tidy when I arrive. I know this makes me sound like a high-maintenance diva, but, sadly, it's all from hard-earned experience at previous house sits, so please take note of the following.

There is no mould in the house

*I am **severely** allergic to mould – if there is mould, I cannot stay!*

The house is clean, including:

- no rotten food in the fridge/cupboards
- vacuumed and/or mopped floors
- clean benches and tabletops
- a clean oven, stovetop, fridge (rotten food!), and shower.

At three previous house sits the ovens were so dirty they set off the smoke alarms when I tried to preheat them. I've also encountered a vegie bin full of rotten food, massive amounts of hair in the shower, and laundry racks with drying underwear full of holes in the living room.

There is clean linen on the bed I will be sleeping in

I've encountered sheets and doonas/duvets with large holes in them, dirt, and/or mould, dried vomit, and blood stains (shudder).

There is room in the fridge/freezer for me to put at least a week's worth of food

On one sit on an island, I ordered my groceries online – including a month's worth of meat. I should have checked first, but when I went to put it away, I couldn't squeeze a single sausage into the freezer. At least I got to meet the neighbours on either side and across the road – I invited them all over for a BBQ 🍷🍷 Fun, but awfully expensive!!!

Kitty litter is fresh and cleaned, and there is enough for the duration of the sit

On one sit I gagged upon arrival. 6 inches of kitty litter – and wet all the way through. Eye-watering! I spent \$30 on garbage bags, kitty litter, and disinfectant, and cleaned it all out. Even so, the lingering smell in the bedroom was so strong I had to sleep on a La-Z-Boy in the living room for two nights and leave the bedroom door to outside wide open. Weirdly, the rest of the apartment was spotless.

During sit requests

Please ensure the following:

- There is enough food for your pets to last the length of the sit (or cash to buy more)
- There is enough kitty litter to last the length of the sit
- The dog(s) have a proper walking harness, not just a collar

I have had three dogs slip their collars and run straight onto the road. I really don't want that fright again. Collars are often not secure enough for clever dogs.

Other final notes from me

Please don't worry about feeding me – I have way too many food allergies for you to deal with 🍌🍌

I bring all my own food. I'm allergic to caffeine, so your coffee supplies are safe from me, and I won't steal your alcohol – I've heard some horrific stories such as the sitters who drank a \$1,000 bottle of Champagne, and others who cleaned out an entire wine cellar in a week.

Other final notes from you

Are there any final notes you would like to add about the sit, or questions you have for me?

Rainbow Bridge

Just this side of heaven is a place called Rainbow Bridge.

When an animal dies that has been especially close to someone here, that pet goes to Rainbow Bridge. There are meadows and hills for all of our special friends so they can run and play together. There is plenty of food, water and sunshine, and our friends are warm and comfortable.

All the animals who had been ill and old are restored to health and vigour. Those who were hurt or maimed are made whole and strong again, just as we remember them in our dreams of days and times gone by. The animals are happy and content, except for one small thing; they each miss someone very special to them, who had to be left behind.

They all run and play together, but the day comes when one suddenly stops and looks into the distance. His bright eyes are intent. His eager body quivers. Suddenly he begins to run from the group, flying over the green grass, his legs carrying him faster and faster.

You have been spotted, and when you and your special friend finally meet, you cling together in joyous reunion, never to be parted again. The happy kisses rain upon your face; your hands again caress the beloved head, and you look once more into the trusting eyes of your pet, so long gone from your life but never absent from your heart.

Then you cross Rainbow Bridge together

– Edna Clyne-Rekhy (1959)