Pet Sitting Business Startup Checklist

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Key takeaways

- Offer dog walks, drop-in visits and overnight sitting to start
- Get pet sitter insurance and a bond, since you hold client keys
- Always do a meet and greet and use a written service agreement
- Photo updates after every visit build trust and referrals

1. Plan

- [ ] Choose your niche and the services you'll offer first
- [ ] Define your service area (keep it tight to cut drive time)
- [ ] Write a one-page plan: who, where, what you charge, how you'll get 10 clients
- [ ] Check local competitors' services and prices

2. Register & insure

- [ ] Pick a business name and check your state registry, trademarks and the .com domain
- [ ] Choose a structure (sole proprietor or LLC)
- [ ] Get a free EIN from the IRS (irs.gov)
- [ ] Check city/county business license requirements
- [ ] Open a separate business bank account
- [ ] Get general liability insurance before your first paid job
- [ ] Look for pet sitter insurance (covers care, custody and control of animals, which general policies may exclude) and a bond since you'll hold client keys. Use a written service agreement with vet authorization and emergency contacts.

3. Equipment

- [ ] Leashes, poop bags and treats
- [ ] Pet first aid kit (consider a pet first aid course)
- [ ] Lockbox or secure key management system
- [ ] Phone app or system for visit updates and photos
- [ ] Client intake forms and service agreement

4. Pricing

- [ ] Track your real job times on your first jobs
- [ ] Set a target hourly rate that covers pay, taxes, insurance, fuel and admin time
- [ ] Create a simple price menu and a minimum charge
- [ ] Use estimate and invoice templates for every quote

- [ ] Check your numbers with the free calculator on ServiceStartKit.com

5. Get online

- [ ] Register a short domain and set up a professional email
- [ ] Launch a 4-page website: home, services & prices, reviews/photos, contact
- [ ] Create a Google Business Profile with photos and your service area

6. First clients

- [ ] Introduce yourself to local vets, groomers and pet stores (leave cards)
- [ ] Google Business Profile and reviews from every client
- [ ] Post in neighborhood Facebook groups and Nextdoor
- [ ] Offer a discounted first walk for new clients
- [ ] Send photo updates after every visit: clients share them
- [ ] Ask every happy client for a review and a referral

7. Money

- [ ] Invoice every job and log every expense
- [ ] Keep a mileage log for business driving
- [ ] Set money aside for taxes each month
- [ ] Review prices at least once a year

General information, not legal, tax or insurance advice. Rules vary by state and city.