

PREPARING FOR YOUR HOUSE SITTING INTERVIEW

Use with additional download: "House Sitter's Checklist—Interview Questions"

First of all, congratulations on securing a positive response to your house sit application! In your excitement you might be tempted to send a hasty reply accepting the sit... but while congratulating yourself, know also that this is just the first step.

Now think about all the questions you'll need to have answered as you enter into this trust based house sit exchange. Comprehensive "due diligence" is the best way to ensure all expectations are met -for both you and the homeowners.

Some homeowners, especially if new, will be just like you: excited to get somebody signed up as quickly as possible. However, both parties should be thinking of this as you would a job application.

While it's not necessarily as formal, it is very good house sitting practice to conduct a two-way interview.

It's important that you ask questions of each other; to be sure you know exactly what's involved and expected. It's important to understand that this is a two-way exchange, so it's as much about your expectations, as it is about the homeowner's.

You need to be comfortable with the home, the pets, the routines, the logistics—and the owners need to be reassured you have the skill sets and care to look after their home and pets, just as they do!

Honestly, this is how you avoid any potential problems along the way, and how you keep building that all-so-important trust between you.

And don't panic if this is your first time - **we have a list of questions that will help you get started.** The following is meant to get you thinking, so that you can develop and build on your own personal set of questions that will very much depend on where your sit is, and the pets you'll be looking after. Interviews can be daunting, but generally it's much more of an informal chat, either by telephone, video or in person if you are close by.

1. Decide on a means of contact

We always encourage a video call as it's a way to "meet the pets", and see the property where you'll be staying. Some homeowners happily take you on a video tour! Of course, if you can arrange a face-to-face visit, that's even better.

There are now many video chat options available. Some of the most popular include Skype, Facebook Messenger, What's App, FaceTime and Zoom. Select one that you can both connect on and make sure you have a good Internet connection. Set yourself up in a quiet area of the home in an uncluttered environment. Test the connection with a friend or family member. There's nothing worse than connecting and dealing with a poor signal.

2. Be on time and be presentable

You might be a relaxed seasoned traveller, but doing an interview in your beachwear isn't going to win you any points. Be on time, confident, presentable and show consideration by listening to what the homeowners say. Pick a time of the day when you feel most relaxed. Keep a free period before and after the interview and don't try and fit it into a stressful routine.

3. Research your house sit

Read the assignment details more than once and make a note of any relevant questions.

If the house sit is in an unfamiliar part of the world, check out the location online. Search details on weather extremes, high and low seasons, climate, accessibility, and don't forget to find out about any travel visa you might require. Make sure you've checked flight costs around the time of the sit.

Research the pet breeds if they are new to you and consider their routines. You'll look so much better informed and by asking important and relevant questions.

4. Communication is key - Ask questions

Homeowners LOVE talking about their pets. So, if they're happy to kick off the chat, let them. Don't interrupt but make a note of anything you want to ask about. Pet talk is a superb way to break the ice. Making notes demonstrates that you are listening and serious about following routines and instructions.

Create your personalized list of questions in advance, using the “House Sitter’s Checklist - Interview Questions” document we’ve provided.

Think about what the homeowners might ask of you - anticipate their concerns and have some answers clear in your mind. We don't suggest you bombard homeowners with constant questions.

Try and keep the interview naturally chatty and allow equal time for both listening and speaking. Instead, use your list to make sure you don't miss anything important and ask for a moment at the end of the interview to check nothing has been missed.

5. Don't make the interview all about you

Just like any job interview, it's important to highlight how you are going to provide a solution. How is your presence as a house sitter going to benefit them and make their own trip as stress free and unproblematic as possible.

While they may be interested in your travel adventures, what they really want to know is that you are going to be there with the primary intention of looking after and providing consistent and professional-level care for their pets.

6. Do highlight relevant experience

Just as you've made a list of questions, also jot down your relevant house sitting - or personal experience. If there is a swimming pool, talk about your experience of balancing chemicals. If a pet requires medication, talk about an instance where you've administered medical care.

Particularly if you don't have housesitting experience in Mexico, but you have travelled in Mexico, let them know. It shows versatility, adaptability, and a little “Mexico savviness” - something that will get you a long way as a house sitter!

7. Trust your gut and watch for red flags

Before the interview consider your "deal breakers", and if applicable, discuss with your partner. Devise a signalling system so you can let each other know if there's something that would prevent you from saying "yes" at the end of the interview.

Everyone has different red flags - it could be that you are required to let the pets sleep in the bed with you, when that's a no-no for you personally. For others this might be quite fine. Or, levels of home cleanliness could be an issue for you.

If you know in advance, you can find a way to assess this in the interview, and be mindful and aware of any gut feelings that rise to the surface while you are talking.

8. Seal the deal!

If you are happy with how things progress in the interview, don't be afraid to try and agree the house sit at the end of the conversation. Say something along the lines of...
"Well we are very happy and would love to confirm the sit if you are happy."

Now see the accompanying: **House Sitter's Checklist - Interview Questions**

Your questions will vary depending on the house sit, but we've created a list to get you started. Take a look and see how you can develop and personalize this to address your own particular concerns, deal breakers, and relevant house sit questions.

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