



# How to Start a Home Dog Boarding Business in Retirement



A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Find out where to begin and how to achieve  
success.

# The Author



## **HELLO THERE! I'M ELAINE**

At 71, I started a dog boarding business from home. I realized my retirement income needed a boost, and dog boarding seemed like a great idea since I've always been a dog person. I started by watching my friend's elderly dog, and I felt more confident. Word spread, and I soon made an extra \$500 a month caring for dogs on weekends. Now, I earn \$1,000-\$2,000 a month, doing something I love.

This business has blessed me financially and brought joy into my life by making wonderful connections with pets and their owners.

I wrote this guide to help other seniors earn extra income without getting overwhelmed by technology. If you love dogs and have extra space, this could be perfect for you. Trust me, you can do it too!

## Welcome to a New Chapter—One with Purpose, Pups, and Possibility

If you're reading this, chances are you're looking for a way to bring in a little extra income—without sacrificing your freedom or peace of mind. Maybe you're newly retired or easing into it. You've worked hard, raised a family, and now find yourself wondering... “What's next?”

You're not alone.

Many retirees are looking for something that offers:

- A sense of purpose
- A bit of extra income
- And a whole lot of companionship

What better way to enjoy all three than by spending time with dogs?

This guide will walk you through a simple, step-by-step way to start your own home-based dog boarding business—at your pace, without tech overwhelm, and with just 15 minutes a day. You don't need a website. You don't need special training. And you certainly don't need to figure it all out at once.

Just pour a cup of tea, pull up a chair, and discover how something as simple as welcoming a dog into your home can bring joy, income, and a renewed sense of meaning to your days.

### Why Dog Boarding Is Perfect for Retirees

Retirement isn't an end—it's a new beginning. And dog boarding offers the perfect blend of structure, flexibility, and connection.

#### It's Flexible

You choose when to take dogs and when to take a break. One or two dogs at a time means you're in charge of your schedule and your energy.

#### It Builds on What You Already Have

A home? Check.

A love for dogs? Check.

Years of life experience and a kind heart? Absolutely.

You don't need certifications or fancy tools—just patience, common sense, and a safe, loving home.

#### It Happens Right at Home

No commuting. No clocking in. No boss. Just the comfort of your home and the companionship of a grateful pup.

#### It Combats Loneliness

Life can feel quiet after decades of busyness. A visiting dog brings laughter, movement, and connection. Research even shows dogs help lower stress and boost wellbeing—something we could all use a little more of.

#### It's a Meaningful Way to Earn

Whether you want to supplement your income, cover bills, or save for travel, earning \$500–\$2,000/month is within reach—with very little overhead and a lot of heart.

Dog boarding isn't just a side gig—it's a chance to do something joyful, rewarding, and deeply needed in your community.

# 10 Easy Action Steps to Start Your Dog Boarding Business in 10 days



# 10 simple steps to success

Do one simple business action each day for 10 days. Starting a business feels overwhelming when you look at everything at once. Instead, break it down into one small step per day and you'll be ready to welcome your first dog guest in your home in no time!

- N.1 REFRAME FEAR INTO AN ADVANTAGE.
- N.2 CONTACT LOCAL LICENSING OFFICE .
- N.3 ASK AN ACCOUNTANT ABOUT LEGAL STRUCTURE.
- N.4 GET PET BUSINESS INSURANCE QUOTES.
- N.5 SET UP A DOG FRIENDLY SPACE IN YOUR HOME.
- N.6 SET YOUR PRICES WITH CONFIDENCE.
- N.7 LOW TECH MARKETING TO FIND FIRST CLIENT.
- N.8 THE INITIAL CONTACT WITH FIRST INQUIRY
- N.9 HOW TO HANDLE A SAFE MEET AND GREET.
- N.10 ONBOARDING YOUR FIRST DOG GUEST IN YOUR HOME.

Starting something new—especially a business—can feel overwhelming at any age. That's why this guide breaks everything down into 10 clear, simple steps designed just for retirees like you. Each chapter focuses on one key area of setting up a home-based dog boarding business, but more importantly, each one is divided into smaller tasks you can do in just 15 to 30 minutes a day. Whether it's calling your local licensing office, setting up a cozy dog space, or meeting your first client, you'll always know exactly what to do next—without stress or guesswork.

By following each step in order, you'll steadily move from having no idea where to start to confidently welcoming your first dog guest. You don't need tech skills or business experience—just a love of dogs and a willingness to take one small action at a time. This approach helps you stay motivated, build confidence, and avoid burnout. Before you know it, you'll have a thriving side gig that fits your life, your pace, and your home.

CHAPTER N.1

# How to Overcome a Lack of Confidence in Starting a Business



Shift from fear and self-doubt to seeing your age and life experience as a powerful asset.



## N.1 COMMON FEARS AFTER 60


It's completely normal to feel nervous about starting something new—especially in retirement. You might wonder, “What if I mess up?” or “Am I too old for this?” Fear of the unknown, lack of confidence, and worries about health or tech can all creep in. But here's the truth: these feelings don't mean you can't do it—they mean you care. In this guide, we'll walk through every step together. Once you name those fears, they lose power. And once you see how manageable each task really is, you'll start to believe in what's possible for you—right now.

## N.2 WHY RETIREES MAKE GREAT DOG BOARDERS

You may not see it yet, but you have an edge. Retirees bring calm, consistency, and experience to the table—qualities that dogs (and their owners!) love. You've likely raised kids, run a household, maybe even had pets of your own. That life experience matters. Dogs thrive in relaxed, homey environments, and many pet parents feel more comfortable leaving their pups with someone mature, grounded, and nurturing. Your steady schedule, patience, and common sense are huge assets in this business. Instead of feeling unsure about your age, you'll soon realize it's actually one of your biggest strengths.

## N.3 REAL LIFE EXPERIENCE BEATS FANCY TECH

It's completely normal to feel nervous about starting something new—especially in retirement. You might wonder, “What if I mess up?” or “Am I too old for this?” Fear of the unknown, lack of confidence, and worries about health or tech can all creep in. But here's the truth: these feelings don't mean you can't do it—they mean you care. In this guide, we'll walk through every step together. Once you name those fears, they lose power. And once you see how manageable each task really is, you'll start to believe in what's possible for you—right now.





## N.4 YOU'RE NOT TOO OLD. YOU'RE JUST RIGHT.

It's easy to believe that starting something new is for younger folks. But the truth is, retirement is the perfect time to start a low-stress business that brings in extra money and joy. You have something many others don't—time, wisdom, and a strong desire to make your days meaningful. This isn't about chasing hustle. It's about doing something you love, on your terms. You're not behind. You're perfectly placed to create a business that fits your life right now. You'll see that small, thoughtful actions—done with care—can lead to something big, even in your golden years.

## N.5 CONFIDENCE COMES FROM SMALL ACTIONS

You don't need to feel confident before you begin—confidence is something you build by doing. The good news? You don't have to do it all at once. Just take one small step today. Call the town office. Clean up the guest room. Read through this guide with a cup of tea. Each action, no matter how small, is a deposit into your confidence bank. And soon, you'll look back and be amazed at how far you've come. The key is to keep moving, gently and steadily. With each step, you'll go from “Can I really do this?” to “Look at me—I'm doing it!”



## Chapter 1 Confidence Builder Checklist

Take a few quiet moments to reflect and write down your thoughts.

1. List 3 things that make you a great candidate to board dogs at home:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

2. What life experiences have prepared you for this?

(Examples: Raising kids, having pets, caring for others, being organized.)

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

3. What fear or worry do you want to reframe as a strength?

(Example: "I'm not tech-savvy" becomes "I offer a human touch people can trust.")

- \_\_\_\_\_

4. What's one small step you can take today to move forward?

- \_\_\_\_\_

CHAPTER N.2

# Make Sure it's Allowed Where You Live



Gain peace of mind by checking that you can legally board dogs in your home.



## N.1 IMPORTANCE OF CHECKING LOCAL RULES


Before diving in, it's important to find out whether home-based dog boarding is allowed where you live. Every town, city, or county has its own rules—and sometimes they differ by neighborhood or zoning area. Don't worry, this isn't a big legal ordeal. It's just a quick check that could save you from trouble down the line. Think of it as the foundation of your business. Knowing you're allowed to operate gives you confidence and helps avoid surprises. It's better to find out now than to start up and get shut down unexpectedly. A 15-minute phone call is all it takes

## N.2 WHO TO CONTACT (CITY/COUNTY OFFICE)

So who do you call? Start with your local government's zoning or planning department. If you're not sure who that is, just call your city or county's main number and say, "I'm looking to find out if I can run a small dog boarding business from my home." They'll direct you to the right department. In rural areas, this might be the county clerk or zoning administrator. Keep it simple. You don't need to ask for permission—just for the rules. And don't worry about being perfect. They've heard it all before and are usually happy to help.

## N.3 WHAT TO SAY WHEN YOU CALL

Not sure what to say? Try this script: "Hi, I live at [your address], and I'm thinking about starting a very small, home-based dog boarding service—just one or two dogs at a time. I want to make sure I'm following the rules. Is this allowed in my area?" Keep it casual. Let them know it's not a kennel or a commercial facility—just a cozy setup in your home. If they ask for more details, be honest and friendly. You're not applying for a license yet—you're just doing your homework. Write down what they tell you for your records.





## N.4 IF HOME BOARDING ISN'T ALLOWED

If they say “no,” don’t panic. You have options. Some areas don’t allow home boarding due to zoning restrictions or HOA rules. But that doesn’t mean the dream is over. You might be allowed to board just one dog at a time, or offer daytime care only. Another option is to become a pet sitter who stays in the dog owner’s home instead. That still allows you to earn extra income and enjoy dogs—without needing to board them at your place. Where there’s a will, there’s usually a way. The key is being flexible and creative.

## N.5 DOG SITTING IN CLIENTS’ HOMES

If you find that your area doesn’t allow boarding in your home, offering pet sitting in the client’s home is a great backup plan. Many people actually prefer this option, especially for older dogs who do better in familiar surroundings. You’ll still get to enjoy all the companionship without the full-time commitment. You can even start this way and later add home boarding if the rules change—or if you move. Either way, you’re building trust, earning money, and doing something meaningful. Don’t let a small roadblock stop your progress—just take a different path and keep moving forward.



## Chapter 2: Local Rules Checklist

Print this out and keep it near the phone when you make your zoning call.

1. Call your city or county zoning or planning office.

■ Write down the name and number of the person you spoke to:

- \_\_\_\_\_

2. Ask: "Can I board dogs in my home as a small home-based business?"

■ Note their response:

- \_\_\_\_\_

3. Is a special license or permit needed?

■ Yes ■ No

- If yes, what kind and how do I apply?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. If not allowed, ask:

"Am I allowed to offer pet sitting in the owner's home instead?"

■ Yes ■ No

5. Next step I'll take based on what I learned today:

- \_\_\_\_\_

CHAPTER N.3

# Choose the Best Legal Setup for You



Feel secure knowing your business is legally protected and you're set up for taxes.



## N.1 WHICH LEGAL STRUCTURE?


When you start a business—even a small one like dog boarding—it's smart to think about how it will be structured in the eyes of the law. This might sound complicated, but it doesn't have to be. A legal structure is simply how your business is recognized for things like taxes, liability, and paperwork. The good news? Most home-based dog boarding businesses start as something called a “sole proprietorship.” It's the simplest setup, and in most cases, you don't need to file any extra paperwork. This step helps you treat your business like a business and keeps you protected.

## N.2 THE EASIEST OPTION: SOLE PROPRIETOR

If you're just getting started and plan to board one or two dogs at a time, operating as a sole proprietor is the easiest route. It means you and your business are legally the same, and you'll report your income on your regular tax return. You don't have to form a company or file special documents—just keep good records of your income and expenses. Later, if your business grows or you want more protection, you can always upgrade to an LLC. But for now, sole proprietorship is a safe, low-cost way to get your feet wet.

## N.3 WHEN TO TALK TO A LOCAL ACCOUNTANT

You don't have to figure it all out on your own. A 30-minute conversation with a friendly local accountant can give you peace of mind and answer important questions—like whether you need to collect sales tax or how to track your income. Many accountants offer free consultations or charge a small fee. Don't be shy—just say, “I'm starting a small dog boarding business from home and want to make sure I'm handling everything the right way.” You'll be surprised how much help they can offer in a short chat. A little advice now can save headaches later.





## N.4 PROTECTING YOURSELF AND YOUR HOME

Even if you're running a small operation, you'll want to think about basic protections. Having the right legal structure (and insurance, which we'll cover in the next chapter) helps shield you in case something goes wrong. A sole proprietorship doesn't give you legal separation between personal and business matters, but combined with insurance and smart practices—like written agreements—you're in good shape. Keep your home and business spaces clear and safe. Be honest and upfront with your clients. These simple habits go a long way toward protecting what you've worked hard for.

## N.5 KEEPING IT SIMPLE BUT SMART

If you're just getting started and plan to board one or two dogs at a time, operating as a sole proprietor is the easiest route. It means you and your business are legally the same, and you'll report your income on your regular tax return. You don't have to form a company or file special documents—just keep good records of your income and expenses. Later, if your business grows or you want more protection, you can always upgrade to an LLC. But for now, sole proprietorship is a safe, low-cost way to get your feet wet.



### Chapter 3: Legal Setup Checklist

Use this checklist to keep your legal setup simple and stress-free.

1. Decide if you want to start as a sole proprietor.

Yes  No  Not sure yet

2. If unsure, schedule a free or low-cost consultation with a local accountant.

Name and phone number of accountant:

- \_\_\_\_\_

Date of appointment:

- \_\_\_\_\_

3. Ask your accountant these questions:

- Do I need to register my business name?

- How should I track my income and expenses?

- Do I need to pay quarterly taxes?

- Do I need a business license in my town or county?

4. Choose a name for your dog boarding business (optional for now).

- My business name idea: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Next step I'll take to set up my business legally:

- \_\_\_\_\_

CHAPTER N.4

# Protect Yourself and the Dogs with Insurance



Gain confidence by knowing you're covered if something goes wrong.



## N.1 WHAT IS PET BOARDING INSURANCE?


Pet boarding insurance is a special kind of coverage designed to protect you, the dogs in your care, and your home in case something unexpected happens. Think of it as a safety net. If a dog gets injured, causes damage, or a client makes a claim against you, insurance helps cover the costs. It's different from your regular homeowners insurance, which usually doesn't cover business activities. This type of policy is made just for people like you—small-scale, home-based caregivers who want to do the right thing. It shows your clients you're serious and gives you peace of mind.

## N.2 WHY YOU NEED IT

Even if you're only caring for one dog at a time, accidents can happen. A dog might chew a doorframe, escape the yard, or snap at another pet. You might even slip while walking a guest dog. Without insurance, you could be held personally responsible. But with it, you're protected. Many pet owners will ask if you're insured—and when you can say yes, it builds trust right away. Insurance also helps you sleep better at night, knowing you've taken one smart step to protect your home, your money, and your reputation.

## N.3 WHERE TO GET QUOTES

There are several companies that specialize in pet care insurance. A few popular ones are Pet Care Insurance, Kennel Pro, and Business Insurers of the Carolinas. You can visit their websites and get a free quote in just a few minutes. No need to buy right away—just compare prices and see what's included. Look for basic coverage for dog boarding in your home, and make sure it includes general liability. Most policies cost around \$150 to \$250 a year. That's a small price to pay for the protection and professionalism it brings to your business.





## N.4 WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A POLICY

Not all policies are the same. Here are the basics you want in your coverage:

- General liability: Covers accidents and injuries
- Care, custody, and control: Covers the dogs while they're with you
- Property damage: In case something in your home gets damaged
- Vet reimbursement: If a dog gets sick or injured in your care

Some policies also cover lost keys (if you do pet sitting in clients' homes), advertising liability, and legal costs. Read the fine print, and don't be afraid to call and ask questions. Choose a policy that fits your comfort level and business size.

## N.5 MORE SIMPLE WAYS TO PROTECT YOURSELF

There are other easy things you can do to stay safe. Always do a meet & greet before taking a dog. Keep written notes on the dog's health, feeding, and behavior. Have the owner sign a boarding agreement. Keep dogs on a leash in unfenced areas, and never leave them unsupervised around your pets. These simple habits protect you legally and build trust with your clients. When you combine good practices with insurance, you're setting yourself up for success.



## Chapter 4: Insurance Checklist

Use this list to confidently research and prepare for the right pet business insurance policy.

1. Research 2–3 insurance companies for dog boarding businesses.

■ My top choices:

- \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_

2. Request quotes from at least two providers.

■ Company 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Quote: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

■ Company 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Quote: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

3. Compare what's included. Make sure the policy has:

- ■ General Liability
- ■ Care, Custody, and Control
- ■ Property Damage
- ■ Vet Expense Coverage

4. Call and ask questions if you're unsure.

■ Notes from phone call:

- \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Choose your policy and mark the renewal date on your calendar.

■ Policy I selected: \_\_\_\_\_

■ Renewal Date: \_\_\_\_\_

CHAPTER N.5

# Create a Safe and Cozy Dog Zone



Turn part of your home into a welcoming, dog-friendly space.



## N.1 CHOOSING THE RIGHT AREA IN YOUR HOME


Start by picking one or two areas in your home that can become your designated dog space. This could be a guest bedroom, a sunroom, a section of your living room, or even a cozy corner in the kitchen. Choose a space with easy-to-clean floors (like tile or vinyl), good airflow, and access to a door for potty breaks. Think about visibility—can you see and hear the dog easily from other parts of the house? You don't need to renovate—just repurpose! A well-chosen area keeps your home organized and your guest dog feeling safe and at ease.

## N.2 KEEPING YOUR PETS AND GUESTS HAPPY

If you have pets of your own, introducing guest dogs into your home takes some planning. You want everyone to feel calm and secure. Keep separate zones for the first day or two while the dogs get used to each other's scent. Use baby gates, crates, or closed doors to give everyone space. Observe their behavior and go slow with introductions. Make sure your own pets still have access to their favorite spots and downtime. A peaceful home makes for happier pets—yours and your visitors. And that means a smoother, more enjoyable boarding experience for everyone.

## N.3 SAFETY FIRST: HAZARDS TO WATCH FOR

Dogs are curious, especially in new places. Before your first guest arrives, look at your home through a “dog lens.” Remove small objects that could be chewed or swallowed. Hide electrical cords and block off areas like staircases or rooms with breakables. Keep household cleaners and medications far out of reach. If you have indoor plants, double-check that they're not toxic to dogs. Outside, check your fence (if you have one) for gaps and secure trash bins. Safety isn't about perfection—it's about prevention. A little time spent “dog-proofing” now can save you a lot of worry later.





## N.4 HOW TO MAKE DOGS FEEL AT HOME

Once the basics are safe and clean, it's time to make it feel welcoming. A cozy dog bed, a soft blanket from home, and a few toys can help a dog settle in quickly. Ask the owner to bring something that smells familiar—like their dog's blanket or shirt. Use a baby gate instead of a closed door, so dogs feel included. Quiet music or a white noise machine can help reduce stress. Keep food and water bowls in the same spot. A calm, comforting environment helps dogs relax—and it shows pet parents that their dog is in good hands.

## N.5 SETTING HOUSE RULES

To keep things running smoothly, it helps to have a few gentle rules in place—for the dogs and the people. Decide in advance: Are dogs allowed on the furniture? Will you take them for walks or only let them outside in your yard? Where will they sleep? Share these guidelines during the meet & greet so owners know what to expect. You can even include your “House Rules” in a simple handout or on your flyer. When expectations are clear, it leads to better experiences for everyone—and fewer surprises once the dog is in your care.



## Chapter 5: Home Setup Checklist

Use this checklist to prep your space before welcoming your first dog guest.

1. Choose the dog-friendly zone in your home.

■ Room or space selected: \_\_\_\_\_

■ Flooring type: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Prepare your own pets.

■ Safe separation zone created

■ Plan for introductions in place

3. Dog-proof your home.

■ Cords and small items removed

■ Cleaning supplies stored out of reach

■ Toxic plants moved

■ Fence/gates checked (if applicable)

4. Add comfort touches.

■ Clean dog bed or crate

■ Water and food bowls

■ Calming item from home (blanket, toy)

■ Background music or white noise (optional)

5. Set house rules.

■ Are dogs allowed on furniture? Yes / No

■ Where will guest dogs sleep? \_\_\_\_\_

■ Will dogs go on walks or stay in yard? \_\_\_\_\_

CHAPTER N.6

# Set Your Prices with Confidence



Learn how to charge what you're worth—even if you've never run a business.



## N.1 WHAT OTHERS CHARGE IN YOUR AREA


Before setting your own rates, it's smart to look around and see what others are charging. Search for local dog boarders on Google, Rover.com, or even ask neighbors what they've paid. Rates often vary depending on location, whether the care is in-home or kennel-style, and what's included. In rural areas, it might be \$30–40 per night. In cities, it could be \$60+. You don't need to be the cheapest—but you do want to be fair. Once you know what's typical in your area, you can set your prices with confidence and without second-guessing yourself.

## N.2 SIMPLE PRICING THAT WORKS FOR YOU

The easiest way to start is with one base rate—for example, \$40 per night per dog. Keep it simple. If you want, offer a discount for longer stays (like a weekly rate) or for additional dogs from the same household. Many people prefer to charge a flat fee that includes everything: feeding, playtime, and potty breaks. If you plan to offer extras like pick-up/drop-off or medication, those can be small add-on fees. The key is: don't overcomplicate it. You can always adjust your prices later as you gain experience and build your client base.

## N.3 DAY RATES VS. NIGHT RATES

What if someone only needs care for the day and not overnight? You can offer a daycare rate that's lower than your overnight rate—usually around 50–70% of the nightly fee. For example, if you charge \$40 per night, a \$25–30 day rate works well. Decide ahead of time what hours your “daycare” covers (e.g., 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.). This way, you're not caught off guard if someone asks. Having both rates ready gives you flexibility and helps you sound more professional when someone inquires.





## N.4 ADD-ONS: WALKS, PICK-UP, MEDICATION

Some dogs need a little extra attention—and owners are usually happy to pay for it. Add-on services like pick-up and drop-off (\$5–10 each way), administering oral medications (\$5 per day), or an extra 30-minute walk (\$10) can boost your income while staying fair. Make a short list of services you're comfortable offering and what you'd charge. Keep it printed or written down so you're not scrambling to decide on the spot. These little extras show that you're thorough and thoughtful—and they add up over time!

## N.5 SIMPLE PAYMENT METHODS YOU CAN USE

You don't need a complicated system to get paid. Many people use a mix of cash, check, and simple payment apps like Venmo, Zelle, or PayPal. Choose what feels right to you and clearly state your accepted payment methods up front. If you prefer not to use apps, that's okay too—just let people know in advance. It's also smart to collect a 50% deposit at booking to hold the spot, with the balance due at drop-off. That way, you're not left chasing payments. Clear, upfront communication makes everything smoother.



## Chapter 6: Pricing Checklist

Use this worksheet to build a simple, stress-free pricing structure.

1. What are others charging near me?

- Local boarding rate: \$\_\_\_\_\_ per night
- Local daycare rate: \$\_\_\_\_\_ per day

2. What will I charge?

- Overnight boarding rate: \$\_\_\_\_\_ per night
- Daycare rate (optional): \$\_\_\_\_\_ per day

3. Will I offer these extras? (check if yes)

- Pick-up/Drop-off: \$\_\_\_\_\_ each way
- Administering medication: \$\_\_\_\_\_ per day
- Extra walk: \$\_\_\_\_\_ per walk
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Accepted payment methods:

- Cash  Check  Venmo  Zelle  PayPal
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. My booking policy:

- Deposit required at time of booking: \_\_\_\_%
- Balance due:  at drop-off  other: \_\_\_\_\_

6. My prices reflect the value I provide. I'm proud to charge what I'm worth.

- Yes!

CHAPTER N.7

# Find Your First Client Without Fancy Tech



Learn no-tech ways to get the word out and attract your first dog guest.



## N.1 WORD OF MOUTH WORKS WONDERS


Don't underestimate the power of simply telling people what you're doing! Let friends, neighbors, your hairstylist, and even your doctor know you've started a home dog boarding service. Many people find their first client through casual conversations. If you're part of a church, club, or community group, mention it there too. Most people know someone with a dog who needs care now and then. You don't need a website or ads—just your voice and a few sentences about what you offer. When people trust you, they're more likely to trust you with their beloved pet.

## N.2 FLYERS, BULLETIN BOARDS, VET OFFICES

Good old-fashioned flyers still work—and they're perfect for retirees who want a low-tech approach. Create a simple flyer with your name, phone number, a short list of services, and a friendly photo of you with a dog (if possible). Post your flyer on bulletin boards at local vet clinics, pet stores, libraries, community centers, or the local café. Always ask permission first. Some vets may even recommend you to clients if you leave a few business cards or brochures with them. Be friendly and clear—and don't forget tear-off tabs!

## N.3 USING PRINTED BUSINESS CARDS

A small stack of printed business cards can go a long way. They're easy to keep in your purse, wallet, or glove box, and they make you look professional. You can order affordable cards online or have them printed at a local office supply store. Keep the design simple: your name, service (“Home Dog Boarding”), phone number, and maybe one short line like “Loving care in a calm home setting.” Hand one out when the conversation turns to dogs—and it often does! People love knowing a trustworthy local dog sitter they can call on.





## N.4 A SCRIPT TO TELL PEOPLE WHAT YOU DO

Sometimes the hardest part is knowing what to say. Here's a simple line you can use:

“Hi! I've started a small home dog boarding service for folks who need a safe, cozy place for their pup when they travel. I only take one or two dogs at a time, and they live right in my home with me. If you or anyone you know needs help with their dog, I'd love to talk!”

You can adjust this for face-to-face conversations, voicemail messages, or calls to vets or groomers. The goal is to sound warm, confident, and clear—not like a salesperson.

## N.5 LOCAL FACEBOOK GROUPS

If you're open to just a little bit of tech, local Facebook groups can be a goldmine. Look for groups like “Pet Lovers of [Your Town],” “Buy/Sell/Trade [Your County],” or community bulletin boards and Nextdoor. Once you're in, post a friendly introduction:

“Hi, I'm [Your Name] and I offer dog boarding in my home. I only take 1–2 dogs at a time, and they stay right in my home with lots of love and attention. If anyone needs a caring place for their pup while they're away, I'd love to help!”

Include a photo and your phone number if you're comfortable.



## Chapter 7: First Client Marketing Checklist

Use this checklist to start spreading the word without stress or tech overload.

1. Tell 5 people about your new service.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Print and hang at least 5 flyers locally.

- Vet clinic
- Library or town hall
- Local café or diner
- Community center or gym
- Pet supply store

3. Order or print simple business cards.

- Yes! Where I'll get them printed: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Practice or write down my "what I do" script.

- My short intro line:

“ \_\_\_\_\_  
”

5. (Optional) Post in a Facebook or online community group.

- Name of group: \_\_\_\_\_
- Date I posted: \_\_\_\_\_

CHAPTER N.8

# What to Do When Someone Reaches Out



Feel prepared and calm when you get your first call, message, or referral.



## N.1 FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT

When someone contacts you for the first time—whether by phone, text, or word of mouth—it's natural to feel a little nervous. Just remember: they already trust you enough to ask! The best thing you can do is keep your tone warm, calm, and professional. Say thank you for reaching out, and let them know you're happy to help. A good first impression helps set the tone for the whole relationship. Speak clearly, be honest about your experience, and focus on making the dog owner feel heard. You don't have to sell yourself—just share what you offer with confidence.


## N.2 QUESTIONS TO ASK EACH NEW DOG OWNER

Before scheduling a meet and greet, ask a few basic questions to make sure the dog is a good fit for your home. Here are some examples:

- What breed, age, and size is your dog?
- Is your dog house-trained?
- How does your dog get along with other dogs?
- Has your dog ever bitten another dog or person?
- Is your dog up-to-date on vaccinations?
- Does your dog have any special needs or medications?
- These questions help you assess whether the dog is a good match for your home and pets. Keep your notes written down so you can refer to them later.

## N.3 WHAT INFO TO GIVE ABOUT YOU

Just as you want to learn about the dog, the owner will want to know about you! Share a bit about your home, how many dogs you care for at once, your daily routine, and your experience with dogs. Let them know your rates, where the dog will sleep, and how often you'll provide updates. If they seem unsure, offer to send a photo of your setup or even a reference from a past client (if you have one). The goal is to build trust without overwhelming them with too many details. Think: friendly, simple, and honest.





## N.4 BOOKING A MEET & GREET

Once you've had a good first conversation and you both feel it's a possible fit, the next step is to book a meet and greet. This is where the real decision will happen (we'll cover the how-to in the next chapter). Offer two or three dates and times, and try to meet a few days before the dog's actual stay. Make sure the owner understands that you only accept dogs you've met in person—it shows you're responsible and selective. Keep the tone friendly and flexible, and confirm the appointment in writing (by text, email, or on paper).

## N.5 RED FLAGS TO WATCH FOR

Pay attention to anything that doesn't feel quite right. If a dog has a history of aggression, is not house-trained, or the owner seems unwilling to answer your questions honestly, that's a red flag. You're not running a shelter—you're offering care in your home. If something feels off, it's okay to say no. It's better to turn away one bad fit than take on a situation that puts you, your home, or your pets at risk. You're in control of your business, and part of being professional is knowing when to pass.



## Chapter 8: First Contact Checklist

Use this simple checklist to guide your first conversation with a new client.

1. Be friendly, clear, and calm.

- “Thanks so much for reaching out. I’d love to hear more about your dog!”

2. Ask key questions about the dog:

- Breed, age, and size
- House-trained?
- Good with other dogs?
- Any past aggression?
- Up-to-date on vaccines?
- Medications or special needs?

3. Share details about you and your home:

- Where the dog will sleep
- Daily routine (feeding, playtime, walks)
- Rates and payment policy
- How many dogs you board at once
- How you’ll send updates (text, photo, etc.)

4. Offer a meet & greet:

- Confirm date and time: \_\_\_\_\_
- Let the owner know this is required before booking

5. Watch for red flags and trust your gut.

- I feel good about this potential guest
- OR—I politely declined due to concerns

CHAPTER N.9

# How to Handle a Successful Meet and Greet



Learn how to host an easy, stress-free first meeting with a new dog and owner.



## N.1 WHY A MEET & GREET IS A MUST


The meet and greet is your chance to see how the dog behaves, how the owner communicates, and whether everything feels right. It protects both you and the pet parent by making sure it's a good fit before a booking. It's not about judging—it's about preparing. You get to see how the dog acts in a new environment, how they interact with your own pets (if you have any), and whether they're likely to settle in well. It's also your chance to reassure the owner that their pup will be in good hands.

## N.2 SET THE SCENE FOR COMFORT AND SAFETY

When the dog and owner arrive, stay calm and upbeat. Have your own pets put away at first. Greet the owner warmly and let the dog explore the yard or house on leash while you chat. Watch the dog's body language—is the tail wagging, or is it stiff and nervous? Give the dog space and don't rush. Be sure to mention where the dog will eat, sleep, and go to the bathroom. If things go well, allow a short, supervised introduction with your own dog(s), keeping both on leash at first. Safety always comes first—for everyone.

## N.3 QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING THE VISIT

This is the perfect time to ask deeper questions that help you care for the dog properly. Examples include:

- What is their usual daily routine (meals, potty breaks, walks)?
  - Any fears (storms, loud noises, certain people)?
  - Are they allowed on furniture?
  - How do they behave when left alone?
  - Have they been boarded before?
  - You can jot answers on a notepad or use a simple intake form. The more you know upfront, the smoother the stay will be—for the dog, the owner, and you.
- 



## N.4 HOW TO POLITELY SAY NO

Sometimes, you'll know in your gut that a dog isn't the right fit. Maybe the dog shows aggressive behavior, has high energy that's hard to manage, or your pets clearly feel stressed. That's okay! It's better to say no now than regret it later. You can say:

“Thanks so much for coming by—I've enjoyed meeting you both. After thinking about my setup, I don't think it's quite the right fit for [Dog's Name], but I really appreciate your time.”

It's respectful, honest, and protects everyone involved—including your peace of mind.

## N.5 WHEN IT'S A MATCH—WHAT'S NEXT?

If everything goes well, great! You've just earned a client and made a dog feel safe in a new space. Confirm the dates, send a quick written summary (text or email) of what was agreed, and include your payment expectations. Remind the owner what to bring: food, leash, bed or blanket, any meds, and emergency contact info. Let them know you'll be in touch during the stay with updates. You're now on your way to your first successful booking—and it all started with a simple meet and greet done with care and intention.



## **Chapter 9: Meet & Greet Checklist**

Use this checklist to guide a smooth and safe first meeting with a potential client.

### **Before the visit:**

Schedule a time when your home is quiet and clean

Put your own pets in a separate room or area

Have a notepad or intake form ready

### **During the visit:**

Greet the owner warmly

Let the dog explore slowly (on leash)

Watch body language (tail, ears, tension)

Point out sleeping, feeding, and potty areas

### **Ask key questions:**

Daily routine and schedule

Any fears, triggers, or separation issues

Behavior with other dogs

Previous boarding experiences

Allowed on furniture? Special rules?

### **If not a fit:**

Thank them politely and explain why

Offer alternative referrals if possible

### **If it's a yes:**

Confirm booking dates and times

Remind owner what to bring:

- Food, leash, bed, meds, vet contact info
- Send a written confirmation with payment info

CHAPTER N.10

# Onboarding Your First Dog Guest in Your Home



Confidently care for your first guest and feel the joy of doing something meaningful.



## N.1 YOUR FIRST DAY PLAN


Having a simple plan for the first day can make everything feel easier. Start by walking the dog through your home, calmly and on leash, to help them get familiar. Show them where they'll eat, sleep, and play. Then give them time to settle in quietly—too much attention at once can feel overwhelming. Stick to the routine the owner shared with you: feeding times, walks, and rest. You've prepared for this, and by following a steady, calm approach, you'll both ease into this new experience smoothly.

## N.2 WHERE THE DOG SLEEPS, EATS, AND PLAYS

Be consistent about where the dog does each of these things—it helps them adjust faster. Set up a clean spot for their food and water bowls, away from distractions or foot traffic. Have a soft bed or blanket in a quiet area where they can rest. Some dogs love cozy corners; others like to be where the action is. Watch their behavior and adjust as needed. If they're used to a crate, make it part of their setup. Keep toys nearby and plan for potty breaks or short walks throughout the day. Routine builds trust and calm.

## N.3 KEEPING THE OWNER UPDATED

You don't need to be glued to your phone, but sending one or two updates during the stay can mean the world to a nervous pet parent. A quick message like, "Bella had a great walk and is now snoozing on her bed!" with a photo, goes a long way. It shows you care and builds lasting trust. You can send updates via text, phone call, or even a written note if they're picking up in person. Set expectations ahead of time—daily update, morning/evening, or just one mid-stay—and keep it light and warm.





## N.4 WHAT TO DO IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG

Even with the best planning, small issues can happen. A dog might have an upset stomach, bark more than expected, or not eat the first day. That's normal. Keep a calm tone, take notes, and if something feels serious, call the owner. Have your vet's number handy, as well as the emergency contact provided. Don't panic. Most things can be solved with a little time and reassurance. The important thing is to stay observant and act quickly when needed. You're not alone—you've prepared for this, and you can handle it.

## N.5 END ON A HIGH NOTE: PICK-UP DAY

When pick-up day arrives, send the owner a quick message to confirm the time. Have the dog ready with their things packed: food, blanket, any meds, and a little note if you like. Share how the stay went—what the dog enjoyed, how they behaved, and how you'd love to see them again. This is also a good time to politely ask for a review or testimonial. Try: "If you were happy with Bella's stay, I'd love it if you shared a few words I can use to let others know about my service!" You've done it—you're officially in business!



## **Chapter 10: First Dog Guest Checklist**

Use this checklist to welcome your first pup like a pro.

### **Arrival day prep:**

Walk dog calmly through home (on leash)  
Show them sleeping, eating, and potty areas  
Follow the routine shared by the owner

### **Daily care basics:**

Feeding and fresh water  
Walks or potty breaks  
Playtime and quiet time  
Monitor behavior and comfort

### **Owner communication:**

Set expectation for updates  
Send 1-2 friendly messages (with photo if possible)  
Report anything unusual

### **If something goes wrong:**

Stay calm and take notes  
Contact owner if needed  
Know your vet/emergency contact

### **Pick-up day:**

Confirm pick-up time  
Pack dog's belongings  
Share a summary of their stay  
Ask for a review or testimonial

## Congratulations! You Did It! 🎉

You've just completed the step-by-step guide to starting your own home-based dog boarding business—and that's something to be proud of.

Whether you're still in the planning stage or already booking your first dog guest, you've done more than just read a guide. You've taken action. You've turned "What if?" into "Let's go!"

You're now equipped with:

- A clear, low-stress path to earning extra income
- A plan that fits your lifestyle, energy, and values
- And the confidence to welcome dogs—and their owners—into your life with open arms

Remember, the goal isn't perfection. The goal is progress, purpose, and puppy joy. You've got everything you need to create something wonderful from the comfort of your home.

So here's to:

- Your new side gig
- The dogs whose tails will wag with happiness
- And the people who will be so grateful they found someone just like you

Now, take a deep breath... and get ready to welcome your first guest with a smile. Your next chapter starts now. 🐾

