

No experience? No reviews? No idea where to start? Let's fix that.

So, you've decided to give pet and house sitting a go. Excellent! But there's one small problem: the **Catch-22**. Homeowners want someone with experience, and you need someone to give you that experience in the first place.

Welcome to the chicken-and-egg stage of house sitting!

The good news? You don't need to book an international adventure or land a month-long sit in a luxury beachfront property to get started. You need to build trust, gain experience, and get those first reviews under your belt.

Here's how I'd tackle it – in fact – it's **exactly** how I started my house sitting journey.

1. Start close to home

Your first few sits should ideally be short, local, and starting soon.

Look for weekend sits, a few days away, or short breaks where the homeowner needs someone within the next week or two. Being available at short notice can give you an advantage, particularly when a homeowner is struggling to find someone suitable and leaving home soon.

Why start locally?

- ☐ You can offer to meet the homeowner and their pets before committing.
- ☐ You can visit the property, ask questions, and get a feel for the arrangement.
- ☐ You won't need to spend a fortune travelling to the sit.
- ☐ Shorter sits let you build experience without committing to weeks of responsibility.
- ☐ You can start collecting reviews and building a reputation.

My own experience: I got started on a platform by applying for a weekend sit on a Wednesday. The homeowners were leaving on the Friday, so they needed someone urgently. I did a good job, earned my first 5-star review, and repeated the process with two more local sits.

Those first three reviews made a remarkable difference in my acceptance rate.

You don't need to copy my exact approach, but the principle is worth remembering: *look for opportunities where you can offer something the homeowner needs*.

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2. Choose your platform carefully

Dedicated house sitting platforms can help you connect with homeowners actively looking for sitters. But before paying for a membership, **investigate what each platform offers**. Check:

- ☐ **References:** Can you upload references from previous employers, friends, family, or people whose pets you've cared for? If you don't have house sitting reviews yet, independent references may help demonstrate your reliability.
- ☐ **Reviews:** How are reviews collected, and can homeowners and sitters review each other?
- ☐ **Local listings:** Are there enough opportunities in your area?
- ☐ **Application limits:** Can you apply for multiple sits, or are there restrictions?
- ☐ **Membership fees and rules:** What will it cost, and what are the cancellation and verification requirements?

Don't assume every platform supports references in the same way. Check the actual features before joining.

If you're in Australia or New Zealand, you could investigate **Aussie House Sitters** or **Kiwi House Sitters**, respectively. Other platforms may suit you better depending on where you live and the type of sitting you want. I offer discount codes for both:
Aussie House Sitters M2Y43H and Kiwi House Sitters M9ZLDJ

You don't need to join every platform going. Start with one that offers suitable opportunities and expand later if necessary.

3. Don't overlook local Facebook groups

House sitting and local community groups on Facebook can be an excellent place to find opportunities, particularly when you're starting out.

Homeowners sometimes post directly in community groups when they need someone to care for their pets while they're away. They may not have considered using a dedicated house sitting platform, so you could be reaching people who wouldn't otherwise see your profile.

Some may be less selective than homeowners using established platforms, but don't assume every Facebook opportunity will be an easy win. You still need to demonstrate that you're **trustworthy, capable, and a good fit**.

Try searching Facebook for:

- House sitting groups in your town, city, or region
- Local community and neighbourhood groups
- Pet sitting groups
- Groups for people travelling or living in your area
- Grey nomads groups.

Read each group's rules **before** posting or responding. Some allow sitters to advertise their availability; others only permit homeowners to post requests. If they do allow sitters to post – **follow their instructions** and especially include where and when you want to sit.

I see so many posts from people in those groups that say simply, "Hi, we'd love to house sit for you". In an Australia wide group. A land of 7,688,287 square kilometres (2,968,464 square miles). Ya might want to narrow your location down a tad 🤦. And yes, you see posts in those same groups from homeowners. "House sitter wanted." When? Where? What pets?

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When you find a suitable opportunity, either comment on the post or via Messenger. If using Messenger, comment "**Sent you a DM** 🐾" otherwise your message may be lost to their spam folder. Explain why you're interested, highlight relevant experience, and offer to chat or meet in person.

And please don't send a message saying, "Hi, I love animals. Can I stay at your house?" 🤣

NOTE: Unlike the house sitting website-based platforms, you can't filter the Facebook groups to find what you want – you kind of have to be in the right place at the right time to see a sit that suits you. And demand is often high. I just saw a listing for a sit on Russell Island posted three hours ago in two island groups – it already has 21 replies in one group and 18 in the other!

4. Build your credibility before you apply

You may not have house sitting reviews yet, but that doesn't mean you have nothing to offer. Think about the experience you already have:

- ☐ Have you owned or cared for pets?
- ☐ Have you looked after friends' or family members' homes?
- ☐ Are you comfortable managing a household, gardens, or everyday maintenance?
- ☐ Have you held a job that required responsibility, reliability, and good communication?
- ☐ Can you provide references from people who know you well?

Ask people who can genuinely vouch for you whether they're willing to provide a reference. If the platform permits uploads, add suitable references to your profile. Otherwise, mention that references are available and follow the platform's application process.

Create a profile with clear, recent photographs – **preferably with animals** – and an honest description of your experience. Explain what animals you're comfortable caring for, what you can offer, and what you're still learning.

Don't pretend to be an experienced horse whisperer if your only encounter with a horse was a pony ride at the school fair.

Honesty builds trust. Overpromising creates problems.

5. Apply strategically, not desperately

When you're new, it can be tempting to apply for every sit you see. **Resist the urge!**

Instead, look for **sits that match** your experience, availability, location, and comfort level.

Read each listing properly. Mention something specific about the home or pets, explain why you're a good fit, and show that you've considered the responsibilities involved.

If you're applying for a local sit starting soon, mention that you're nearby and can meet beforehand, if that's genuinely convenient for you.

Keep your application friendly, personal, and reasonably concise. Homeowners want to know why they should trust you with their home and beloved animals, not read your autobiography.

And remember, you're choosing the homeowner as much as they're choosing you. Ask questions, arrange a conversation, and ideally meet before agreeing to the sit.

A gorgeous house with a swimming pool isn't worth accepting if you can't safely manage the pets or the homeowner's expectations are unreasonable.

6. Turn your first sit into your next opportunity

Once you've secured a sit, **do the job well.**

Follow the agreed routines, look after the property, communicate with the homeowner, and contact them promptly if anything goes wrong. Don't be afraid to ask sensible questions.

When the sit is complete, politely ask the homeowner to leave an honest review through the platform, if applicable. If you've arranged the sit privately, ask whether they'd be comfortable providing a written reference for future opportunities.

Keep building your experience one sit at a time.

A happy homeowner may recommend you to friends, invite you back, or become a repeat client. Good word of mouth can be every bit as valuable as an online review.

Your first-sit action plan

- ☐ Identify a few local house sitting and pet sitting groups
- ☐ Investigate one suitable house sitting platform
- ☐ Prepare your profile and gather any genuine references you can obtain
- ☐ Search for short, local sits starting soon
- ☐ Apply selectively and offer an in-person meet-and-greet where practical
- ☐ Ask questions, check the responsibilities, and accept only a sit you can handle
- ☐ Do a great job, request an honest review, and build from there.

A HEADS UP ABOUT READING REVIEWS OF HOMEOWNERS

If using a platform, make sure you read the reviews of the homeowner. Although rare, there are mean people out there who have sitters in who do a sterling job – and then the homeowner tears them to shreds in the review – occasional even making up terrible lies. When you're just starting out, you want to be sure you get a decent human being to sit for.

Another useful resource

You'll find ***Aunty Kaz's Guide to Writing Your First Sit Application*** at the same place you found this guide: Aunty Kaz's Guides.

AUNTY KAZ'S FINAL WORD

You don't need to be the most experienced sitter in the world; you need to be someone a homeowner can trust.

Start small. Be honest. Be reliable. Learn as you go.

And don't underestimate what a few good local sits can do for your confidence and credibility.

I started full-time house sitting at 56. You don't need to have it all figured out before you begin.

Now, go find your first sit. Those furry supervisors are waiting!

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