

# 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.

Just as some people are “dog people” and others are “cat” or “bird” people, there’s no “one size fits all” when it comes to finding the right pet sitter to meet the specific needs of you and your pet.

The pet-sitting industry has grown in recent years. This has provided pet owners with many options for choosing a professional pet sitter, whether you are looking for cat care, dog sitting, exotic bird care, pet fish care or anything else in the way of in-home pet-care services.

With more pet-sitting options and numerous online pet-sitter directories, you will need to be more prudent in your search for reliable pet care. It is important that you practice due diligence to ensure that you are using the services of a true professional pet sitter.

Finding a pet sitter to provide the right pet-care services requires an investment of time—time to do phone interviews, conduct an in-your-home meeting and thoroughly check references on those you’re considering hiring.

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!”

## Questions you should ask any potential pet-care provider:

Before securing the services of a professional pet sitter, an initial meeting (often called a “meet and greet” or “initial consultation”) should be scheduled. This initial interview allows the pet sitter to meet with you in your home, interact with your pets and discuss services and business policies. Some pet sitters offer this service at no charge, while others charge a nominal fee for time and travel expenses.



## PSI advises pet owners to ask seven important questions when interviewing a potential pet sitter:

### 1. Does the pet sitter have the proper business license for your city or state, if required?

Rules and regulations vary regarding what is required to legally operate a business. If your city or state requires a business license, any professional pet sitter you use should have a valid business license. While pet sitters care for your pet at your home, some do offer limited in-their-home boarding. If so, ensure that they also have the proper authorization and license to offer this service as well.

### 2. Is the pet sitter insured and bonded?

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

### 3. Can the pet sitter provide proof of clear criminal history?

Remember, the person you choose to hire will have access to your property and your beloved animal companion(s). 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. This documentation can provide the peace of mind you seek when admitting a new pet-care provider to your home.

### 4. Does the pet sitter provide client references?

PSI recommends that all of its members have a list of references for potential clients to contact. Some pet sitters also include testimonials on their company websites or on their PSI Locator profiles.

### 5. Will the pet sitter use a pet-sitting services agreement or contract?

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.

### 6. Has the pet sitter completed PSI's Certificate in Professional Pet Sitting Program and/or has he or she participated in pet-care training, such as pet first aid?

Experience in caring for special needs pets or various types of pets is helpful if that is what you need. Pet sitters who have completed PSI's Certificate in Professional Pet Sitting Program have the resources on hand to care for a wide variety of companion animal species.

### 7. Is the pet sitter a member of a professional and educational association, such as Pet Sitters International?

Membership in a professional association such as PSI demonstrates a pet sitter's commitment to their profession and the industry at large. PSI members have access to the most up-to-date educational resources and business tools to help them provide the best possible service to clients and their pets.



## Additional considerations:

### *Does the pet sitter 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 voicemail 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 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 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.

### *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. Most pets require at least 2-3 visits per day if you are out of town.

### *Does the pet sitter have a website that you may peruse?*

Many pet sitters have business websites 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 business 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 staff sitters 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 use.

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.