BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

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# Pet Sitting & Dog Walking for Pay

*Rover & Wag basics — getting paid to be with animals, in plain English*

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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# 1 The Short Version

Of all the ways to earn a bit of money from home, this is the one people tend to love most, because it hardly feels like work at all. If you are fond of dogs and cats, you can be paid to walk them, check in on them, or host them while their owners are away.

You sign up with an app like Rover or Wag, pass a background check, and list the services you want to offer. Owners find you, book you, and pay through the app, which takes a small cut.

1. Download Rover or Wag from the official app store and create an account.
2. Set up your profile: a friendly photo, a few lines about your love of animals, and your experience.
3. Choose the services you will offer — walks, drop-in visits, day care, overnight boarding, or house-sitting — and set your rates.
4. Pass the background check, and always do a meet-and-greet with a new pet and owner before the first paid booking.
5. Get paid through the app, gather good reviews, and set aside a little of what you earn for taxes.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> You set your own rates and choose every job. If a booking does not suit you — the wrong animal, the wrong days, a bad feeling — you simply decline. You are never obliged to take anything.

The work itself you already know how to do — you have likely cared for a pet all your life. This guide is about the few small things the apps add on top: the profile, the meet-and-greet, and the money and tax side. And never pay a fee to start sitting — there is none.

# 2 Why This One Is Worth a Look

Pet care has two things going for it that few side gigs can match. First, the demand is steady and real — people always need someone trustworthy to walk the dog or mind the cat when work, travel, or illness keeps them away, and good sitters are genuinely sought after. Second, the work is a pleasure for the right person rather than a chore, which is why so many keep at it for years.

It also fits a quiet, home-based life beautifully. A few dog walks fit around errands; drop-in visits are short and local; boarding a gentle dog can be company as much as work. For a retiree who misses having an animal about, or who simply enjoys them, it brings a little income and a little warmth together.

> **TIP**
>
> Before you sign up, think about what you can comfortably offer — a walk round the block, a drop-in visit, or a dog staying overnight in your home are very different commitments. Start with the gentlest.

And because you set your own rates and choose your own jobs, it bends to fit you rather than the other way round. You can do a great deal or very little, take only the animals and tasks you are comfortable with, and stop any time. That control is a large part of why it suits so many people so well.

# 3 Rover and Wag — What They Are

Rover and Wag are the two best-known apps that match pet owners with sitters and walkers in their area. An owner opens the app, sees sitters nearby with their photos, services, rates, and reviews, and books the one they like. You, as the sitter, set up a profile, choose your services and rates, and respond to the requests that come in. The app handles the booking and the payment.

| | Rover | Wag |
|---|---|---|
| Rates | You set your own prices | More standardized, often set by the app |
| Best for | Building repeat clients | A quick first booking; leans to on-demand walks |
| Services | Walks, drop-ins, day care, boarding, house-sitting | Similar, with a focus on walks |
| Vetting | Background check (a basic one, plus an optional enhanced check) | National background check, plus a safety quiz |

Both take a cut of what you earn in exchange for finding you the clients, handling the payments, and providing some protections. The cut is commonly cited at roughly 15 to 20 percent on Rover and higher on Wag, but the exact figure and how rates work vary and do change, so check each app's current terms. The idea is the same: they bring you the customers, and you do the caring.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> You can list on both Rover and Wag at once. Rover is good for building repeat clients at your own rates; Wag can be quicker to send a first booking. Both run a background check before you start, which reassures owners rather than anything to fear. Trying both costs nothing.

## 4 The Services You Can Offer

The apps let you offer a range of services, and you pick only the ones that suit you. These vary a great deal in what they ask of you — walks and drop-ins are short, local, and low-commitment, while boarding and house-sitting are much bigger undertakings.

| Service | What it involves | How big a step |
|---|---|---|

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Dog walking** | A set walk round the neighborhood | Easiest to start |
| **Drop-in visits** | Short calls at the pet's own home to feed, let out, and give company | Low commitment |
| **Day care** | Minding a dog at your home during the day | A moderate step |
| **Boarding** | A dog staying overnight in your home | A bigger step |
| **House-sitting** | Staying at the owner's home to mind the pet and the house | Most involved |

**TIP**

Begin with dog walks and drop-in visits. They are short, local, and easy to fit around your day — and they let you build reviews before you consider taking a dog into your home overnight.

You are free to offer just one service or several, and to change your mind as you go. Many sitters begin with walks and drop-ins, find their feet, and only later add boarding once they know what they are comfortable with. Boarding and house-sitting bring a strange animal into your home or you into someone else's, so they are best taken on only once you are confident and have built up some trust and reviews.

# 5 Setting Up a Profile Owners Trust

Owners are trusting you with a beloved pet, so your profile is where that trust begins. A warm, clear photo of you — ideally with a friendly dog or cat — does a great deal. A few honest lines about your love of animals and your experience ("I grew up with dogs and have cared for my own for decades") matter more than any polish. People are choosing a person, not a service.

List any real experience plainly: pets you have owned, any caregiving or animal work, a fenced yard, a calm home without small children if that is so. If you have none of the formal sort, your plain lifelong fondness for animals and your reliability are exactly what many owners want. Honesty reads as trustworthy; exaggeration does not.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> A friendly photo and a few honest sentences about your love of animals beat any amount of fancy wording. Owners are choosing someone they can trust with a family member — so just be plainly, warmly yourself.

Keep it simple and genuine. You are not writing an advertisement so much as introducing yourself to a worried pet owner. The sitters who do best are usually the ones who sound like exactly what they are: kind, steady people who love animals and will take good care of theirs.

# 6 Setting Your Rates

On Rover you generally set your own prices for each service, which is a nice freedom but can be a puzzle at first. The simplest way to find your footing is to look at what other sitters in your area charge — the app shows you — and set yours somewhere sensible among them. You can always adjust as you go and learn what your time is worth.

New sitters often start a touch lower to attract those first bookings and gather the reviews that build trust, then nudge their rates up once they have a few good ones. There is no need to be the cheapest — owners often choose a slightly dearer sitter who seems kind and reliable over the lowest price. Price yourself fairly for careful work.

> **TIP**
>
> Look at what nearby sitters charge in the app and price yourself sensibly among them — a little lower at first to earn your first reviews, then nudge up once you have a few. You need not be the cheapest to stay busy.

Remember that the app takes a cut of what you charge, so the amount you keep is a bit less than your listed rate. That is the trade for the app finding you clients and handling the money. Factor it in when you set your prices, and keep in mind that the income is yours to report at tax time.

> Rather not do this yourself? I'll come to your home and set it up for you — a flat $99 first visit across Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities. Outside the area? I also help remotely by phone or screen-share. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042.

## 7 The Meet-and-Greet — Never Skip It

Before any first booking with a new pet, arrange a meet-and-greet — a short, no-obligation meeting with the owner and the animal, usually at the owner's home. This is the single most important habit in pet sitting, and you should never skip it. It lets you meet the dog or cat, see how it behaves, learn its routine, and decide whether you are comfortable with the job before anything is committed.

It protects everyone. You get to judge whether the animal is friendly and manageable and whether the owner and home feel right. The owner gets to see that you are kind and capable. And the pet gets a gentle first introduction rather than a stranger

appearing cold on the first day. If anything feels off — an aggressive dog, a situation you are not equipped for — you are free to decline, with no hard feelings.

> **WATCH OUT**
> Never take a first booking with an animal you have not met. The meet-and-greet is how you spot a dog you cannot handle or a situation that is not right — and declining then is far better than discovering trouble once you are responsible.

Treat the meet-and-greet as your chance to ask every question: feeding, medications, walking routine, where things are kept, how to reach the owner, what to do in an emergency, and who the vet is. A good owner will welcome the care. The few minutes it takes saves a great deal of worry later.

## 8 Keys, Homes, and the Trust That Comes With Them

Several of these services involve a key to someone's home or a stay inside it, which is a real trust and deserves real care. For drop-in visits and house-sitting you may be given a key or a code; treat it as you would your own, keep it safe, and return it promptly. Note plainly with the owner what you are and are not responsible for in the home.

Being in someone's home also means respecting it entirely — you are there for the pet, not to make yourself at home beyond what is agreed. For house-sitting, clarify in advance what is expected: which rooms, whether you stay overnight, what to do about mail, bins, and plants. Clear expectations on both sides prevent every awkwardness.

And when you board a pet in your own home, the trust runs the other way too — you are bringing a strange animal into your space, around your things and perhaps your own pets. Make sure your home is safe for it and that it will get along, and never take on an animal that puts your household at risk. Good boundaries make for good

bookings.

## 9 You Are Self-Employed — and a Heads-Up About Taxes

As with the other gig apps, when you sit pets through Rover or Wag you are an independent contractor — you work for yourself, not as the app's employee. That brings the welcome freedom to set your rates, choose your jobs, and work as much or as little as you like. The app is a matchmaker and a payment handler, not a boss.

The other side is the familiar one: no taxes are taken out of what you earn, so setting money aside for them is up to you; there are no benefits; and any small costs of the work — treats, bags, travel to visits — are yours. Money you earn from pet sitting is taxable income, and it is yours to report even though no one withholds anything as you go.

The app may send you a summary of what it paid you at year's end, and you report that — less any small deductible costs — at tax time, paying income tax plus the self-employment tax that covers Social Security and Medicare.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Keep a simple record of your pet-sitting income and set aside a share for taxes as you go — many people put away something like a quarter into a separate account. For a casual sitter that is nearly all the bookkeeping you need.

If you earn enough over the year, you may owe quarterly estimated taxes rather than one bill in spring. It is far easier to handle from the start than to untangle later. We have a fuller guide in this series on quarterly taxes and the 1099 for side income if you want the whole picture.

# 10 Building Good Reviews

On these apps, reviews are everything — a new sitter with a few warm, genuine reviews will be chosen far more often than one with none. So the early goal is less about money than about doing a wonderful job for your first few clients and earning their kind words. Those reviews then bring the next bookings, and the thing builds on itself.

Earning good reviews is not complicated: show up on time, do exactly what you promised, send the owner a photo and a cheerful note during a visit, and treat the animal with real care. Owners worry about their pets, and a sitter who eases that worry with a little communication is the one they rave about and book again.

> **TIP**
>
> During a visit, send the owner a quick photo of their happy pet and a line about how it is doing. That small kindness eases their worry, delights them, and earns the glowing reviews that bring your next bookings.

Ask happy owners, gently, to leave a review if they are willing — most are glad to for a sitter who did well. A handful of genuine ones is worth more than any amount of self-promotion, and before long they do your advertising for you.

# 11 Being Ready If Something Goes Wrong

Caring for an animal means being ready, calmly, for the rare moment something goes wrong — a dog falls ill, slips its leash, or a cat hides and will not eat. None of this is common, but a sitter who has thought it through handles it well, and an owner who knows you have is reassured.

- At the meet-and-greet, get the owner's phone number and a backup contact.
- Note the pet's vet and whether there is an emergency animal hospital nearby.

- Write down any medications and conditions, and what the owner would want done in a crisis.
- Keep these where you can find them during a booking, not buried in the app.

For walks, a secure leash and harness and a firm hold near roads prevent the commonest mishap — a dog getting loose. For boarding, a safe, escape-proof space matters. Thinking these things through once, before you need them, turns a frightening moment into a manageable one.

## 12 The Old-Fashioned, Local Way

Worth saying plainly: the apps are convenient, but you can also do all this the old-fashioned way — by word of mouth in your own neighborhood, church, or circle of friends. People have always paid trusted neighbors to walk the dog or mind the cat, and doing it locally means no app taking a cut and often people you already know and trust.

The apps' advantages are that they find you clients you would never meet otherwise, handle the payments, and offer some protections and insurance for the booking. The local way is simpler and keeps all the money, but you find your own clients and handle your own arrangements and safety. Many sitters do both — apps to find new people, word of mouth for the neighbors.

If you are nervous about the apps, there is no shame in starting with a neighbor or two you already know, getting comfortable, and adding an app later. The work is the same either way; it is only how you find the clients and handle the money that differs.

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## 13 Cats and Other Animals, Not Just Dogs

Dogs get most of the attention, but there is real and steady demand for minding cats and other animals, and it often suits a sitter beautifully. Cats usually need only drop-in visits — a daily call to feed, freshen water, tidy the litter, and give a little company — which is short, local, low-commitment work that fits easily around a day.

Beyond cats, people need someone to mind small pets when they travel: rabbits, birds, fish, the occasional reptile or small flock of backyard hens. Much of this is simple feeding and checking, and if you are comfortable with the animal in question it can be pleasant, easy earning. You offer only what you know and like; there is no obligation to take on a creature you are unsure of.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Do not overlook cats and small pets. Drop-in visits to feed and check on them are short, local, and gentle — often the easiest and most comfortable way to start, and they rarely involve walking in bad weather.

## 14 Turning One-Off Jobs Into Regulars

The happiest sitters are usually the ones with a handful of regular clients — the same few dogs walked each week, the same cats minded whenever their owners travel. Regulars are easier and more pleasant than a constant stream of strangers: you know the animal and its ways, the owner trusts you, and the bookings come without any chasing. A little steady roster is the goal to aim for.

You earn regulars simply by being reliable and kind on the first few jobs. An owner who comes home to a happy, well-cared-for pet and a sitter who communicated along the way will book you again and again, and often tell their friends. Those first good impressions quietly build the steady work that follows.

It helps, too, to be the sort of sitter people can plan around — answering messages promptly, keeping to what you promised, and being clear about when you are available. Owners value dependability above almost everything, because they are trusting you with a member of the family.

## 15 What to Bring, and Weather and the Walk

You need very little kit, but a few things make visits smoother. Spare poop bags, a sturdy leash and a well-fitting harness for walks, and a small towel for muddy paws cover most of it. A phone, charged, lets you follow any instructions, send the owner a photo, and call for help if ever needed. Most of what matters, though, is information rather than equipment.

Before a booking, know the pet's routine: how much and when it eats, its walking habits, any commands it knows, its quirks and fears, and anything it must not have or do. Know where the food, leash, bags, and cleaning things are kept, and how to lock up.

> **TIP**
>
> Keep a short note on your phone for each regular pet — feeding, walking, quirks, where things are kept, vet and owner contacts. It saves you guessing and keeps each animal to the routine it knows.

Dog walking also means being out in all weathers, and a Portage County winter is no small thing. Cold, ice, and snow make walks slower and the footing treacherous, for you as much as the dog. Dress properly, wear boots with real grip, and shorten or adjust walks in harsh conditions — a frozen sidewalk is a fall waiting to happen, and no walk is worth an injury to you or the dog.

**WATCH OUT**

Keep a firm hold near roads in any weather, because a startled dog pulling loose is the commonest mishap of all. A secure harness and a good grip prevent it. In bitter weather a shorter walk or a bit of indoor play may be kinder than a long trudge.

# 16 How You Get Paid, and Growing It Gently

One of the quiet comforts of the apps is that they handle all the money, so you never have to haggle over cash or chase a payment. When an owner books you, they pay through the app; once the job is done and confirmed, your share — your rate less the app's cut — is released to you and paid out to your linked bank account on the app's schedule.

Because the money runs through the app, there is a clear record of every booking and payment, which is a help both for trust and for your taxes. For tidiness, consider having the app pay into a separate account kept just for your pet-sitting money — it makes your earnings easy to see and gives the share you are setting aside for taxes a natural home.

**TIP**

Keep every booking and payment inside the app. It is not only tidy and good for your taxes — it is what keeps the app's protections working and keeps you safe from pay-outside-the-app scams.

There is no need and no rush to do everything at once. Begin with the service you are most comfortable with — usually walks or cat drop-ins — do a few jobs well, gather some warm reviews, and only then add a service or take on more. A couple of walks a week for pocket money is a fine and complete thing; so is a busy roster of boarding, if that is what you want.

The point is that it bends to fit you, and you grow it — or don't — entirely on your own terms.

# 17 Keeping Yourself and Your Money Safe

Pet sitting is gentle work, but a few safety rules matter. Always do the meet-and-greet before a first booking, and trust your instinct about an animal, an owner, or a home — you may decline anything that feels wrong. When entering homes alone, let someone know where you are. And keep all bookings and payments inside the app, where there is a record and some protection.

That last point also guards against a common scam. If a supposed owner contacts you and wants to pay outside the app, or sends you a check for more than the booking and asks you to refund the difference, or pushes you to move the conversation off the app, stop — that is a fake-check scam wearing a pet owner's clothes. A real owner books and pays through the app, plainly.

**WATCH OUT**

A real pet owner books and pays inside the app. Anyone who wants to pay outside it, sends a check for too much and asks for the difference back, or pushes you off the app is running a scam — not offering a job. And never pay any "fee" to start sitting; there is none.

Download the real apps only from your phone's official app store, keep your bank details and password to yourself, and if a message feels off, go to the app directly rather than following a link. When in doubt, ask someone you trust before you act.

# 18 Common Mistakes and Common Questions

The troubles I see with new sitters are rarely about the animals — they are these few avoidable slips. None need happen to you.

- Skipping the meet-and-greet and taking on an animal or situation you cannot handle.

- Taking payment outside the app, losing both the record and the protection — and risking a fake-check scam.
- Jumping straight to overnight boarding before building any reviews or confidence.
- Setting rates with no idea what nearby sitters charge, then feeling under- or over-priced.
- Not getting the owner's contacts, the vet, and the emergency plan at the meet-and-greet.
- Forgetting the income is taxable and setting nothing aside.

> **TIP**
>
> Always meet first, keep everything in the app, start with walks and drop-ins, and gather the owner's emergency details every time. Get those right and the rest is a pleasure.

### Do I need experience or a certificate?

No formal one. What owners want is someone kind, reliable, and comfortable with animals, and a lifetime of owning and loving pets is exactly that. The apps do run a background check, which is normal and reassures owners.

### Is it safe to let strangers' dogs into my home?

With a meet-and-greet and good sense, yes. It lets you judge an animal before you ever commit, and you are free to decline any dog you are not comfortable with. Make sure your home is safe and secure, and start with day visits before overnights.

### Do I have to pay taxes on it?

Yes — pet-sitting earnings are taxable income and yours to report, even though nothing is withheld as you go. Keep a simple record, set aside a share, and if you earn enough you may owe quarterly estimated taxes.

### What if the pet gets sick or runs off?

It is uncommon, but you prepare for it at the meet-and-greet: get the owner's number and a backup, the vet's details and any nearby emergency animal hospital, and what the owner would want done. For walks, a secure leash and harness prevent the commonest mishap.

# 19 The Quick Recap, and Bill Is Here to Help

Here is the whole guide in one glance.

- Pet sitting through Rover or Wag is real, pleasant work for anyone who loves animals and has time.
- Sign up, pass a background check, build a warm honest profile, and choose which services you will offer.
- Start with walks and drop-ins; add boarding and house-sitting only once you are confident and have reviews.
- Never skip the meet-and-greet — it is how you judge an animal and a situation before you commit.
- Keep every booking and payment in the app, and watch for fake-check scams that want you to pay outside it.
- You set your own rates; the income is yours to report, so keep a record and set aside a share for taxes.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Love the animals, meet before you book, keep it in the app, and build a few glowing reviews. That is honest, happy pet-sitting in a nutshell.

When you would rather have a hand, that is exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat ninety-nine dollars, and for the parts that do not need me on-site — like setting up your Rover or Wag profile and getting your account linked for payment — I can often help right on your screen for forty-nine dollars. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee.

> *Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help.*

CHEAT SHEET

# Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this handy as you get started with pet sitting and dog walking.

| Task | What to do |
|---|---|
| Get started | Install Rover or Wag from the official app store and create an account |
| Win trust | Add a friendly photo and a few honest lines about your love of animals |
| Choose services | Start with walks and drop-ins; add boarding later once you have reviews |
| Set your rates | See what nearby sitters charge; start a touch lower, then nudge up |
| Meet first, always | Do a meet-and-greet before any first booking — decline anything that feels off |
| Get the essentials | Owner and backup contact, the vet, meds, and the emergency plan |
| Earn great reviews | Show up on time, do what you promised, and send a photo during visits |
| Stay safe from scams | Keep every booking and payment in the app; never pay a fee to start |
| Mind the taxes | Keep a record and set aside about a quarter of what you earn |
| Get help | Call Bill: (330) 200-8042 |

**BEFORE YOU GO**

# A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.

HOW I CAN HELP

# Your Visit — and My Promise

*You don't have to remember all of it — just that a friendly, patient person is one call away, whenever you'd rather have a hand.*

**KEY SPECS**

In your home — $99 flat for the first visit, no contracts and no surprises, with a 30-day come-back-free follow-up. In-home visits cover Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities.
Outside the area? Remotely — $49 for a screen-share session (free for Support Plan members, $39/mo), refundable if I can't fix it — and credited toward a visit if you'd rather have me in person. Book either at billshometech.com/book.

**GOOD TO KNOW**

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full $99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Whenever you're ready, I'll come to your home anywhere in Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities, at your pace. Too far for a house call? I also help remotely. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042. — Bill

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