

E-BOOK

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN HOUSE-
SWAPPING & PET-SITTING

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CONSIDERATIONS FOR HOUSE-SWAPPING & PET-SITTING

My experiences house-swapping and pet-sitting...

...have taught me that it's essential to initiate an interview process where both parties can discuss terms before agreeing to live in each other's homes. The advice in these pages is sprinkled with anecdotes that may seem ridiculous but that I can assure you are 100% true. As always, this workbook contains current research and is meant to be used as a guide. Take the time to determine your preferences, boundaries and expectations to determine whether house-swapping is right for you before setting up an interview.

Using this e-book

- Read my blog called *Considerations When House-Swapping and Pet-Sitting*
- Interview the people you're swapping with, or send them a copy of this questionnaire to fill out.
- Use this as a guide to build out your own preferences, boundaries and expectations.
- By using this workbook you agree to the Terms & Conditions on our website.

Before Getting Started

RENTERS

- Rental agreement reviewed
- Renter's insurance policy reviewed

HOME OWNERS

- HOA rules reviewed (if applicable)
- Homeowner's insurance policy reviewed

The Considerations

Setting Boundaries and Expectations

Planning a trip always includes making lists, checking them twice, and packing.

Planning your house swap should also include effective communication of boundaries and expectations. It's important to build a rapport and establish trust so that both parties can be comfortable staying at each other's homes.

Below are several lists of my priorities for setting boundaries and expectations. Your priorities may be different, so make sure you take the time to write your own list. Then, take that list with you when you sit down to discuss your boundaries and expectations with your potential house swap.

Happy swapping!

CONSIDERATIONS FOR HOUSE-SWAPPING & PET-SITTING

General Expectations

- The house and all amenities must be left in the same condition as they were found. This includes cleanliness, daily consumables like toiletries and food, but excludes things like cleaning supplies, pool chemicals and firewood.
- Locked areas are to remain off-limits.
- Don't leave the house / garage / pool area, etc. unlocked when not at home.
- If pet-sitting, establish an acceptable amount of time the pet may be left alone & unattended.
- Establish a timeline for communicating any sort of emergency (fire, water leak, lost pet, etc.).
- Provide a schedule for maintenance, and communicate who is responsible for performing the maintenance (pool cleaning, hot tub cleaning, yard maintenance, garbage, organics, recycling, etc.).
- Scheduled service interruptions (power, water, wifi, etc.)

Heck, if my house made weird sounds I'd include that too, because the comfort of my guests is important to me. And if you're house-swapping, it should be important to you, too.

Safety & Security

Ask about security features like gates and alarm systems. Get detailed instructions on how to use electronic key pads, and ensure keys are easily identifiable for each lock.

Ask whether there are cameras. If there are, ask where they're located. Find out who has access to the video feed and recordings. Discuss any privacy concerns and ensure both parties are in agreement. Get the agreement in writing.

If a car swap is included, make sure the car is insured for extra drivers and that you both have a valid drivers license at home and abroad. Talk about whether it's standard or automatic transmission, what type of fuel should be used, and then have a general discussion about driving. You might be surprised what you learn.

fun times



On a month-long house swap to Costa Rica, on our way in from the airport, the 4x4 truck we'd been lent for the trip broke down. We were still 20 minutes from the house and sunset was falling fast.

We flagged down a friendly cab driver who took us up the mountain but his little sedan didn't have the clearance to navigate major wash-outs in the road. We ended up having to hike our suitcases through the pitch-dark jungle wearing only flip-flops and shorts. To call it exciting would have been an understatement.

It turns out the truck battery had to be watered like a houseplant. The 3-hour drive from San Jose Airport had run the battery dry, shorting out the electrical systems in the truck.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR HOUSE-SWAPPING & PET-SITTING

Pet Care

The golden rule when considering a pet-sitting gig is to not make assumptions about how someone might care for their pet. Be thorough and ask even the most mundane questions, like “should I pack a leash for your dog, or do you have one?”

Here are the things to think about when applying to pet-sit:

- Veterinary contact information.
- Homeowner’s emergency contact information.
- Detailed feeding schedule.
- Medication / schedule for administering the medication / how to refill the prescription if needed.
- How to identify signs of illness.
- How the pet has been registered in case it gets loose (and the tracking service or App to find them)
- Ask for a detailed behavioural writeup:
 - What quirky things should I know about your pet?
 - Is the pet friendly toward other animals? Toward adults? Children?
 - How much exercise does your pet need?
 - Is it allowed off-leash or out of its aquarium / tank / terrarium?
 - What quirky things should I know about your pet?
 - Is the pet friendly toward other animals? Toward adults? Children?
 - How much exercise does the pet need?
 - Is it allowed out of it’s cage / aquarium / off-leash?
 - Is the pet indoor only? Outdoor only?
 - Is the pet prone to wander?
 - Is there a pet door?
 - If yes: is there a time when it should be locked to keep the pet in / out?
 - If no: do the human doors need to be left open 24/7?
 - Have you ever had a stray animal enter the house?

notes



CONSIDERATIONS FOR HOUSE-SWAPPING & PET-SITTING

Bathroom

- What temperature is the hot water on demand set to?
- What temperature is the hot water tank set to?
- How do I use the programmable shower?
- How do I use the jetted tub?
- How do I use the heated towel rack?
- Is there a clothes line for drying towels?
- Is the tap water safe for brushing teeth?
- Are there bug screens on the windows?
- Where are clean linens kept?
- Can toilet paper be flushed down the toilet?
- Where can I find extra toilet paper?
- Where are the cleaning supplies located?

Kitchen

- Is the tap water potable?
- Get them to list all available amenities (appliances, utensils, crockery, china, flatware, cooking oils, spices).
- Get operating manuals with serial numbers so that you can look up instructions in English if you need to.
- Are appliances electric or propane?
- Where is the gas shut-off in case of emergency?
- How do I read the gauge on the propane tank and when / who do I call to have it refilled?
- Where to dispose of garbage, organics and recycling?
- Where is fire extinguisher / fire blanket in case of fire?

House Maintenance

- Electrical outages - how to get all appliances started again, including hot water on demand, fridge, stove, freezer, electric fence, security gate, etc.
- Location of electrical panel and all labels made in the language the user can understand
- Water shutoff and bibs for watering outdoor plants / gardens / lawns
- Lawn maintenance
- Windows - how do they open / close
- Cleaning supplies - kitchen, bathroom, floors, dusters, mops, rags, buckets and a list of cleaning products that should not be used on specific surfaces.

fun times

Even in Guatemala you want hot water for a shower or a bath. After a week of lukewarm showers I finally decided I needed a hot bath. I started carting pots of boiled water up to the tub, only for the power to go out when the tub was less than half full.

Turns out the power would go out for no reason in our little village, something that would have been nice to know ahead of time.

Also nice to know? That there was hot water available, we just needed English instructions on how to operate our (weirdly) space-age bathtub and shower.



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House Amenities

WIFI

- Where are the routers / hubs located?
- How do I reset them in case of power outage?
- What are the passwords?

WASHER / DRYER / DISHWASHER

- What settings do you (the homeowner) use?
- What kind of soap should I use?
- Where to find a drying rack or clothes line?

FIREPLACE

- Where is the operating manual for the gas fireplace?
- Where are the hand-written instructions for safe use of wood burning fireplace?
- Where and how can I safely dispose of ash?
- Where is the firewood or gas tank located?
- How do I read the gauge on the gas tank and when / who do I call to have it refilled?

ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE

- Get a list of all AV equipment.
- Get operating manuals with serial numbers so that you can look up instructions in English if you need to.
- Where are the remote controls located?
- Do I need to bring my own HDMI cable to watch a movie from my laptop?
- Where are the hand-written instructions on how to access the AV from my smart phone or laptop?

HOT TUB / POOL / SAUNA

- Where do I find the operating manual for the hot tub / pool / sauna?
- How often should I add chemicals to the tub / pool?
- Where do I find chemicals and in what quantity should I add them to the tub / pool?
- Will the water need to be replaced while I'm staying here?
- Where do I find the instructions on how to change the water in the tub / pool?
- What other features are located near the tub / pool / sauna (ambient lighting, music, etc.)?
- How do I operate these special features?
- Is there a pool deck?
- Is there outdoor lounge furniture?

