

PREPARING TO INTERVIEW A HOUSE SITTER

Use with additional download: "Homeowner's Checklist - Interview Questions"

First of all, congratulations on getting some serious candidates for your house sitting assignment! In your excitement you might be tempted to send a hasty reply offering the housesit to someone you feel drawn to. However, while feeling optimistic, this is the time to pause and realize there's no rush!

This is just the first step, and there are a few more stages to go through before you confirm your perfect sitter.

If you haven't already, you should take time to consider all the things you want to know from your sitters, so that you are totally reassured and prepared as you embark on this trust based exchange.

Comprehensive "due diligence" is the best way to ensure all expectations are met - for both you and the house sitters. This is a two-way exchange, where trust is built between you, and that involves getting to know each other better. Both you and the housesitter should be thinking of this with the same professionalism that you would consider a job application.

We always recommend, as part of best practice, to conduct a two-way informative interview. This way you'll both be sure of what's involved and there will be no surprises as the sit approaches.

You need to be comfortable with the sitter(s), their skill sets, their experience with pets, and their familiarity with your climate and environment. You also want to know that they will arrive on schedule and be prepared to carry out a thorough handover. Ultimately you want to be reassured that they have the ability to care and look your home and pets, just as you do!

This "interview" is one way to help avoid any potential problems along the way, and an aid to building that all-so-important trust between you.

References

HouseSitMexico advocates that "the best 5 minutes you can spend in the interest of peace of mind is to pick up the phone and literally speak to a sitter's reference."

Not only will you hear first-hand about your potential sitters, but you'll also likely get advice from other homeowners who have been in exactly the same place as you.

It's a good idea to check these references before you have your chat.

Compiling your questions

Don't panic if this is your first time - **we have a list of questions that will help you get started**. This document will get you thinking so that you can develop and build your own personal set of questions relevant to your assignment.

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 contact method

We always encourage a video call as it's a good way to allow your potential sitters to "meet the pets", and even take them on a short video tour of the property - show them where they will be staying... their bedroom and bathroom space, the beautiful view, the kitchen etc.

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

Remember that house sitters and travellers may be on tight schedules, so be on time, look presentable and show consideration by listening to what the house sitters 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. It's quite normal for you as the homeowner to start the interview by giving a bit of background and then lead into more specific questions. Remember that talking about your pets is a great icebreaker. Showing them to the house sitters... even better!

3. Research your house sitters

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

Re-read their references for clues, and if they are new to house sitting, see if they have any character references.

See where they are based (if not nomadic), and look for common ground between you. If the house sitter sends you a link to their personal house sitting website or Facebook page, have a look through and find a couple of points to talk about. It shows that you've taken their application seriously!

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

4. Communication is key - ask questions

We don't suggest you bombard housesitters with constant questions. Try and keep the interview naturally chatty and allow equal time for listening and speaking. 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. Think also about what the housesitters might ask you - anticipate their concerns and have some answers clear in your mind.

5. Don't make the interview all about you

Remember what we said about this being a 2-way exchange. Think about how you, as the homeowners are going to make this house sit as good for the house sitters, as it will be for you, knowing you can go away without any worries about your home and pets. Highlight some of the good experiences they might have in your neighborhood, talk about what you love about your home and location.

6. Do highlight any potential problems

Honesty is key... if the pets need medication, or have complicated daily routines, be upfront about this. Similarly be honest about how well socialized your pets are. House sitters don't want surprises—in the same way you don't— so talking about any potential difficulties at this stage helps everyone make good judgement calls.

Living in Mexico is very different to living in the UK for instance. Possibly the house sitters' only experience in Mexico could be of touristy seaside hotels where they are protected from bugs, extreme heat and any of the cultural differences they may come across through "living" temporarily in a residential area. Check their experience of travel in Mexico, or countries that might have similar environments.

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, for instance, it could be that you let your pets sleep on the bed with you, but you find that's a no-no for your sitters. 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 have already checked references 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 too."*

Now be sure to see the accompanying: **Homeowner's Checklist - Interview Questions**

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

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