



Tips for Conducting a Professional Pet Sitter Interview

Pet Sitters International is pleased to provide pet owners with a checklist of pertinent information and questions to help in the pet sitter interview process.

We encourage you to take some time early in the selection process to determine the pet sitter best suited for your situation. Once you've made the best selection, we hope you'll agree with the multitudes of other pet owners who say, "My pet sitter is worth her (or his) weight in gold!"

Does the pet sitter (or agency) keep regular office hours?

- ✓ A Professional pet sitter should have a schedule of office hours. A larger business may have additional personnel to answer phone calls or e-mails, but many pet sitters are sole proprietors who use answering machines to field inquiries.

If you left a message inquiring about services, how soon was it returned?

- ✓ All phone calls should be returned within 24 hours.

How much notice does the pet sitter (or agency) need in order to schedule your request for a pet sitter?

- ✓ Most pet sitters request at least two weeks notice, but may be able to accommodate an occasional short-notice assignment. Sometimes there is an additional charge for short-notice assignments.

Does the pet sitter (or agency) have established fees for pet care they can quote over the phone and/or in company literature?

- ✓ A professional pet sitter should have a published list of fees that cover the most common pet-care requests. Fees for special services may be worked out on a case-by-case basis.

Is the pet sitter bonded and insured?

- ✓ Ask for proof of coverage. PSI members have access to group rates on policies specifically for pet-sitters and are provided insurance cards.

Does the sitter have a clean criminal history?

- ✓ Ask for third-party credentials that verify the sitter has a history of honesty and integrity. Official verification documents will contain a current date (within one year), a Social Security number trace, county-level court search results and the contact information of a reputable investigator. PSI has created "[How to Have a Conversation with Your Pet Sitters about Background Verification](#)", a set of pointers to guide you through verifying criminal history results documents. Remember, the person you choose to hire will have access to your property and your beloved animal companion(s). This documentation can provide the peace of mind you seek when admitting a new pet-care provider to your home.

Does the pet sitter meet with you and your pet(s) in advance? Is there a charge for this in-home meeting?

- ✓ Initial interviews allow the pet sitter to meet with you in your home, interact with your pets and discuss services and business policies. These visits are highly recommended for both pet owner and pet sitter. Some pet sitters offer this service at no charge, while others charge a nominal fee for their time and travel expenses.

How much experience does the pet sitter have in caring for your particular type of pet?

- ✓ Experience in caring for special needs pets or unusual types of pets is helpful if that is what you need. Pet sitters who have completed [PSI's Certification Program](#) have the resources on hand to care for a wide variety of companion animal species.

Tips for Conducting a Professional Pet Sitter Interview - continued

Does the pet sitter willingly and happily provide references?

- ✓ PSI recommends that all of its members have a list of references for potential clients to contact.

Does the pet sitter use a service contract that spells out services performed and fees for doing so?

- ✓ A well-written contract outlines the details associated with each service the sitter will provide. The contract includes all fees along with the expected amount of time that will be spent with your pet(s). This ensures that both you and your sitter have agreed on and understand the level of service being provided in your absence

How much time does the pet sitter spend in your home to care for your pet(s)?

- ✓ The average in-home visit to care for one pet is approximately 30 minutes, but additional time may be required if you request special services such as dog walking, pet grooming, etc. or have a multiple pet household.

Does the pet sitter have a Web site that you may peruse?

- ✓ Many pet sitters have Web sites to communicate with current and potential clients. It is an excellent way to provide information to pet owners and to offer the option of e-mail communication between owners and sitters.

What contingency plan does the pet sitter have in the event of inclement weather or natural disaster while caring for your pet(s)?

- ✓ Every professional pet sitter should have a written Disaster Plan that addresses natural or man-made disasters, as well as a contingency plan to provide for your pet's care if anything prevents the sitter from completing the assignment.

What does the pet sitter do if medical care is needed for your pet?

- ✓ Arrangements should be made with your veterinarian and/or local emergency veterinary clinic to allow the sitter to seek medical attention for your pet while you are away.

How does the pet sitting agency screen and train their pet sitters?

- ✓ When a pet-sitting business owner uses staff sitters, a careful employment screening process should be used to ensure that any of the company's personnel who care for your pet are trained and equipped to provide the high-quality care you and your pet deserve.

During the in-home interview, does the pet sitter exhibit a positive attitude and seem comfortable and competent in caring for your pet(s)?

- ✓ A positive attitude goes hand in hand with experience when it comes to in-home pet care. As a result, you can feel at ease and look forward to the in-home pet care a professional pet sitter provides.

How will the pet sitter confirm your safe return home for the care of your pet(s)?

- ✓ Your pet sitter should call to confirm that you have returned home at the expected time or ask that you call to confirm your return.

Will the pet sitter provide you with an evaluation or rating form of their services?

- ✓ A service rating form, either left at your home or sent by e-mail, is the hallmark of a professional pet sitter who wants to ensure client satisfaction.

What are the payment terms?

- ✓ Some pet sitters require payment in full for first time customers while others require a deposit upon reservation and balance paid at the end of the assignment. There is no industry standard for payment terms, so be sure you understand in advance the terms of the pet-sitting business you utilize.

When you engage the services of a professional pet sitter, use this checklist and make sure all of your questions are answered to your satisfaction. This ensures that you can leave your beloved pets with the peace of mind knowing that they will be well cared for. That's a win-win-win situation for you, your pets and your pet sitter.