



# The Safe and Secure Pre-House Sit Clarity Guide

FOR HOMEOWNERS / PET PARENTS AND THEIR SITTERS

*For homeowners who want a smooth, trust-filled sit — and for sitters who want to know they're walking into a well-prepared home.*

**i** New to house sitting and looking for your first sit? Visit **[travellivelearn.com](https://travellivelearn.com)** for our full guide and resources.

A high-trust agreement for homeowners and house sitters — ensuring safety, clarity, and a fair exchange, so beloved pets are cared for and a comfortable home remains in safe, happy hands at all times.

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# 1. Security & Access Protocols

Getting access right from the start protects both parties and prevents costly misunderstandings.

## Lockbox Security

Confirm the sitter knows to **scramble the code immediately after each use**. Never leave the code visible on the dial.

## Spare Key Failsafe

Is there a spare key with a neighbour or in a hidden (non-obvious) location? Confirm the sitter knows where it is **only for emergencies**.

## Alarm Systems


Provide a **unique guest code** for the alarm. Demonstrate the "exit" and "entry" delay procedures to avoid false alarms.

## Deliveries & Mail

Does the sitter have permission to open packages? Should mail be brought in daily to **prevent "empty house" signals** to burglars?

## Off-Limits Areas & Third-Party Access

Confirm together which rooms, storage areas, wine cellar, or valuables are explicitly out of bounds. Also agree in advance whether the sitter will encounter third-party access during the sit — including cleaners, gardeners, or contractors — and what their expected schedule is, plus how to handle letting them in.

 Security protocols are non-negotiable. Both parties must walk through every step together before the sit begins.

## 2. Camera & Privacy Policy


**Full disclosure is mandatory.** Trust is built on transparency — every camera must be declared and agreed upon before the sit begins.

### What Must Be Disclosed

- **Internal Cameras:** Homeowner must disclose *all* internal cameras. Cameras in private areas (bedrooms/bathrooms) are **strictly prohibited**.
- **External Cameras:** Disclose doorbell cams or floodlight cams. These are for security only — **not** for monitoring the sitter's movements.

### The Trust vs. Security Balance

- **Privacy Mode:** Can internal cameras be turned off or covered while the sitter is in the home?
- **Mutual Agreement:** Both parties must explicitly agree on the "Trust vs. Security" balance before the sit starts.

 A sitter who feels watched cannot provide their best care. Agree on privacy upfront.

# 3. Emergency & "What If" Protocols

Prepare for the unexpected. Every sitter should know exactly what to do before a crisis happens — not during it.



## Water & Gas Failsafe

Agree together that the sitter knows where the **main water shut-off valve** and **gas isolation valve** are. This is essential for burst pipes or leaks.



## Power Outages

Confirm with your sitter where the **fuse box/circuit breaker** is, and whether a torch or candles are easily accessible in a known location.



## Emergency Fund

Agree together whether there is a small **cash float (e.g., £100)** or an agreed contact for urgent repairs who can bill the homeowner directly.



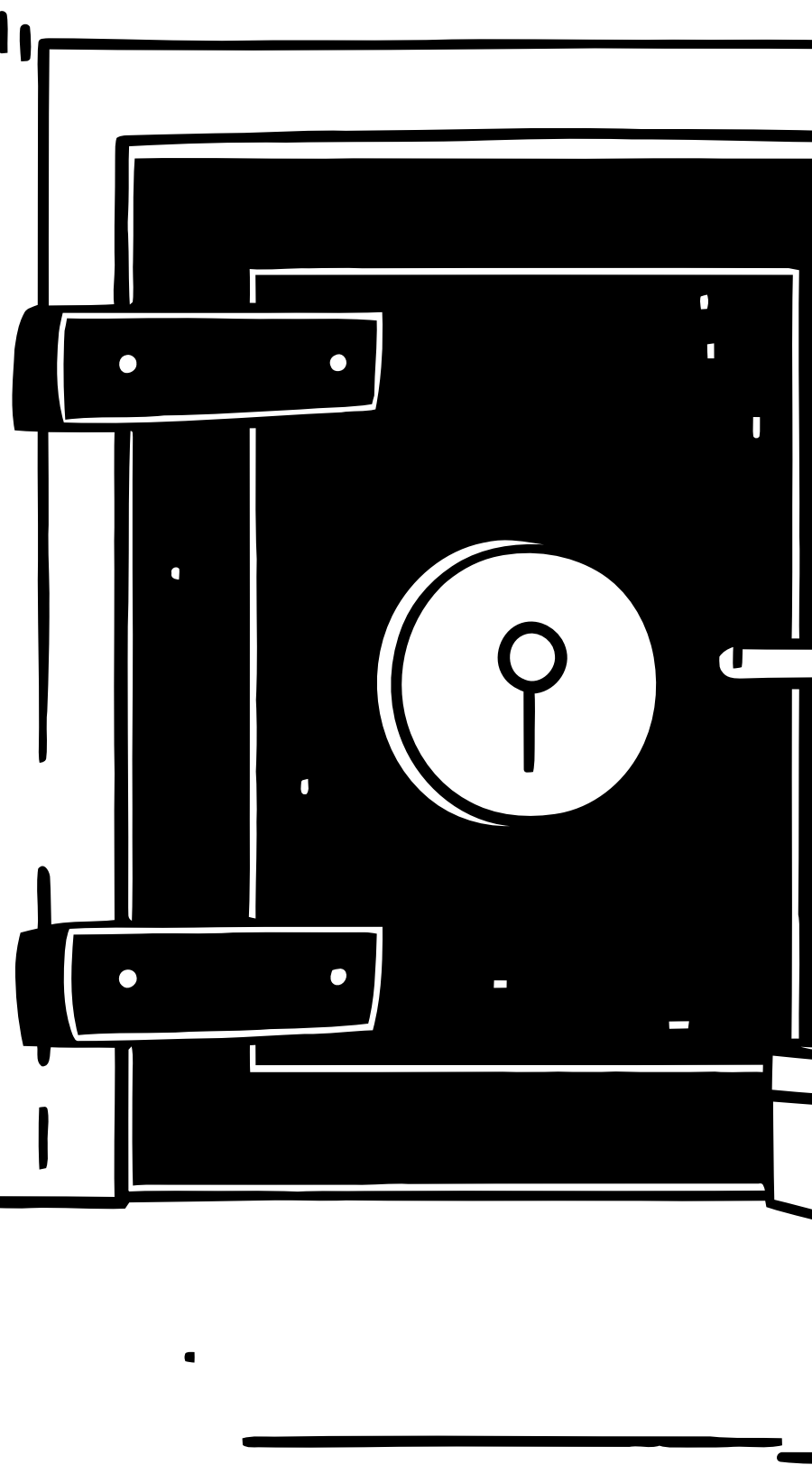
## Secondary Contact

If the homeowner is on a flight or out of signal, confirm who is the local decision-maker for pet medical emergencies.



## Early Exit Protocol

Agree in advance what happens if the sitter needs to leave early due to a personal emergency. Who is the backup sitter contact? What notice period is required? Having a plan removes panic from an already stressful situation.





## 4. Communication & Updates

Agreeing how you'll stay in touch removes anxiety for both parties — and prevents the homeowner from feeling ignored or the sitter from feeling monitored.



### Update Frequency

Agree together on the expected rhythm — daily photo check-in, every 2–3 days, or "only if there's a problem." Neither is wrong; what matters is that both parties agree upfront.



### Preferred Channel

Confirm the best communication method — WhatsApp, email, or the platform's own messaging. Agree on one primary channel so nothing gets missed.



### Homeowner Response Expectations

Be upfront about signal or availability gaps. If you'll be on a flight, in a remote area, or in a different time zone, let the sitter know in advance — and confirm who the backup contact is.



### Urgent Contact Protocol

Agree together what the sitter should do if they genuinely cannot reach the homeowner in an urgent situation. Name a secondary contact and confirm the threshold for what counts as "urgent."



Good communication isn't about checking up — it's about both parties feeling supported throughout the sit.



# 5. Photos, Social Media & Privacy

No assumption is safe — agree what can be shared before the sit starts.



## Pet Photos on Social Media

Is the sitter permitted to post photos or videos of the pets on their personal social media? Many sitters love sharing their furry companions — confirm whether this is welcome, and if so, whether the homeowner would like to be tagged.



## Home & Location Privacy

Is the home's exterior, interior, or location off-limits for sharing publicly? Agree together on what — if anything — can be shown online, and whether the address or neighbourhood should remain private.




## Travel Dates & Security Risk

A sitter sharing their sit location and dates on social media can inadvertently signal that the homeowners are away. Someone who knows the owners — or the property — now knows the house is in unfamiliar hands for a specific window of time. Agree upfront what's okay to post publicly.



## Platform Profile & Reviews

May the sitter use pet photos for their house sitting profile, portfolio, or review purposes on platforms like TrustedHousesitters or Nomador? This is a reasonable request — agree it upfront rather than after the sit.

 A sitter who feels trusted to share their experience will always go the extra mile. Set the boundaries kindly and clearly.

# 6. Pet Care & Health

Your pets are the whole reason for the sit. These protocols ensure they receive the best possible care — even in unexpected situations.

## 1 Vet Protocol

Agree together that there is a **"Letter of Authority"** at the vet, or an alternative agreed-upon plan, that allows the sitter to seek treatment. Confirm with your sitter how payment should be covered for emergencies.

## 2 Dietary No-Gos

Share a clear list of **human foods that are toxic** to pets — grapes, chocolate, onions, and xylitol — to help prevent accidental poisoning.

## 3 Off-Leash Rules

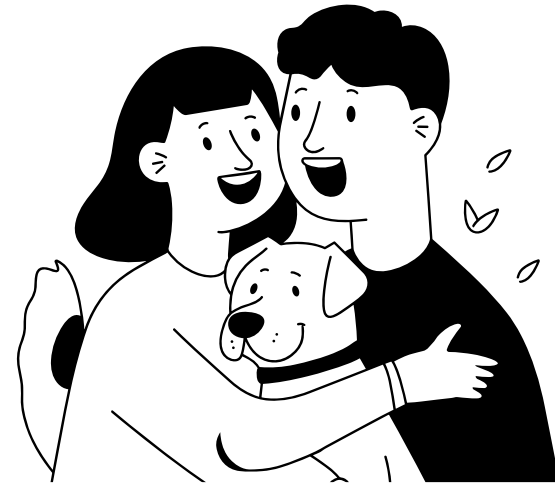
Agree together on whether the dog is allowed off-leash in public spaces, and where it is safe for them to be running free.

## 4 Pet ID & Microchip

Confirm the sitter has a clear photo of each pet showing their markings, and knows the microchip details and registration in case of loss. A lost pet is far easier to recover with this information to hand.

## 5 Behavioural Notes

Share any known triggers, anxieties, or aggression with strangers or other animals. Note any separation anxiety behaviours so the sitter can plan accordingly and isn't caught off guard.



⊗ Never assume. Always confirm dietary restrictions and vet access in writing before the sit begins.

# 7. Home & Cleaning — The Fair Exchange

A clear, shared understanding of home standards removes awkwardness and ensures both parties feel respected.

## "As Found" Standard

Agree the home should be returned in the **same condition it was received**. No deep-cleaning required, but no mess left behind.

## Consumables

Set **clear boundaries** on food, alcohol, and toiletries. "Help yourself to the pantry" vs. "Please don't touch the wine cellar."

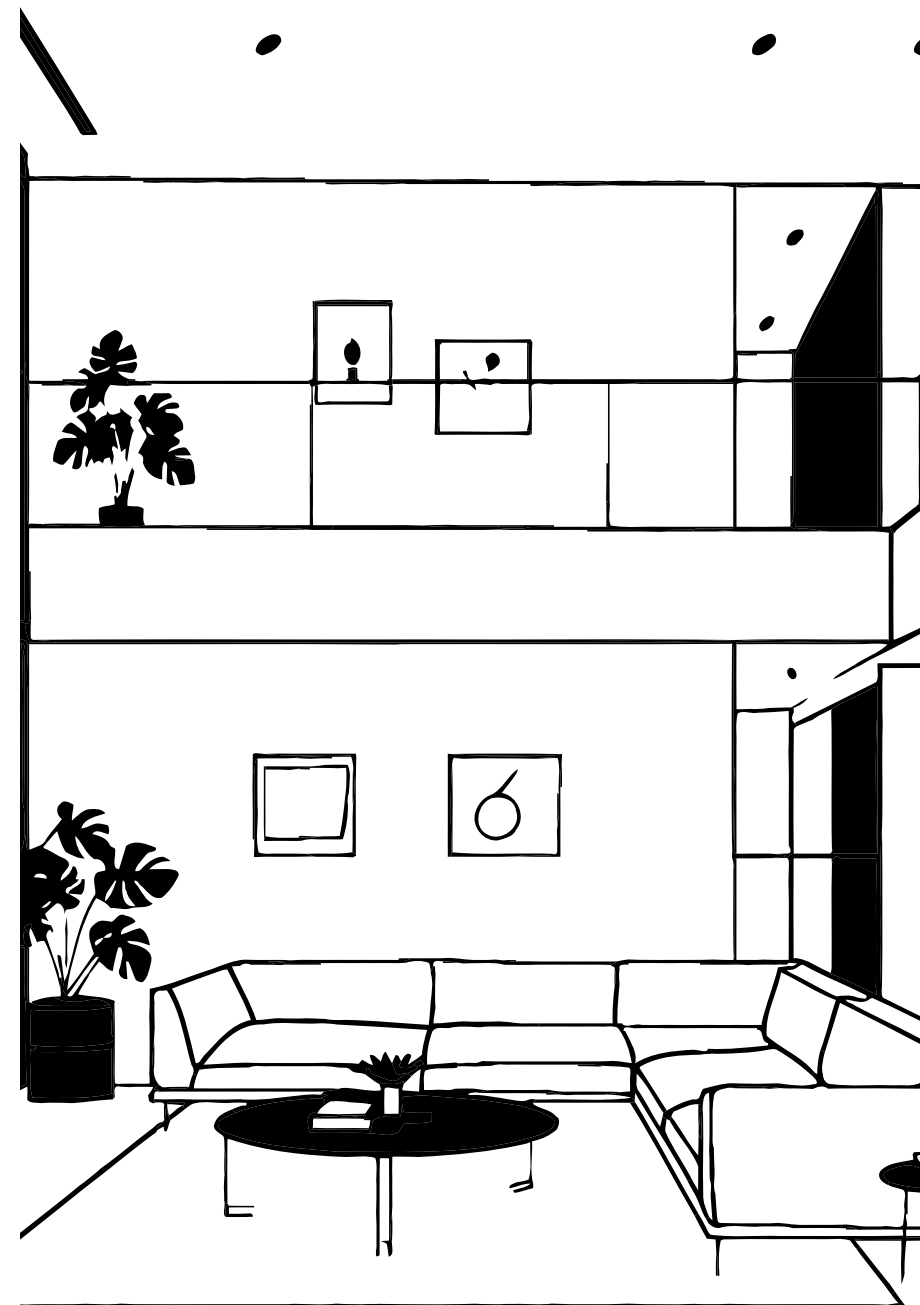
## Laundry Protocol

Agree on the **"Last Day" protocol** — should sheets be put in the wash, or simply stripped and left folded?

## Garden & Plants

Confirm any watering, mowing, or outdoor maintenance expectations for the duration of the sit. For longer sits especially, a neglected garden is a common oversight that's easy to avoid with one quick conversation.

- ✔ The "Fair Exchange" principle means both parties leave the experience feeling valued and respected — the foundation of a 5-star sit.





# 8. House Rules & Lifestyle

The small things matter. Agreeing on lifestyle expectations upfront prevents awkwardness and protects the relationship.

## Smoking Policy

Confirm together whether smoking is permitted — inside, outside, or anywhere on the property. If the homeowner has a strict no-smoking policy, this must be stated clearly before the sit is confirmed.

## Overnight Guests

Agree whether the sitter may have overnight guests. If yes, is prior notice required? Daytime visitors — are these welcome with notice, or not at all? There's no wrong answer, but silence creates assumptions.

## Parties & Gatherings

A hard no for most homeowners — but confirm it explicitly. Even a small gathering of friends can feel like a breach of trust if it hasn't been discussed.

## Quiet Hours & Noise

If the property has noise-sensitive neighbours, shared walls, or the homeowner has specific preferences, agree on quiet hours in advance. This is especially relevant for urban properties or flats.

## Vehicle Use

If a car is available for the sitter's use, confirm: Is the sitter covered on the homeowner's insurance? Who pays for fuel? How is liability for accidental damage handled? Never assume vehicle access is included.

✔ House rules aren't about distrust — they're about setting both parties up for a relaxed, enjoyable sit.

# 9. Insurance & Liability

A brief but important conversation — protecting both parties before anything goes wrong.

## Homeowner's Contents Insurance


A quick two-minute call to your insurer is worth it — just confirm that your contents cover stays valid with a sitter in residence. Most policies are absolutely fine, but some have a 'vacant property' clause worth knowing about. A sitter doesn't usually trigger this, but it's better to know than assume.

## Sitter's Personal Liability Cover

No specialist insurance is needed to house sit — but it's worth a quick check of any travel insurance you already hold. Many standard policies include personal liability cover, which would apply here. If you don't have it, that's fine — just something to be aware of rather than a blocker.

## Accidental Breakages — The Threshold Agreement

Things get broken — it happens. The awkwardness comes from not having talked about it beforehand. Most sits run on goodwill and common sense, but a simple conversation upfront removes any weirdness: agree on a rough threshold where small accidents are absorbed gracefully by whoever caused them, and anything significant gets a calm conversation.

 Most sits never need any of this — but five minutes of conversation means both parties can relax and focus on what matters: happy pets and a well-loved home.

# ✓ Pre-Sit Checklist — At a Glance

Run through this together on your pre-sit call. Tick each item off before the sit begins.

1

## Security & Access

- Lockbox code demonstrated and scramble procedure confirmed
- Spare key location shared (emergency use only)
- Alarm guest code provided and entry/exit delays walked through
- Mail and delivery instructions agreed
- Any off-limits areas or rooms noted

2

## Cameras & Privacy

- All internal cameras disclosed
- Confirmed no cameras in bedrooms or bathrooms
- External cameras (doorbell/floodlight) noted
- Privacy mode / camera-off agreement reached

3

## Emergency Protocols

- Main water shut-off valve location shown
- Gas isolation valve location shown
- Fuse box / circuit breaker located
- Emergency fund or repair contact agreed
- Secondary local contact named for pet emergencies

4

## Pet Care & Health

- Vet "Letter of Authority" confirmed
- Emergency vet payment method in place
- Toxic foods list provided
- Off-leash rules explicitly agreed
- Feeding schedule and dietary needs confirmed

5

## Home & Cleaning

- "As found" condition standard agreed
- Last-day laundry protocol set
- Food, alcohol, and toiletry boundaries clear
- Garden and outdoor maintenance expectations confirmed

6

## Communication & Updates

- Update frequency agreed (daily / every 2–3 days / problems only)
- Preferred communication channel confirmed (WhatsApp / email / platform)
- Homeowner signal gaps and availability disclosed
- Urgent contact protocol and secondary contact named

7

## Photos, Social Media & Privacy

- Pet photo sharing on social media agreed
- Home exterior/interior/location sharing boundaries set
- Sitter's travel dates — public sharing approach agreed
- Platform profile/review photo use confirmed

8

## House Rules & Lifestyle

- Smoking policy confirmed (inside / outside / none)
- Overnight guests policy agreed (yes with notice / no)
- Parties and gatherings — confirmed as not permitted
- Quiet hours noted if relevant
- Vehicle use, insurance, fuel, and liability agreed (if applicable)

9

## Insurance & Liability

- Homeowner confirmed contents insurance valid with sitter in residence
- Sitter checked personal liability cover
- Accidental breakage threshold agreed (e.g. under/over £50)

10

## After the Sit

- Both parties leave an honest review on the platform

Both parties should verbally confirm each item — and ideally sign or screenshot this list.

# The "Fair Exchange" Commitment

A mutual agreement — not a script. Both parties should feel confident entering into an agreement before a sit begins.

## What the Homeowner Commits To

- Provide a safe, clean, and private space
- Disclose all security information and camera locations
- Be reachable during the sit, or provide a named backup contact
- Set clear expectations in advance — no surprises on arrival
- Respect the sitter's time and professionalism

## What the Sitter Commits To

- Follow all security protocols, including lockbox procedures
- Care for pets exactly as agreed — feeding, exercise, medication
- Communicate proactively and as agreed
- Leave the home in the same condition as found
- Respect the privacy of the home and family at all times

## About the Authors

### **Sarah Blinco & Cooper Dawson**

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Community Managers, Pet & House Sitting, Travel and Digital Nomads (26,000+ members)

Sarah and Cooper began their house and pet sitting journey across the UK and Europe in 2018 and have been active in the community ever since. What makes their perspective unique is that they sit on both sides of the arrangement — as experienced sitters who have cared for homes and pets across multiple countries, and as homeowners who regularly engage trusted sitters to care for their beloved Westie dog. They know first-hand what good preparation looks like, and what happens when it's missing. This guide is built on that lived experience and their desire for pet parents *and* sitters to enjoy the exchange.

## Join Our Community

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Our House Sitting Essentials eGuide includes a global platform directory, a ready-to-use application letter template, and the "Is this sit right for me?" checklist — everything you need to land your first sit with confidence.

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