

# 5 Tips for Finding a Great Pet Sitter

A vacation sounds like a great idea until you realize that you've got to find a dependable pet sitter to take care of your dog. And dependable is just the basic requirement for the job. Your pet sitter must be kind, knowledgeable about dogs and not above scrambling under the deck to retrieve your pet's favorite toy. The tips below can help you choose a sitter both you and your pet will love.

## 1. Decide What You Want

If you don't know what skills or services are important to you, you won't know what questions to ask. Think about how you want the pet sitter to interact with your pet, including how many times each day she'll visit and how much time you would like her to spend with your dog during a visit. If your dog has a kidney condition, you might need a sitter who is familiar with the condition and can monitor your pet's urine output.

## 2. Get Recommendations

Websites and brochures present a pet sitter in the best possible light. Recommendations from people who've actually used a sitter's services are much more helpful. Ask your friend and neighbors about the pet sitters they've used. Find out which sitters they like and which ones didn't do a good job. Don't accept a "yes" or "no" answer. Ask what they liked or didn't like about a particular sitter. Considerations important to them might not be important to you, and you might like a sitter they rejected.

## 3. Schedule a Meeting

You wouldn't hire someone to work for your company without an interview, and you won't want to hire a sitter without speaking to her first. Before you begin the interview, introduce your dog. If the two of them don't get along, there will be no reason to ask your questions. Pay attention to the way the sitter interacts with your dog. If she only gives him a brief pat on the hand before turning her attention back to you, she might not be the best choice for a dog who craves human contact.

## 4. Ask Plenty of Questions

If the sitter and your dog get along, ask her a few questions about her background and experience. Questions might include how she started pet sitting, how many pets she has, how she would handle an emergency, and her back up plans should she be unable to care for your dog. Ask what types of pets she usually cares for while sitting. If she primarily works with cats, that doesn't mean she won't be a good choice, but it might affect your decision.

## 5. Find Out What You Get for Your Money

Ask the pet sitter to explain the services she will provide, and ask if she's bonded and insured. If you don't think the time allotted for a visit is long enough, ask if it can be extended for an additional fee. Discuss whether she'll walk your dog or just release him or her into your fenced yard when she visits. Find out if she'll provide notes on your dog's care every time she visits or will prepare a daily summary. Talk about emergency notification and clarify what circumstances constitute an emergency in your eyes.