

Becoming a Cat Sitter

CatChannel expert Jeanne Adlon, explains the realities of cat-sitting.

By Jeanne Adlon

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Q: How can I become a cat sitter?

A: As a full-time cat sitter, I talk to many people who are curious about what I do. After nearly 35 years, there is a lot I can tell you about the rewards and challenges of this very interesting job. The best way to do that is in two columns. This week I will tell you the realities of the job and what you need to be prepared for.

Full-Time Cat-Sitting: Part I

There are two ways to be a cat sitter: You can become a part of a cat sitting service, where you are an employee and the service handles the business end and takes a percentage of your fee.

You can set up your own at-home business, which I have done.

I have met many wonderful people and wonderful cats, but anyone who wants to pursue this business has to know that you work seven days a week, and your busiest times are weekends and holidays. You will be working when other people are away on vacation or enjoying the holidays out of town. When I started, there was no one else in Manhattan doing in-home cat sitting. Now it's very competitive. To build and keep a loyal clientele, you must be available when they need you.

Responsibility is key. You must travel to your client's home, and take care of their cat no matter what. That includes trudging through snowstorms, torrential rains and heat waves. I even have done house calls with a fractured foot. Also, if you don't see a cat, you'll have to make sure it is in the home. I once found a poor kitty who got locked in a closet in the owner's rush to leave. Not all cats will be friendly, and you'll have to deal with that, but most will be happy to have their food, water and litter taken care of.

I love what I do, and the satisfaction I get out of this unusual line of work far outweighs any sacrifices I have made. I hope I have given you the reality of what it means to be a cat sitter, and next week I will tell you how to get started.

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