

Your First Steps Into House Sitting

A simple action plan for the first 2 weeks after you've decided to start house sitting

Week 1: Build Your Foundation

Step 1: Gather Your References

Character References (You need 2-3)

- **Who to ask:** Employers, landlords, long-term neighbours, family friends (not relatives)
- **What to say:** "I'm starting house sitting and need character references. Would you be comfortable vouching for my reliability if homeowners contact you?"
- **Give them this info:** They might get brief calls asking about your trustworthiness, punctuality, and whether they'd trust you with their home

Pet Experience References (You need 1-2)

- **If you have pet experience:** Friends/neighbours whose pets you've helped with, even informally
- **If you don't:** Offer to pet-sit for friends this weekend in exchange for a reference, or volunteer at a local animal shelter

Quick Reference Request Text: "Hi [Name]! I'm getting into house sitting and building my profile. Would you mind being a character reference? It just means occasionally getting a quick call from homeowners asking if I'm trustworthy. Let me know if you're comfortable with that - thanks!"

Step 2: Photo Collection Mission

Photos you need:

- **You with pets:** Dig through your phone for any photos of you with friends' dogs, cats, etc.
- **Missing pet photos?**
 - Ask friends if you can visit and get photos with their pets this week
 - Offer to walk a neighbour's dog and snap some pictures
 - Visit a local dog park and ask friendly owners if you can pet/photo their dogs

Photo tips:

- Natural, candid shots work better than posed ones
- Show you comfortable and relaxed around animals

- Include different types of pets if possible (dogs, cats, etc.)
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Week 2: Platform Research & Application Prep

Step 3: Get Your Police Check

Why you need it:

- Most platforms require or prefer background checks
- Shows professionalism and builds trust
- Takes 1-2 weeks to process, so start early

How to get it:

- Apply online through your state/country's police check service
- Cost: Usually \$40-60
- Choose "employment/volunteer" purpose
- Keep digital and physical copies

Pro tip: Get this done in your first week - it's often the longest part of the setup process.

Step 4: Choose Your Starting Platform

For Beginners - Pick ONE to start:

Option A: Rover (Free)

- **Choose if:** You want to test the waters without spending money
- **Good for:** Local sits, building initial experience
- **Downside:** Limited house sitting options, more pet sitting focussed

Option B: Aussie House Sitters (\$79/year)

- **Choose if:** You're serious about house sitting and can invest upfront
- **Good for:** Australia-focussed platform, established community, travel opportunities
- **Downside:** Annual fee, but very reasonable for what you get
- **Bonus:** Use referral code **7RT5AH** for \$10 off your first year

Option C: MindAHome (Free)

- **Choose if:** You want another free option with house sitting focus

- **Good for:** Dedicated house sitting platform, no subscription fees
- **Downside:** Smaller user base, less established than paid platforms

Option D: Local Facebook Groups (Free)

- **Choose if:** You want to start hyper-local and build community connections
- **Good for:** Less competition, direct communication with homeowners
- **Downside:** Less security, requires extra safety steps
- **Safety tip:** Always ask if they have a profile on a formal platform (Aussie House Sitters, Rover, MindAHome) - this gives you additional security and verification

Decision framework: If you're unsure about committing, start with Rover, MindAHome, or Facebook groups. If you know you want to house sit regularly, go with Aussie House Sitters.

Step 5: Create Your Application Template

Build a template with these sections that you can customise for each application:

Subject Line Template: "Reliable [Your City] house sitter available [dates] - [pet type] experience"

Opening Paragraph: "Hi [Homeowner Name],

I'd love to care for [pet names] and your home from [dates]. I'm [brief intro about yourself - job, neighbourhood, why you house sit]."

Experience Section: "Whilst I'm new to house sitting platforms, I have experience with [specific pet types/situations]. [Reference specific examples: 'I regularly care for my neighbour's golden retriever when they travel' or 'I grew up with cats and understand their routines']."

Responsibility Section: "I understand that house sitting means being a responsible guardian of your most important possessions. I'm [mention relevant qualities: punctual, communicative, detail-oriented] and would [specific care promises: send daily updates, follow all routines exactly, treat your home with respect]."

Practical Details: "I'm available [exact dates], live in [your area], and can [mention any extras you offer: plant care, post collection, house maintenance]. I'm happy to meet beforehand or do a video call to discuss [pet names]'s specific needs."

Closing: "I'd love to learn more about [pet names] and answer any questions you have. Thank you for considering me!"

Best regards,

[Your name]"

Customisation checklist for each application:

- ☐ Pet names mentioned at least twice
 - ☐ Specific dates confirmed
 - ☐ Relevant experience highlighted (match their pet type)
 - ☐ Show you read their full listing
 - ☐ Mention something specific about their home/location
 - ☐ Professional but warm tone
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Your Two-Week Action Plan

Days 1-3: Foundation Setup

- Make your list of potential references
- **Apply for police check immediately** (this takes the longest)
- Send reference requests to 4-5 people (expect 1-2 to decline)

Days 4-7: Photo Mission

- Collect existing photos from your phone
- Arrange visits with friends who have pets
- Take new photos if needed

Days 8-10: Platform Research

- Research your chosen platform thoroughly
- Create your account
- Study successful profiles in your area
- **Join local Facebook house sitting groups** (even if not your main platform)

Days 11-14: Profile & Template Creation

- Complete your platform profile
- Upload your police check when it arrives
- Write your application template
- Practise customising it for 2-3 example listings

Day 15: Launch Day

- Send your first 5 applications
 - Set up a simple tracking system (spreadsheet or notebook)
 - Plan to send 5 more applications each week
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Pro Tips for Your First Two Weeks

Don't overthink the references: Most people are happy to help if you ask nicely and make it easy for them.

Quality over quantity on photos: 3-4 good photos of you with pets beats 10 awkward ones.

Read successful profiles: Before writing yours, study profiles of sitters with good reviews in your area.

Start local: Your first sits will likely be nearby. Focus on building local reputation first.

Facebook group safety: If someone offers you a sit through Facebook, always ask "Do you have a profile on Aussie House Sitters, Rover, or MindAHome?" This gives you additional security and verification.

Be patient with responses: Homeowners might take a week to respond. Don't take silence personally.

Track everything: Keep notes on which applications you've sent, response rates, and what seems to work.

You're Ready When You Have:

- ☐ 2-3 confirmed character references
- ☐ 1-2 pet experience references
- ☐ 3-5 photos of you with pets
- ☐ **Police check completed and uploaded**
- ☐ Completed profile on your chosen platform
- ☐ Application template ready to customise
- ☐ List of 10 potential sits to apply for

Time investment: About 10-15 hours over two weeks. Front-loading this work will make your ongoing house sitting much smoother.

Next step: Start applying! Expect your first few applications to feel awkward - that's normal. You'll find your rhythm within the first week of applications.