

SUGGESTIONS FOR USE and remember . . . these apply to any kind of critter ☺

Each section of *When My Family Is Away . . .* is designed for you to provide complete instructions and to clearly define your pet's needs and your rules. The unique sections, *Things to Know*, *Behavior Patterns* and *Commands* are essential to your sitter's knowledge in order to maintain a happy home for your pet while you are away. These sections specifically address anything and everything about your rules and your pet's behavior, which insures everyone's happiness and safety.

Things to Know – 5 sections:

I don't like ♥ I am allowed to ♥ I am not allowed to ♥ Special handling and care ♥ Where I sleep

Every pet and every animal behaves differently. For example, even if we think all dogs like to have their ears or tummies rubbed, some do not and they let you know it by growling, snapping or maybe even biting. This is what would be entered in the **I don't like** section. Not everyone wants their pets on the furniture or beds. This information would be entered in the **I am not allowed to** section. Fill in whatever you want that pertains to your rules and your pet.

Behavior Patterns - 3 sections:

Behavior you should know about ♥ Unusual behavior that shouldn't alarm you ♥ Nicknames and endearing terms

This section will be a relief for your pet sitter. Pets can have some strange behaviors especially if they are rescued animals and you know nothing about their past. This is where you can really describe things they might do that really aren't normal but it's just the way they are. And, if your pet is aggressive in any way, this is definitely, where you want to describe actions or situations that bring on the aggressiveness. Some pets might have unusual physical/neurological conditions like spasms or, might hide in a closet for hours on end. Behaviors your pet sitter **should not** be alarmed by would be entered in that section. And finally, if you refer to your pet with other nicknames or endearing terms, let your pet sitter know what they are too. I know that my pets love hearing those terms because they know it means I love them.

Commands - 2 columns:

Left column – When You Say Or Do This . . .

Right column - You Want Me To . . .

Not everyone uses the basic *sit, stay, come* commands. Use the left column for the words you use as commands and to describe hand sign / body gesture commands. Then, enter the definition of what those commands mean to your pet in the right column. If you use several unique commands, the commands your pet sitter should know first are the ones that keep your pet(s) the safest.

Notes:

Any additional information relevant to you and your pet can be entered in this section. Here are a couple of suggestions:

- Your travel itinerary i.e., hotel, phone number, flight information, friends you are staying with, their address and phone number, return date and time etc.
- Location of your fire extinguisher.
- Does a neighbor have an extra set of house keys? Put their name, home, cell and work phone numbers here.
- Please wash your hands before handling our pet(s).

See Reverse for Important Items to Consider

IMPORTANT ITEMS TO CONSIDER

- Double check your property to insure your pet cannot venture from your yard.
- Does your pet get scared at loud noises like fireworks, loud bangs, construction sounds, Halloween? Does your pet have a favorite hiding place when it gets scared? Tell your pet sitter where that hiding spot is.
- Talk to your Veterinarian and local emergency hospital about medical release forms. Do they recommend having one available for your pet sitter in case of an emergency? Do they have forms at their office?
- What method of payment should you leave on file with your Veterinarian and local emergency hospital in case of an emergency?
- Be sure to leave all phone numbers where you can be reached at all times. Even leave your email address. Some people use their PDA's/Palm Pilots etc. as their method of communication. It's another way to be contacted if needed.
- Do you have a pool? Is it secure from your pet(s) falling in? Does your pet know how to swim? Some pet sitter's know how to give CPR to an animal. Does yours?
- Do you have a pet first aid kit?
- Where do you keep old towels and blankets for pets or emergencies?
- Ask your pet sitter to bring in your newspaper and mail each day.
- Keep a bottle of anti-bacterial soap handy for the pet sitter as they may have other pet clients that same day. Remind your sitter to wash their hands before touching your pets to insure your pet stays healthy.
- Do you prepare home cooked food for your pet(s)? Leave enough for each feeding each day you will be away. Have the recipe for the sitter in case the food runs out sooner than you thought. Keep a couple of days portions in the freezer in case of an emergency.
- Would you feel comfortable giving your pet sitter the authority to have emergency home repairs completed in case of a problem i.e., plumbing, electrical, heating, air conditioning etc.? Ask your repair companies what they accept as authorization from you and which method of payment is most secure to have on file..
- Have emergency equipment available together in one spot in your home for quick access to safely secure and transport your pet(s) in the event of an emergency evacuation i.e., extra leashes, collars, carrying cases, carrying cages, etc. Inform your pet sitter where these items are. There is a section on both the pad and chart to enter this information.
- This next item to consider is a tough one, one that many of us don't want to think about however, we have to. Who would you want your pet to live with in the event something happened to you? Discuss this with that person and be sure to add it to your Trust and Will. The Humane Society of the United States has an informative website offering information for this and many other topics. Please visit www.humanesociety.org/petsinwills for more information. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (spcaLA) also offers Peace of Mind Pet Re-homing Program. For more information, contact spcaLA 1 (888) SPCA-LA1, ext 233. These programs guide you to make the right decision and properly document your wishes.
- Let a trusted neighbor know you are going away. Give them the name and contact number of the pet / house sitter.
- Kennels/Boarding – If you choose to board / kennel your pet(s), be sure someone you trust knows the contact information of the kennel or boarding facility in case of an emergency. Ask the appropriate person at the facility what documentation they require on file in the event someone other than you has to pick-up your pet(s). Also provide a completed sheet from the When My Family Is Away pad and give it to the caretaker of your pet(s) as well.
- Avoid saying the words “good-bye” and making a big deal when you leave. Your pet(s) already know you are leaving.
- And finally, if you have **any** concerns about aggressive, territorial, or unexplained behavior with your pet(s), please contact a reputable professional pet behaviorist for proper education and guidance. This could eliminate the painful decision of having to find a new home for your pet.

We love our pets and they love us . . . unconditionally!

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