

PSI Members Share Their *#1 Pet-Sitting Tip*

during PSI's 27th annual Professional Pet Sitters Week



Brought to you by Pet Sitters International

Thank You for Participating in #PPSW2021!

Pet Sitters International (PSI) would like to thank every member who shared their top pet-sitting tip on PSI's Tip Tuesday post as part of our 2021 Professional Pet Sitters Week celebration (March 7-13).

This e-book is a compilation of many of the tips that were shared on that post in PSI's private members-only Facebook group, [Professional Pet Sitters Chat](#).

While the 27th annual celebration of Professional Pet Sitters Week is coming to an end, we encourage you to continue to share your knowledge, experiences and tips like these shared in this e-book with fellow PSI members all year long.

At PSI we believe the more you know, the better your business will be—and one of the benefits of being a PSI member is the opportunity to share your knowledge with and also learn from so many other pet-care professionals from around the globe.

PSI's motto is "Pet-Sitting Excellence through Education," and it's a commitment we take seriously. We encourage you to stay connected with PSI, take advantage of your various member benefits (including your Monthly Member Toolkit, free member webinars and Professional Pet Sitters Chat) and make continuing education a priority in the coming year.

As we work to rebuild our industry after the pandemic, your commitment to education will set you apart from your competition and give you the resources and tools you need to not only survive, but **thrive**, in the coming months!

Remember, the PSI team is here for you! You can reach us Monday-Thursday, 9:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. EST, at (336) 983-9222, option 1, or by email at info@petsit.com. Be sure to also follow PSI on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

Happy pet sitting,
The PSI Team

Jessi *Beth* *Casey*
Meghan *Rebbie* *Michelle*

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The following tips were shared by your fellow PSI members in PSI's private, members-only Facebook group—Professional Pet Sitters Chat—during #PPSW2021. While each business is different (and you have to decide what is best for you and your company), it's so important to share your experiences and also learn from the advice of other pet-care professionals.

We hope you will find the wisdom shared below helpful, and we encourage you to join member discussions taking place in [Professional Pet Sitters Chat](#) this year!

Stand your ground with clients. There are those few that will try to run over you. After seven years of being in business I FINALLY have no trouble with this. —Jennifer Eaves-Latch, The Precious Pet Professional Pet Sitters, Saucier, Mississippi

Learn to say "no." It's not about being inflexible, but [learning] to respect yourself and maintain mental and physical health to offer the best care. —Leticia Orlandi, Pets da Lets, Pinheiros, Sao Paulo, Brazil

Do your research before setting your pricing. My rate is the same or higher than my pet-sitting friends (GET TO KNOW THEM) in the area. [It is] challenging to raise rates later. —Kathryn Burge, Lake Oswego Pet Sitting, Lake Oswego, Oregon

Set client and geographical boundaries early. That way when you grow you have an infrastructure in place. Also get software as soon as possible to keep organized and look very professional. —Faith Korey, CPPS®, Purrfect Paws LLC, Chicago, Illinois

Be true to yourself. If a prospective client situation is not a good a good fit, do not be afraid to say so. —Dee Adams, Professional Pet Partners, Inc., Westmont, Illinois

Enforce the policies you have in place. Software is a must (I learned the hard way) and remember to take time for yourself. —Kat Roth, CPPS®, Kat and Dogs Ohio, Willoughby, Ohio

Write a business plan and review it/update it at least once a year. I got help from SCORE with this if you don't know how to do it. —Jan Wolff Rea, Jan's K9 and Kat Sitting, LLC, Vestal, New York

Aim high and don't be stingy with setting your prices. Be very honest with yourself about your business model and your ideal profit. It's always stressful to raise rates. Instead of starting off too low, start off with sustainable pricing that fits the level of services you offer and the going rates in your area. —Rachel Reisner, Cats and Hamsters, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

When you are newly establishing your pet-care business, try not to overwhelm yourself by taking assignments that are too far. If not, you'll find yourself spending most of your time driving around. —Nicole Browne-Brunson, Nicole's Pet Care, LLC, Sumter, South Carolina

Set reasonable geographic boundaries and don't be tempted to go beyond them. Set competitive pricing for your market. If you feel you need to discount, do a promo...don't lower prices or go in low. Say no to aggressive animals. —Gail Wunderlin, Princess Gentle Paws Pet Sitting and Care, Liberty Township, Ohio

Don't fear change. Continue to evolve! What worked for you when you initially started (policies, vision, mission statement) may not be what works for you now. As you grow as a pet-care professional and as your business grows—adjust, modify and operate in ways that continue to best serve you, pets and their people. —Cynthia Johnson, Copy Cat & Dog Care Pet Sitting, Lebanon, Ohio

Make sure your business fits what you are comfortable offering. Don't offer services because you think you should, or others do. Examples: Overnights, not everyone is comfortable or wants to stay in another person's home; nail trims, maybe you aren't interested in doing them. Your business should be an extension of you. —Amy Alexander, Amy Lynn's Animal Care, LLC, Boston, New York

There is more to professional pet sitting than walking and feeding a cat or dog. Do your homework. Invest in your business by taking classes like companion animal first aid and CPR; purchase business insurance; know what companion animal service you want to provide and set competitive pricing for your service; set a service area; and, network with local veterinarians, pet stores and dog trainers. —Ann Andrews, CPPS®, Ann Andrews Dog Obedience Training and Pet Sitting, Carmel, Indiana

Don't give up! I was working from home full-time when I started. I had to turn clients down because financially I was too nervous to leave my job. I then decided to change my business to only do overnight pet sitting. I can now travel farther and still work from home, the client's home. I currently have four weeks in a row booked for four different clients. —Chrissy Giordano, Boardwalk Buddies, Bradley Beach, New Jersey

Always, always return that phone call or email in a timely manner even if you cannot help the client. Have a referral ready for them. Even if you cannot help them that particular time, they will remember that you got back to them quickly and gave them options to help them in their time of need and will think of you first next time! —Kristi Dement, 4th Dementation Training & Petsitting, Greeley, Colorado

Get pet sitting software sooner than later! I read this advice and wish I had followed it myself. Absolute game changer! —Katherine Barbour, WeCare Pet Services, Alberta, Canada

It's okay to say no. Know your limitations! —Scott Black, CPPS, Personal Touch Pet Sitting, Kingwood, Texas

NEVER discount and establish a service area and do not go out of that area EVER. Get pet-sitting software from the get-go! My ONLY regret when I started was not doing this. —Karen Levy, Laughing Pets Atlanta, Atlanta, Georgia

Don't be afraid to network with other sitters in your area. They are not your competition. Building a good relationship with other sitters will allow you to build an alliance and offer reliable options for your clients when you are too busy to accommodate them. Clients appreciate this so much and will always remember your professionalism. —Erika Lloyd, Baxter's Bed and Biscuit LLC, Charleston, South Carolina

Bring your own sheets, towels and whatever for overnights. I have gone to houses that were borderline but passable. Also, if your client comes home early you can grab and go. Also, I will keep "strip the bed and all towels" from my COVID protocols, that has worked out great. —Joni Sullivan, Joan of Ark Pet Sitting, Rockland, Massachusetts

We've been in business for 23 years, all with PSI. [Because we think] demand will [pick up] later this year as COVID-19 becomes less restricted, I suggest now is the time to raise prices on a gradual basis. The demand will likely level off years to follow, and many costs of doing business, especially fuel costs, will increase. —Jay Pattiz, Pampered Pet Sitting, Warrensburg, Missouri

SCORE is a FREE business resource that is an absolute must! They offer webinars and even one-on-one mentors to help you! —Stephanie Savy, Steph's Pet Sitting, LLC, Media, Pennsylvania

Every market is different. You need to do your own thing—you do not need to follow [the] herd only. You know what your goals and dreams are. —Solomon Kernosh, T.P.M.C. Pet Service, Rehoboth, Delaware

Include low-tech marketing in your hi-tech strategy. Social media, SEO, Google, Yelp, and an attractive website are all important, but don't leave out the old school guerrilla marketing. I see the biggest ROI from door hangers, mailers and magnets. Just last week, I got a new client who saw one of my door hangers that I hung at his community dog park. He booked me for a week, and referred two of his neighbors. For the gated communities that I can't access, I get homeowners names and addresses from the county property tax assessors website, create a spreadsheet, set up a mail merge, then send the door hanger with a magnet (free gift) in a branded envelope. —Ken Botts, Creekside Critters Pet Sitters, Fort Worth, Texas

Hello! When walking a pup and cannot see around a corner or some curve around a building, I sing to the dogs and to remind myself a little song. Here it is...Gotta go wide, Gotta go wide... What's on the other side! The dogs love it, and we avoid obstacles that could put us all in danger! And start singing way before the corner. —Kelly SeBour, Max & Me Dog Walking Service, Havre de Grace, Maryland

Last minute requests always come with a price...it's last minute and you drop everything to accommodate them—usually these are the people who take a long time to pay, always run out of supplies, are always last minute or you never hear from them. I don't take on last minute requests even if they say they are having an emergency. I say "we wouldn't be able to take care of your pets this time, but I hope we might be able to in the future." —Amy Munns, Leash4Lease, Professional Pet Care, Kitsap County, Washington

I've always found that being organized, punctual and "doing a little extra" for my clients (leaving thank you's and a welcome home gift, leaving the house spotless for when they arrive home) pays off in the long run. I've gained many clients simply because I show that I'm extremely committed to providing pet care excellence. It's okay to say no sometimes but my clients also appreciate that I'm very flexible as well. Lastly, don't be afraid to raise your rates! You are a business so don't sell yourself short! Those who are true clients won't mind! —Kaytlynn D'Agostino, Kaytlynn's K-9 and Cat Care, Delanco, New Jersey

Do not sell yourself short! You are a business not a yard sale. Prices are not negotiable. You charge based on your experience, education and professionalism. Aim for Quality and not Quantity of jobs. People willing to pay your prices and appreciate your quality of service will come back time and time again. Price shoppers will always be looking for the next best deal. —Caitlin Grant, Pet Perfect LLC, Staunton, Virginia

Book your time off a year in advance. It's so important to know you have a vacation coming when you feel overwhelmed by obligations. This will also help you to say No, and it will help the clients know when you take your time off. I always schedule a week off mid-May and Mid-Sept. —Conni Ersland, Play All Day! Pet Care, Glendale, Arizona

Get involved in your pet community! Talk to vets, groomers, shelters. Be aware you will face some rejection and that's okay. Keep learning and growing and trying to foster those relationships. Especially when it comes to events, volunteer opportunities and fundraising. —Jordan Di Marco, CPPS, Dogma Catma Pet Sitting, LLC, Boulder, CO

My biggest piece of advice is to choose your core values and business philosophy as much as you can from the beginning. Do you want to work Monday-Friday during regular workday hours? Do you want to just do vacation visits — leaving you big gaps during your day? Do you want to hire staff so you can be 24/7? Do you want to do lots of walks, or hang out at people's houses? Do you want to offer affordability? Quality? Luxury? Do you want to cater to your client's every need, or do you want to offer a base level service? Figure out all the things, design a plan, build your business around it. —Jessica Milam, Fur Services Fur Pets, Savannah, Texas

Marketing Tip - Pay attention to reasons throughout the year when people may need help — holiday travel, spring break, dark winter months, etc. Advertise your availability during these times when kennels may be booking up, snowy dark winter days when folks may prefer someone else walk their dog in the cold snow. —Jen Urich Dudenhefer, Happy Hearts Dog Walking, Erie, Colorado

Never promise what you can't deliver! In other words, don't overbook yourself. It isn't fair to your clients, their pets, or yourself. —Beth Hobbs, Stay and Play at Home, Bristol, Virginia/Tennessee

Have a good daily self-care plan in place. Eat healthy, exercise, and get plenty of rest. Honor yourself. Schedule regular time off, including an annual vacation. —Janet Reed, Dr. J's Pet Services, LLC, Austin, Texas

Make sure each client is a good fit for you. Don't be afraid to pass on a client and give them an option with another pet sitter. There are enough pets to go around. I used to worry about losing a client, but another one always calls. —Evelyn Ellis, Pet Partner Services LLC, Centerville, Ohio

Always carry your business cards with you. And hand them out to anyone out walking their dogs. I used to be afraid of doing this until I had a friend tell me "it can save them lots of time finding a pet sitter when they need one." —Lynnae Schooler, Alaska Pet Nanny, Fairbanks, Alaska

The big tip I tell myself is to remember, every second, that I'm working with sentient and wonderful non-human animals and their families, and they all deserve the best of me. If I ever think that this is just a business I will lose my soul and that, will never happen. —Claudia Bertucelli, tumigato, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Take Your Time...to make up a contract, policies and procedures, research rates, liability insurance, software and continued education. Take Your Time...to market your business, build website and social media, to network with other sitters and businesses. Take Your Time...with customer service, with potential client's, don't rush, build rapport, on visits go the extra mile, refer out to non potential clients, word of mouth goes a long way. Take Your Time...don't overbook, stay in territory. The most important is Take Your Time...for yourself, every day, every month and vacation time off. Self help is key, then you can Take Your Time...and enjoy the ride! —Melissa King, King Care Pet Sitting, Raymond, Maine

My best paid advertising material so far has proven to be a magnet with emergency contact phone numbers and/or websites. My clients love them and stick them on their fridges or filing cabinets. I also give them to vets, groomers, trainers and any other businesses that collaborate with me...and of course, pre Covid I handed them out at trade shows. —Anja Gangur, Fido & Feline Holidays and Daycare, Guelph, Ontario, Canada

I was told when I started to never lock a door without a key—awesome advice to prevent getting locked out! I prefer wearing lanyards to keep keys on me with hands free. One word of advice I have learned personally is to listen to your gut instinct. If someone/something seems off just walk away. Say you're not the right fit, refer another co. if asked and walk away. —Katie McKeown, For the Love of Animals LLC, Corrales, New Mexico

Know when to say no and follow your gut. Be willing to be flexible, but know your boundaries. Be willing to network with other sitters. It is a good way to learn and share information and help one another. —Nancy Howerter, Hug A Love Pet Sitting, LLC, Fort Collins, Colorado

Learn to understand a bit of dog and cat behaviors. You can do so with an animal behaviorist. Also taking the dog(s) to a dog park can be dangerous for the dog you watch and yourself. There's no one to enforce the rules, i.e. non-neutered aggressive dogs. —Missy Bauer, The Pet Nanny & Services, Cincinnati, Ohio

Take as many classes as you can. This gives you more insight and education to help educate your clients. Also too, shadow multiple local trainers. Not everyone's style is the same. And your clients will most likely use different ones. It's important for consistency with the owners as well as you. It helps create a happier pet. —Kelly DiCarlo, All Paws Are Walking, Syracuse, New York

Know your boundaries, establish office hours and write down your policies. Stick to all of them, don't let clients guilt you into violating your boundaries. They are there to protect you and give you a sense of balance in life. —Jennifer Hodge, Jenn's Pet TLC, LLC, San Jose, California

Be patient. It takes time to build a client base and for word of mouth to spread for any new business especially our industry. Be patient, persistent and professional and you will soon start to grow. You just need to accept it will take a bit of time so in the meantime, finalize the details, network as much as possible and have everything in order for when new potential clients start reaching out! —Rebecca Cormier, The Buddies LLC, New Durham, New Hampshire

Professionalism, and I always leave a thank you card after a tip or present. Remember, you are the face of your company. —Crissy Doucette, Crissy's Critters, Waterford, Connecticut

Take the time to connect with your clients at other times during the year, or between sits if infrequent. Let them know you care and that this is not just a business. —Sylvia Gothard, SIPS - Saggy's International Pet Services, Homewood, Illinois

Let's Keep in Touch!

As a PSI member, we hope you'll stay connected! Visit the [Members Area of petsit.com](#) frequently for the latest in member resources and updates, including your [Monthly Member Toolkit](#), [upcoming and on-demand free member webinars](#), the [digital version of Pet Sitter's World magazine](#) and more.

Also be sure to join PSI's private members-only Facebook group, [Professional Pet Sitters Chat](#).

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