

House Sitting Agreement

Date of signing this agreement: <input type="text"/>	Address of the property covered by this agreement: <input type="text"/>
Home owner name/s: 1 <input type="text"/> 2 <input type="text"/>	
House sitter name/s: 1 <input type="text"/> 2 <input type="text"/> 3 <input type="text"/> 4 <input type="text"/>	This agreement takes effect on: <input type="text"/> and ends on: <input type="text"/>

The home owner gives the house sitter permission to occupy the above premises as long as they abide by the conditions of this agreement.

No person/s or pet/s other than those listed in this agreement are permitted to live at the premises during the term of this agreement.

This is not a lease. Both parties agree that the house sitter only has a license to occupy the premises according to the terms and conditions of this agreement and has no legal interest in the premises.

At the end of this term the house sitter may continue to occupy the premises under the same terms of this agreement only if given permission to do so by the home owner.

If the home owner requires the house sitter to make rental payments, then this agreement needs to be adjusted and extended to cover these arrangements.

All parties to this agreement should have their own copy of this agreement, which should be signed by every person who is party to this agreement.

1. Access to the premises

1.1 The home owner agrees:

- to provide the house sitter with at least seven days notice of any change to the agreed first day of the house sitting assignment
- to provide the house sitter with seven days notice of an inspection of the premises
- that the premises will be vacant and in a habitable condition for the house sitter to move in on the agreed first day of the house sitting assignment

The home owner, or any person authorised in writing by the home owner, may only enter the premises during the terms of this agreement in the following circumstances:

- in an emergency (including to make urgent repairs)
- if the premises seem to be abandoned
- for any other purpose, if the house sitter agrees

1.2 The house sitter agrees:

- to be responsible for any act by any person the house sitter allows on the premises who breaks any terms of the agreement
- not to sub-let the premises without the home owner's prior written permission
- not to allow any person not listed in this agreement to live at the premises without the home owner's written permission

2. Care of the premises

2.1 The home owner agrees:

- to ensure that the premises are reasonably clean and fit to live in
- to provide the house sitter or the home owner's nominated contact person with a set of spare keys for the premises

2.2 The house sitter agrees:

- not to use the premises, or allow the premises to be used, for any illegal purpose
- not to cause a nuisance or allow a nuisance to be caused on the premises
- not to interfere, or allow others to interfere with the reasonable peace, comfort or privacy of neighbours
- not to keep any animal on the premises other than those listed in this agreement without the permission of the home owner
- not to block any sink or drain
- not to cause or allow any damage to be caused to the premises
- to care for every item in the premises
- to regularly clean the bathroom and kitchen

- to maintain the grounds and garden in the same condition as at the start of this agreement
- to put all household rubbish and recycling out for regular collection
- to report any infestation of the premises to the home owner and seek advice for solutions to the problem
- to keep the premises as clean and tidy as at the start of this agreement
- to notify the home owner as soon as possible of any damage to the premises
- to leave the premises as nearly as possible in the same condition (fair wear and tear excepted) as at the start of this agreement
- to regularly feed, water and maintain any indoor plants and to keep them in at least as good a condition as at the start of this agreement
- to keep windows and doors locked where appropriate and ensure that any other security measures in the premises are used effectively

3. Care of animals

Name and describe each animal to be covered by this agreement. Describe how you would like each animal to be managed on a day-to-day basis. Include details of any medications or special treatment that each animal requires.

3.1 The home owner agrees:

- to describe in writing and in detail how any animals normally resident at the premises should be cared for
- to provide all food and sundry supplies (insect control and other medicine, bedding, exercising and cleaning equipment) for the animals, or make arrangement to reimburse the house sitter for any food or supplies bought for the animals
- to make arrangements for payment for any services provided by a qualified veterinarian in the treatment and care of the home owner's animals

3.2 The house sitter agrees:

- to make every reasonable effort to ensure the good health, comfort, safety and happiness of the animals listed in this agreement
- to follow the home owner's instructions as far as possible in the care of the animals listed in this agreement

3. Care of animals con't

Veterinarian contact details: <input type="text"/>	After hours emergency service for animals: <input type="text"/>
Pets covered by this agreement:	
1 <input type="text"/>	2 <input type="text"/>
3 <input type="text"/>	4 <input type="text"/>
5 <input type="text"/>	6 <input type="text"/>
7 <input type="text"/>	8 <input type="text"/>
9 <input type="text"/>	10 <input type="text"/>

4. Payment for utilities

For an accurate calculation of the house sitter's liability for utility charges all relevant meter readings should be taken near the start of the house sitting assignment. Before the house sitter leaves the premises at the end of the assignment, further meter readings can be taken and the house sitter's share of costs can be accurately calculated.

4.1 The home owner agrees to pay or reimburse the house sitter for the following costs:

- municipal service charges such as council tax and rates
- all costs incurred by the house sitter in the care of the animals listed in this agreement
- all costs of emergency repairs or routine maintenance of the premises

4.2 The house sitter agrees to pay service providers directly or reimburse the home owner for the following utilities:

(cross out any of the following that do not apply)

- electricity
- gas
- telephone calls and service charges
- water
- excess rubbish or sanitary waste removal charges
- internet access
- cable or satellite TV

The house sitter should make good their financial obligations under the terms of this agreement before leaving the home owner's premises. The house sitter may choose to pay service providers directly and should keep receipts of such payments for home owner's records. Any financial liability still outstanding at the end of the house sitting assignment may be reclaimed by the home owner from the security deposit.

Gas meter:	date recorded:
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Electric meter:	date recorded:
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Water meter:	date recorded:
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Other:	date recorded:
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Other:	date recorded:
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

5. Security cameras or recording devices

If there are security cameras or other recording devices on the premises, the home owner should declare this to the house sitter, so that the house sitter can give their consent.

5.1 Home owner declaration

Do you have any cameras or recording devices installed on the premises?

Please indicate all inside and outside locations and times active.

Yes

No

Please list each location:

Time active:

5.2 House sitter declaration

I give consent to be filmed/recorded whilst on the premises:

Yes

No

6. Additional terms

Any additional terms and conditions may be added to this agreement here. All parties to this agreement need to initial each additional term. See the 'Home owners checklist (Appendix B of this agreement) for additional points you may want to address here.

1

2

3

4

7. Maintenance & repairs

7.1 What are urgent repairs?

The **home owner agrees** to make payment, either directly to the service provider or as a reimbursement to the house sitter, for the following urgent repairs:

- burst water service
- blocked or broken lavatory system
- serious roof leak
- gas leak
- electrical faults
- flooding or serious flood damage
- serious storm damage
- serious fire damage
- failure or breakdown of the gas, electricity, or water supply to the premises
- failure or breakdown of any essential service for hot water, cooking, heating, or laundering
- any fault or damage that causes the premises to be unsafe or not secure

7.2 Repairs & emergency contact details

Gas service person:

Electrician:

Plumber:

Builder:

Window repairer:

Locksmith:

Local police:

Fire service:

Emergency:

Nearest hospital with accident and emergency department:

Veterinarian:

Emergency 24-hour animal treatment service:

7.3 Reimbursement for repairs

The home owner agrees to pay the house sitter, within 14 days of the end of the house sitting assignment, any reasonable costs that the house sitter has incurred for making repairs to the premises so long as:

- the house sitter was not in breach of this agreement when the damage occurred
- the house sitter gives the home owner, or their nominated contact, a reasonable opportunity to make the repairs
- the house sitter makes a reasonable attempt to have any appropriate tradesperson named in this agreement make the repairs
- the repairs are carried out, where appropriate, by licensed or properly qualified persons
- the house sitter gives the home owner, or their nominated contact person, written details of the repairs, including receipts for any costs the house sitter has incurred

8. Staying in contact

8.1 Home owner's contact details

The **home owner agrees** to provide the house sitter with contact details for use during the term of this agreement. These contact details, whether phone or fax numbers, postal or email addresses, should remain current and functional during the term of this agreement.

The home owner can be contacted by the following methods during the term of this agreement:

Postal address:	
<input type="text"/>	
Email address:	Phone number:
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Skype/Messenger/other:	Alternative phone number:
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

8.2 Nominated contact person's details

The **home owner** may choose to nominate a third party to act on their behalf during the term of this agreement. This nominated contact person agrees to provide the house sitter with their contact details and to be readily contactable. Those details should remain current and functional for the term of this agreement.

The home owner's nominated contact person can be contacted by the following methods during the term of this agreement:

Postal address:	
<input type="text"/>	
Email address:	Phone number:
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Skype/Messenger/other:	Alternative phone number:
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

8.3 House sitter's contact details

The **house sitter** agrees to provide the home owner or the home owner's nominated contact person with their contact details and to be readily contactable. These details should remain current and functional for the term of this agreement.

The house sitter can be contacted by the following methods during the term of this agreement:

Postal address:	
<input type="text"/>	
Email address:	Phone number:
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Skype/Messenger/other:	Alternative phone number:
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

9. Termination of agreement

9.1 The home owner agrees:

- to give the house sitter at least seven days notice of an early termination of this agreement if the agreement is for less than six months
- to give the house sitter at least 28 days notice of an early termination of this agreement if the agreement is for six months or longer

9.2 The house sitter agrees:

- not to leave the premises before the end of this agreement without written permission from the home owner or nominated contact person
- to give vacant possession of the premises to the home owner or nominated contact person's on the date of termination of this agreement
- to return all keys and other security devices on the date of termination of this agreement
- to provide the home owner or nominated contact person with a forwarding address
- at the end of this agreement the house sitter may continue to occupy the premises under the same terms of this agreement only if given permission to do so by the home owner

9.3 Both parties agree:

- that if either party persistently breaches this agreement, then the innocent party may terminate this agreement on 24 hours notice that termination of this agreement does not affect the right of either party to recover any monies due under the terms of this agreement

10. Signatories & witnesses

The **home owner** and the **house sitter** enter into this agreement and agree to all its terms.

Home owner/s

1. Name of home owner:

Signature of home owner:

2. Name of home owner:

Signature of home owner:

House sitter/s

1. Name of house sitter:

Signature of house sitter:

2. Name of house sitter:

Signature of house sitter:

3. Name of house sitter:

Signature of house sitter:

1. Name of witness:

Signature of witness:

2. Name of witness:

Signature of witness:

Appendix A

1. Security deposit lodgment form (optional)

Please note: the home owner should never request a security deposit from the house sitter before the assignment starts (especially over email)! To avoid the possibility of house sitters being defrauded, money should only change hands between house sitters and home owners when all parties are together at the property, before the home owners have left. Also, as a general guide, the deposit amount should be relative to the length of the house sitting assignment and be no more than the equivalent of one month's rent for a similar property in the area.

House sitter security deposit

(to be paid by house sitter)

Deposit amount (and currency):

Type of payment:

eg. bank transfer, cheque, money order, cash

Address of premises covered by this agreement:

Date:

Home owner section

Home owner name:

House sitter section

House sitter name:

Home owner address:

House sitter address:

Home owner telephone:

House sitter telephone:

Home owner email address:

House sitter email address:

Home owner signature:

House sitter signature:

House sitter refund (only to be filled out at the end of the house sitting assignment). Refunds should be in full if the assignment was cancelled before it started.

Original deposit paid:

Add house sitters' expenses:

Subtract house sitters' liabilities:

TOTAL AMOUNT OF REFUND:

1.1 Lodging the security deposit lodgment form with a third party

Use this part of the form if you're going to be lodging the deposit with a third party for safe keeping. In the event of a dispute between home owner and house sitter at the end of the house sitting assignment the person nominated to hold the deposit agrees to mediate. Refunds should be in full if the assignment was cancelled before it started.

In the event of any dispute with regard to an entitlement to any or all of the security deposit hereby submitted, I/we accept that [enter name] reserves the right to act as mediator, and will deduct any costs incurred in resolving said dispute.

Third party security deposit holder:

Name:

Telephone number:

Address:

Email address:

Signature:

Date:

Copies of this form should be held by each part for reference.

2. House sitter expense claims

This form to be used to list the house sitter's expenses in the care and upkeep of the property and the animals listed in this agreement. The house sitter should keep an itemised list of such expenses as well as a receipt for each item. Claim for the following costs and purchases:

Claim description:	Cost:
Total:	

3. House sitter liability claims

This form to be used to list the house sitter's liabilities during the house sitting assignment. These could include any accidental loss or damages to the home owner's property.

Claim description:	Cost:
Total:	

Total deductions:

Currency and amount of refund (eg. US\$50):

Type of payment (eg. bank deposit, cash, money order)

Address of premises:

Name of home owner/s:

Home owner nominated contact person:

Name/s of house sitter/s (only list house sitters whom have contributed to the deposit and will receive the refund)

Signature of home owner:

Signature of mediator:

Signature of home owner nominated contact person:

Signature of house sitter/s:

House sitter forwarding contact details:

Postal address

Telephone number:

Email address:

Appendix B

Before you go - checklist for home owners

Home owners - use this checklist to make sure you're ready to hand over the care of your home to your house sitter on the day that you leave. If you're leaving one or more pets in the care of your house sitter see the companion document to this one: Before you go - checklist for pet owners.

1. Create an information pack

It's a good idea to put an information pack together containing all of the material that your house sitter needs to provide top quality care to your home. Your signed and completed house sitting agreement will provide the cornerstone of your information pack. By placing all of your records in plastic A4 sheets in a sturdy folder, this pack can be used by your house sitters for years to come. Consider including the following in your information pack:

Contact information

If you would like to have a role in the management of your property while you're away you will need to leave your contact information. You may like to ask your house sitter to send you regular email updates on the status of your home and animals while you're away.

Emergency contact information

You may want to assign a friend, relative or neighbour the role of nominated contact person to liaise with your house sitter in your absence. If so, leave enough of their contact information so that your house sitter can reach them at any time of the day or night. You need to establish how comfortable your nominated contact person is with the idea of making decisions on your behalf.

Visitors policy

If you have strong feelings about the numbers and types of people who may (or may not) visit your home with your house sitter's consent, include this information in your house sitting agreement.

Rules and regulations

If your home is a condominium, a unit or a rental property, you may want to leave a copy of the by-laws or lease for your house sitter to refer to.

Home contents out of bounds

You may like to make a list of items you don't want your house sitter to use (add this to your house sitting agreement).

Rooms out of bounds

You may like to write a list of any areas or rooms in your house or on your property that you don't want your house sitter to use (add this to your house sitting agreement).

2. Telling others you're leaving

It's crucial that other people know about your arrangements with your house sitter to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings.

Neighbours

Let your neighbours, friends and family know that you have a house sitter moving into your home on a particular date.

Insurance

Contact your insurance company to let them know you will have a house sitter moving into your home. Your home and contents premium should be unaffected by this information.

Service providers

If you've negotiated with your house sitter to keep some of your usual services running while you're away, it's important to tell your service providers (maid, gardener or groundsperson etc) about your house sitting arrangement.

3. Preparing your home

Your home is like a ship and you are like its captain. Before you go, you need to get it shipshape both for your house sitter and for your own return.

Store your breakables

Stash away your breakables in a secure area such as a locked cupboard or your attic space. This can include anything made of glass or ceramics that you value (such as framed photographs, sculptures, trophies, vases, artworks, even a favourite snowdome). Accidents do happen¹but they don't need to happen to your breakable treasures.

Store your valuables

It is only commonsense to store your valuables in a secure locked area while you're away. If your valuables are especially expensive then you need to maintain your usual security precautions in your absence. Make an inventory of your valuables before you go. Put your wine collection and bar supplies well out of sight of your house sitter.

Clean your home and yard

It's a good idea to ensure your house and grounds are clean and tidy in preparation for your house sitter's arrival. Note that in the house sitting agreement your house sitter has agreed to maintain your home and garden to the condition that they first encountered them.

Perishable foodstuffs

You may want to empty your refrigerator of any perishable foodstuffs. Although your house sitter is probably happy to eat or otherwise dispose of these!

Shut down parts of your home

If your home is larger than your house sitter needs you may want to shut parts of it down (for example, you could make all but one bedroom and bathroom off limits to your

house sitter) just so that these parts of the house remain in pristine condition for your return.

4. Preparing your vehicles

When you go away you may be leaving a car, SUV, RV, boat, bicycle or tractor behind to face a period of disuse. You may ask your house sitter to clean and maintain your vehicles in your absence.

Use of your vehicle

If you are happy to have your house sitter use your vehicle while you're away you need to do the following: - familiarize them with your vehicle before you go - add their name to your motor vehicle insurance policy - have them confirm in writing that they will be liable for any costs and damages incurred while using your vehicle including paying any excess fees on any resulting insurance claim (this can be added to your house sitting agreement). - provide local driving regulation information for their reference

Maintenance of your vehicle

You may want to have your vehicle maintained in your absence. This could include asking your house sitter to start your car once a week and/or clean your car of leaves, dust and bird droppings.

Use of your bicycle

You may be happy for your house sitter to use your bicycle. Familiarise your house sitter with any security locks you may use including combination numbers and spare keys.

Remote control devices

Be sure to leave your garage door opener or similar device out in plain sight to allow your house sitter access to your garage.

5. Preparing your animals

Take the time to prepare your animals for your departure, thoroughly pet proof your home and educate your house sitter in the finer points of caring for your pets. This process is crucial to ensuring the house sitting assignment is a success for every party (your animals included). Please see the companion checklist: Before you go - checklist for pet owners.

6. Preparing to travel

A few simple preparations can make being away from home a snip!

Email

If you are currently using an email address that is dependent on your home internet service provider, you may need to set up a new address that can travel with you. There are many hundreds of good, free email service providers you can sign up with in less than five minutes. Choose a service provider that gives each member account enough disk space to store, send and receive jpg (image) files.

Inventory of valuables

Make an inventory of your valuables before you go and store it in a secure place (such as with a relative, a solicitor, or in an online digital safe). Note that this list does not go in your house sitter's information pack.

7. Services

Your house sitter needs to know everything about your home's usual services in order to keep everything sailing along.

Rubbish collection

Make a note of which day your rubbish is collected. Provide plenty of rubbish bags of the right size and strength.

Recycling services

Make a note of the day your recycling is collected. Have any recycling equipment available for your house sitter to use. Let your house sitter know what can and can't be recycled through your kerbside collection service.

Subscriptions

You may want to suspend or cancel any magazine or newspaper subscriptions you may have.

Pay-per-view TV

You may want to suspend or cancel your satellite or cable TV service.

DVD rental

You may want to suspend or cancel your DVD rental subscription.

Internet access

You may want to suspend or cancel your home internet access account. Although your house sitter may want this service to continue and may be prepared to pay for the service while they're in your home.

Mail redirection

You may want to set up a redirection order for your mail - although this is what house sitters are for!

Home deliveries

You may want to suspend or cancel any regular home deliveries you may have including dairy products and organic vegetables .

Cleaning, gardening and lawn mowing services

You may want to suspend or cancel visits by your regular cleaner, gardener or lawn mower. If your house sitter wants to retain these, you need to discuss who will pay for these services.

8. Your house sitter's needs

House sitters are people too and they will need the facilities to live their own lives in your home as well as enough information to settle into your home and neighbourhood quickly and easily.

Spare keys

Leave a set of spare keys with your nominated contact person (if you have one). Your house sitter will need their own set of your keys plus a spare set.

Childcare

Leave details on local childcare facilities and places of fun for your younger house sitters.

Tourist information

Mark up a local map with some of the area's best assets for your intrepid house sitter. Include your local supermarket, library, internet cafe, cinema, DVD rental shop, dog park etc.

Transport maps

Local transport maps covering travel by bicycle, bus, train, tram and underground are invaluable for helping your house sitters get oriented.

Storage space

You may need to empty some cupboards and drawers for your house sitter to stow their belongings.

Clean linen

Put out clean bed linen and towels for your house sitter.

First meal

Provide the essentials for your house sitter's first meal in your home.

Parking

Describe what parking is allowed on or near your property including costs and restrictions. You may be able to arrange for a visitors parking permit for your house sitter to use during their stay.

Local driving information

Provide local driving regulation information for your house sitter's reference.

9. Utilities

Your utilities will need to be paid for in your absence, either by you or the house sitter (depending on what financial arrangements you have agreed to). Irregardless of who pays for the utilities however, your house sitter will need to know everything about maintaining these critical elements in your home.

Gas and electric

Leave instructions for the safe use of your electricity and gas services. Show your house sitter where the relevant meters are as well as the fuse boxes and cut-off switches.

Take meter readings on your last day in the property so that your house sitter's share of the utility bills can be worked out on your return. (Use the fields in your house sitting agreement to record your meter readings.)

Heating and air-conditioning

Leave detailed instructions on how to program the heating and air-conditioning systems. Show your house sitter where the relevant heating and air-con switches and thermostats are.

Water and drains

Leave instructions on the location of your water mains tap and the access area to your drains system in case of emergency or routine maintenance.

Laundry appliances

It's amazing how quirky and bad tempered your laundry appliances can get with age. Leave instructions for your house sitter on how to keep on the right side of your washing machine and dryer.

10. Grounds maintenance

Only you know just how much loving your outside space needs in your absence.

Compost

Make a list of what you would and wouldn't like your house sitter to add to your compost.

Pool maintenance

Have your pool equipment and chemicals available for your house sitter to use. Attach clear written instructions to these.

Garden tools

Make sure your garden tools are accessible. Leave a copy of your shed keys for your house sitter.

Indoor plant maintenance

Leave any supplies for your indoor plants out for your house sitter. Attach written instructions to these.

Lawn maintenance

Check that your lawnmower is in good working order. Leave a spare can of fuel for your lawn mower if required. Attach hoses to outdoor water supplies for watering your garden and lawn. Leave rakes and a wheelbarrow out for your house sitter.

Bird feeders

Leave enough wild seed to keep your bird feeders topped up while you're away.

11. Security

Your usual security systems and precautions should continue unabated in your absence. Your house sitter will make every effort to conscientiously protect your home and

household contents in all the ways that you describe.

Security systems

If you have an alarm system, you may need to make arrangements with the security company for a code and security password specifically for your house sitter to use. Security systems can be very tricky (and noisy) so be sure to tell your house sitter how to manage your alarm system in exact detail.

Security cameras and/or recording devices

If you have cameras or recording devices on your property, you must declare this to the house sitter before the assignment starts, so that this can be discussed and that there are no surprises. We have tried to help by including a special declaration regarding this in our "House sitter agreement" document (in section five) which you can download before the assignment starts. In this section, you can declare the locations of these devices as well as the times of operation. Also, house sitters can declare whether they consent to the home owner operating the devices or not.

Window locks and security doors

Any keys for window locks and security doors should be left with your house sitter.

Phew!

Well done...you've made it to the end of this list. Now you can leave your home knowing that your house sitter is exceptionally well-prepared to take on their duties and responsibilities toward you, your property and your animals. Relax and go.

Appendix C

Before you go - checklist for pet owners

Your animals' special needs, health and safety need to be both documented and provided for while you're away. Your house sitter is prepared to make your animals' health and happiness a top priority but they can't do their best by Spot and Fluffy without all the necessary information and preparation by you. At the last count (in 2003) there were 77.7 million pet cats and 65 million pet dogs in the US. (Phew, I think our house sitter members are going to be busy!) For the purposes of this checklist I've assumed that your beloved pet is either a cat or a dog (sorry to all you bird, rabbit, mouse, fish, snake and pony owners but you will have to customise parts of this checklist for yourselves).

See also Before you go - checklist for home owners.

1. Create an information pack

It's a good idea to put an information pack together containing all of the information that your house sitter needs to provide top quality care to your pets. By placing all of your animals' records in plastic A4 sheets in a sturdy folder, this pack can be used by your house sitters for years to come. Consider including the following in your information pack:

- up-to-date immunization records
- microchip or tattoo information
- lost pet register contact information
- municipal license or registration records
- medical history (including last dates of de-flea and de-worming treatment)
- current medication (including generic names of drugs, dosage information and your usual supplier)
- vet's contact information
- after-hours animals medical emergency service contact information
- photograph of your pet that is both current and adequately detailed to identify them with
- map with the location of good dog parks and other permitted dog walking areas

2. Educate your house sitter

Knowledge is power. The more you can tell your house sitter about your animal's usual habits and quirks the more fine-tuned their care and attention can be toward your pets. Honesty is essential here. If your dog is antisocial around other dogs or about to come into season tell your house sitter. If your dog is an 'escaper' when let off the lead or your cat is a scent-marker then you need to leave this information for your house sitter. It won't necessarily put your house sitter off the assignment. However, having to chase your dog through a large park or worrying about smelly furniture covers will only cause your house sitter undue stress. It's much better for every person (and animal) concerned

if your house sitter is prepared for any eventuality. Take the time to answer the following questions (where relevant) and print out your document to be added to your house sitter's information pack.

- What are the important routines in your pet's day (including eating, sleeping, exercising and playing)?
- Is your pet on a special diet? What amounts of food do they usually eat? When do they usually eat? How many treats are they usually permitted?
- Does your pet have any major and minor health problems (for example, skin allergies or old injuries)?
- Create an emergency health care plan (Which health care provider do you use? How do you get to the clinic? How will your house sitter make a payment for emergency care?)
- Where are your pet's favourite toys, chew toys and treats kept?
- Where are your pet's favourite hiding places?
- Does your pet have any unusual habits (for example, your cat may regularly vomit, your puppy may urinate when showing submission or your dog may try to leap out of open car windows)?
- Does your pet have any phobias or anxieties?
- Are any rooms or parts of the property 'off limits' for pets?
- Have a back-up plan for the care of your animals in case your house sitter has an emergency they need to attend. Leave the contact information for a vet boarding service, your local kennels or a nearby friend or relative who could care for them if needed.
- How does your dog usually travel? (Are they allowed on public transport? Can they walk in the snow or on hot pavements? Do they have a car restraint? Are they happy to be in their travel container?)

3. Animal supplies

Stock up on enough supplies to keep your animals happy and healthy while you're away (plus extra of everything in case your return is delayed). Leave your animals' supplies in one spot in plain sight for your house sitter's easy access. These supplies could include the following:

- food (main meals, dry food, treats, chewing bones)
- catnip
- food and water bowls
- medications (flea, tick, lice, heartworm, worm and mange treatment, with dosage information)
- toys (indoor chewing and tugging toys, chasing toys)
- exercise equipment (leads, balls, tennis racket, towels, cold weather gear, muzzles, collars, harness, snow boots)
- identification tags, tattoo or microchip (featuring a contact number or a number on a registration list - make sure these are current!)

- bedding (basket, mattress with pillows, blankets or duvet, spares for washing)
- cleaning equipment for your animal (medicated shampoo, towels, hoses, brushes, clippers and scissors)
- cleaning equipment for your animals' messes in your home (mops, brushes, sponges, disinfectant)
- waste collection equipment (poop scooper, bags, gloves, kitty litter and trays)
- travelling equipment (car restraints, car blankets, travel containers)

4. Preparing your animals

By doing a few simple things for your animals you can leave knowing that they'll be that much more safe and secure in your absence.

- Deal with any suspected health problems in your animals before you go.
- Ensure your dog is comfortable walking on a leash.
- Make sure your pets are wearing practical collars that fit properly (collars shouldn't be too tight or so loose that they can slip off).
- Have an identification tag engraved with a current contact number for each of your pets. Attach these tags to the D-rings on your pets' collars with a sturdy steel ring.
- Register each of your pets with a lost pet register connected to your local animal shelter.
- Take digital photographs of each of your animals showing their markings and distinctive features.
- Ideally, your house sitter should spend some time with your pets in your company before you leave. Schedule some time to take your house sitter and your dogs out for a walk. Or your house sitter could just handle your animals in your presence to get everyone acquainted with each other before you go.
- Tell them when you'll be coming back home (some people believe that our pets understand these reassuring messages).

5. Preparing your home

While you know exactly what hazards your home contains, your house sitter doesn't, so it's a good idea to attempt to really 'pet-proof' your home before you leave.

- Put anything away that could be harmful to your pet. Christmas tree decorations, tinsel, pine needles, firewood, cooked bones (think gum and gut-perforating splinters and shards), strings, ribbon or knitting wool are all potentially deadly to curious cats and dogs. Add pesticides, flavoured medicines, digestion aids, sweetened pills, chocolates, confectionary, biscuits, space cookies, tobacco and sweet liquors to this list.
- Your garage probably contains many hazardous substances such as rat poison and slug killer, fertilizers, antifreeze and pesticides. It is critical to put any dangerous substances in your garage completely out of reach of your pets (preferably behind a locked door).
- Seal off any routes to your cellar or attic so that your pets don't become 'lost' in these hard-to-get-to spaces.

- Block your pets' usual escape routes from your property. You may need to repair holes in the fence or fill scraped-out depressions beneath fences or gates with heavy objects.
- Secure any gates on your property (including those to a swimming pool).
- Unplug any appliances that your house sitter won't be using to prevent possible accidents.
- Consider installing a doorflap so that your animals can leave the house if they need to (for their toileting or in case of an emergency such as fire or flooding).
- Arrange your arsenal of cleaning equipment in plain sight for your house sitter. This can include your vacuum cleaner, mop, broom, dustpan, gloves, disinfectant, sponges and trash bags etc.
- Just before you leave, ensure that the right pets are inside the house.
- If your pet escapes the house before you leave, tell your house sitter where to look for the animal.
- And lastly, leave a piece of your worn clothing in your pets' sleeping area to give them a nice reminder of their beloved human while you're away.

Appendix D

Before you go - checklist for house sitters

Congratulations that you have found a house sitting assignment! For the next step, use this checklist to make sure you're ready to start your house sitting assignment.

1. Download and fill out the house sitting agreement

When two perfect strangers meet and arrange to take care of each other's house sitting requirements, it's a good idea that you both go into the situation equipped with a copy of our House sitter agreement. We've tried to cover all the bases with this plain-English document but as you go through it with the home owner you may think of further amendments, clauses and deletions you'd like to make to suit your particular situation.

2. Ask for an information pack

It's a good idea to ask the home owner for an information pack, containing all of the material that you will need to provide top quality care for the home (and pets). Your signed and completed house sitting agreement will provide the cornerstone of your information pack. Consider requesting the following from the home owner:

Contact information

Does the home owner want you regular email updates on the status of your home and animals while you're away? If so, ask the home owner for their contact details and how often they want to be notified.

Emergency contact information

Make sure that the home owner has a nominated contact person you can contact for emergencies eg. a friend, relative or neighbor and that you have their contact details.

Visitors policy

Does the home owner have strong feelings about the numbers and types of people who may (or may not) visit their home during your stay? Include this information in your house sitting agreement.

Rules and regulations

If your home is a condominium, a unit or a rental property, you may want to ask if there are any rules or regulations that you need to follow.

Home contents/areas out of bounds

You may want to ask the home owner if there are any contents or areas of the property that are out of bounds (add this to your house sitting agreement).

Insurance

Ask the home owner whether they have home and contents insurance, and whether you will be covered during your stay.

Service providers

If the home owner has any third party services running during your stay, it's important to ask for their details and schedule (eh. maid, gardener or grounds person etc) and if you are expected to give them access.

3. Vehicles

Use of home owners' vehicle

If the home owner is happy to let you use their vehicle, make sure you ask them to familiarize you with their vehicle before they go. Also, ask that they add your name to their motor vehicle insurance policy. Also, you should agree (in writing) who will be liable for any costs and damages incurred while using the vehicle, including payment of any excess fees on any resulting insurance claim (this can be added to your house sitting agreement). Also, make sure you are familiar with the local driving laws if you are coming from overseas.

Maintenance of the home owners' vehicle

The home owner may want you to have the vehicle maintained in their absence. This could include starting the car once a week and/or cleaning the car of leaves, dust and bird droppings.

Use of home owners' bicycle

The home owner may be happy for you to use their bicycle. Familiarise yourself with any security locks they may need you to use including combination numbers and spare keys.

4. Preparing animals

Take the time to ensure that the home owner has fully educated you in the finer points of caring for their pets. This process is crucial to ensuring the house sitting assignment is a success for every party (animals included). In case the home owner is not aware, we have a checklist for them also: Before you go - checklist for pet owners.

5. Preparing to travel

A few simple preparations can make being away from home a snip!

Email

If you are currently using an email address that is dependent on your home internet service provider, you may need to set up a new address that can travel with you. There are many hundreds of good, free email service providers you can sign up with in less than five minutes. Choose a service provider that gives each member account enough disk space to store, send and receive jpg (image) files.

Traveling from overseas? Have a plan B.

If you are coming from overseas, don't forget to have a Plan B in place, in case something goes wrong and you are unable to stay at the property – it has been known to happen before! Being stuck in a foreign country without a backup plan can be a problem, unless you are prepared for all eventualities. Also, ask the home owner how you can get to their property, or if you can get a lift :)

6. Services

You will need to know everything about the home's usual services in order to keep everything sailing along.

Rubbish collection

Make a note of which day the rubbish is collected. Make sure that the home owner provides plenty of rubbish bags of the right size and strength.

Recycling services

Make a note of the day the recycling is collected. Make sure that the home owner provides any recycling equipment available for you to use. Ask what can and can't be recycled through the kerbside collection service.

Subscriptions

Ask the home owner if you are allowed to access any magazine or newspaper subscriptions they may have.

Pay-per-view TV

Ask the home owner if you are allowed to access any satellite, cable TV service. Also, find out if they expect you to pay, or whether they will pay.

Internet access

Ask the home owner if you are allowed to access the internet/wifi service. Also, find out if they expect you to pay, or whether they will pay.

Mail redirection

Ask the home owner if they want you to redirect their postal mail.

7. Your needs

Spare keys

Ask the home owner to leave a set of spare keys with their nominated contact person in case you lose yours.

Transport maps

Ask if the home owner has a spare local transport maps that covers travel by bicycle, bus, train, tram and underground to help you get oriented.

Parking

Ask the home owner what parking arrangements are allowed on or near your property including costs and restrictions. If you are bringing your own car, do you need a visitors parking permit?

8. Utilities

The utilities will need to be paid for in the home owners absence, either by you or the home owner (depending on what financial arrangements you have agreed to). Irregardless of who pays for the utilities however, you will need to know everything about maintaining these critical elements during your stay.

Gas and electric

Ask the home owner for instructions on the safe use of electricity and gas services. Ask the home owner where the relevant meters are as well as the fuse boxes and cut-off switches. Take meter readings on your first day in the property so that the utility bills can be worked out on the home owners return. (Use the fields in your house sitting agreement to record meter readings.)

Heating and air-conditioning

Ask the home owner for detailed instructions on how to program the heating and air-conditioning systems and where the relevant heating and air-con switches and thermostats are.

Water and drains

Ask the home owner to leave instructions on the location of the water mains tap and the access area to the drains system in case of emergency or routine maintenance.

Laundry appliances

It's amazing how quirky and bad tempered laundry appliances can get with age. Ask the home owner for instructions on how to keep on the right side of your washing machine and dryer.

9. Grounds maintenance

Only the home owner knows just how much loving the outside space needs during your stay.

Compost

Ask the home owner for a list of what you can compost.

Pool maintenance

Ask the home owner for clear written instructions to maintain and clean the pool.

Garden tools

Ask the home owner where the garden tools are kept (are their shed keys?).

Indoor plant maintenance

Ask the home owner for any supplies that you need to look after any indoor plants.

Lawn maintenance

Ask the home owner for instructions on how to use the lawnmower and where to find the spare can of fuel. Also, ask for the location of the outdoor water supplies for watering the garden and how often you should do so.

Bird feeders

Don't forget to keep the bird feeders topped up during your stay!

10. Security

Security systems

If the property has an alarm system, you may need to know the code and security password. Security systems can be very tricky (and noisy) so be sure to ask the home owner how to manage the alarm system in exact detail.

Security cameras and/or recording devices

Ask the home owner if they have security cameras or other recording devices on their property, and whether they intend to operate these during your stay. We have included a special declaration regarding this in our "House sitter agreement" document (in section five), where the home owner can list the locations of these devices as well as the times of operation. If you don't want to consent to being recorded during your stay, make sure that you make this clear to the home owner before the assignment starts. If there is disagreement about this, remember that the home owner just wants to know that their house and pets are safe and are being looked after – there may be other ways of doing this, such as a regular zoom call or emailing photos of the pets daily to the home owner. This can even be a lot of fun!

Window locks and security doors

Ask the home owner for any keys for window locks and security doors that you need.

Phew!

Well done...you've made it to the end of this list. Now you can begin your house sitting assignment knowing that you are well-prepared to take on your duties and responsibilities.