

Tab 1

Recruitment Language

Forums: Reddit r/trustedhousesitters and community Facebook group

Post Title: Share your sitter experiences with me for my grad school research project!

Post Body: I am looking for sitters to interview about their experiences using Trusted Housesitters. Participants must be 18+ and willing to do a ~30 minute interview over zoom. Selected participants will be compensated with a \$10 Amazon gift card for their time. 🍷 🐾 😊

[Take this 2 minute survey to join the study!](#)

*Note: I am saying 30 minutes in the post and will ask if they are willing to continue longer during the interview once we have built up rapport. I don't think people would be willing to commit to 45 minutes

Survey Details:

Thank you for your interest in helping with my project! This survey will take 2-3 minutes. Please read the following notes before beginning your survey.

Study Objectives: I am a graduate student at the Maryland Institute College of Art conducting a school research project to better understand the experience of current or past sitters who use Trusted Housesitters and how it could be improved.

The Research: I am looking for sitters (single or couples) willing to participate in a ~30 minute zoom call and be interviewed about your experiences with Trusted Housesitters. The call will be recorded for my own reference and deleted upon completion of the project. You will be asked to sign a consent form.

I AM NOT AFFILIATED WITH TRUSTED HOUSESITTERS. AT NO TIME DURING THE SCREENING OR INTERVIEW WILL WE ASK FOR YOUR TRUSTED HOUSESITTERS PROFILE OR OTHER PERSONALLY IDENTIFYING INFORMATION.

Timing: If you are selected for this study I will reach out to schedule the 30 minute interview with you between Sunday, September 21st and Tuesday, September 30th.

Compensation: If you are selected for and complete this study you will receive a **\$10 Amazon gift card** via email upon completion of your zoom interview.

Thank you!

Screeners Survey

(<https://forms.gle/ntcmAkC9moroQD2a8>)

Client: Trusted Housesitters (THS)

Problem Statement: Both pet owners and sitters have had bad experiences and received poor customer service, leading some users to have stopped using the product.

User Type: House/pet sitters

User characteristics:

- Over 18
- Has completed three or more sits
- Has had bad sitting experiences
- Has received unsatisfactory customer service from THS
- Has either already stopped using THS (within the past year) or is planning to not renew their membership
- Based in the US
- Can be single sitters or couples interviewing together, can be current or past sitters

Screeners Guidelines:

Thank you for your interest in helping with my project! Please read the following notes before beginning your survey.

Overall Study Objectives:

I am a graduate student at the Maryland Institute College of Art conducting a school research project to understand the experience of **current or past sitters** who use Trusted Housesitters and how it could be improved.

The Research:

I am looking for **sitters (single or couples)** willing to participate in a ~45 minute zoom call and be interviewed about your experiences with Trusted Housesitters. The call will be recorded for my own reference and deleted upon completion of the project. You will be asked to sign a consent form.

AT NO TIME DURING THE SCREENING OR INTERVIEW WILL WE ASK FOR YOUR TRUSTED HOUSESITTERS PROFILE OR OTHER PERSONALLY IDENTIFYING INFORMATION.

Timing:

If you are selected for this study I will reach out to schedule the 45 minute interview with you between Sunday, September 21st and Tuesday, September 30th.

Compensation:

If you are selected for and complete this study you will receive a \$10 Amazon gift card via email upon completion of your 45 minute zoom interview. Thank you!

QUESTIONS

1. Please select your age range
 - a. Under 18 DISMISS
 - b. 18 - 25
 - c. 25 - 40
 - d. 40 - 60
 - e. 60+

2. What is your membership status?
 - a. Pet Sitter - Active Membership
 - b. Pet Sitter - Past Membership
 - 2.1 [If current pet sitter is selected] Do you plan to renew your membership?
 - c. Yes 2nd CHOICE
 - d. No 1st CHOICE

 - 2.2 [If past pet sitter is selected] When did you stop using Trusted Housesitters?
 - e. Less than 3 months ago 1st CHOICE
 - f. Between 3 months to 6 months ago 2nd CHOICE
 - g. Between 6 months to 1 year ago 3rd CHOICE
 - h. More than 1 year ago DISMISS

 - 2.3 [If past pet sitter is selected] Why didn't you renew your membership?

3. How many sits have you completed using Trusted Housesitters?
 - a. 0-2 DISMISS
 - b. 3-5
 - c. 5-10
 - d. 10-30

- e. 30+
- 4. How would you rate your sit experiences on Trusted Housesitters?
 - a. All good DISMISS
 - b. Mostly good
 - c. 50/50
 - d. Mostly bad
 - e. All bad
 - f. Other
- 3.1 [If any option besides A is selected) Can you please describe one or more bad sit experiences you had?
- 5. How many times have you contacted Trusted Housesitters customer service?
 - a. 0 DISMISS
 - b. 1-2
 - c. 3-5
 - d. 5-10
 - e. 10+
- 6. How would you rate your experience with Trusted Housesitters customer service?
 - a. Very positive DISMISS
 - b. Positive DISMISS
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Negative
 - e. Very Negative
 - f. Other
- 5.1 [If option c/d/e is selected] Can you please describe one or more negative experiences you had with Trusted Housesitters customer service?

[GOAL: AN ASSORTMENT OF CURRENT/PAST SITTERS WHO HAVE HAD BAD SITS AND NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES WITH TRUSTED HOUSESITTERS CUSTOMER SERVICE]

INVITATION

I'm interested in learning how Trusted Housesitters can improve sitter experiences and would like to learn from you. This project is for school research purposes only.

I am not affiliated with Trusted Housesitters, no attempt will be made to sell you products or services, and at no time will I ask questions about your personally identifying information.

To participate in this study you must be willing to participate in the follow activity:

30 minute zoom interview scheduled between September 21st and September 30th, 2025. The interview will be recorded for research purposes only.

Incentive:

In return for completing the interview you will receive a \$10 Amazon gift card via email within 24 hours after completion. This is a student project and I appreciate your participation!

1. Are you interested in participating in the study?
 - a. Yes CONTINUE
 - b. No THANK & DISMISS
2. Are you able and willing to join a zoom call to do the interview?
 - a. Yes CONTINUE
 - b. No THANK & DISMISS
3. Are you able and willing to be interviewed between September 21st and September 30th?
 - a. Yes CONTINUE
 - b. No THANK & DISMISS

3.1 Please select which time zone you are in and all date/time options that you would be available for the interview. I will reach out to you via email to schedule the specific time and share the zoom link.

[List options for timezones and dates and morning/afternoon/evening]

4. First Name _____
5. Email Address _____

CLOSING AND NEXT STEPS

Thank you for your time, I'm looking forward to learning about your experiences.

I will follow up soon with a confirmation email and scheduling details for the interview.

Your participation in this study is very important. I am only able to select a few sitters for this research. At any time if you are no longer able or willing to complete the interview please contact me as soon as possible. Thank you for your time and responses, I look forward to your contribution.

Interview Guide:

Review from user research plan

Problem Statement: Both pet owners and sitters have had bad experiences and received poor customer service, leading some users to have stopped using the product.

Research Goal: How might we improve satisfaction and customer loyalty (membership renewals)?

Objectives:

1. Understand what they believe led to bad sit experiences
 2. Learn why they are unhappy with Trusted Housesitters' customer service
 3. Learn how they would have felt more supported by Trusted Housesitters
 4. Explore what design solutions could facilitate better customer service
 5. Learn whether the main problem is bad sits or bad customer service
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Formatted Interview Outline

I. Introduction (5 minutes)

- **Welcome & Rapport Building:**
 - “Thank you for joining me today. I’m excited to hear about your experiences and insights.”
 - The purpose of my research is to learn more about sitter experiences using trusted Housesitters and explore ways that they can be improved
- **Consent and Confidentiality:**
 - Explain recording procedures, data usage, and confidentiality.
 - I may be looking at my other screen to see my questions and take notes, but I’m always listening to you
 - Ask: “Do you have any questions before we begin?”

II. Warm-Up Questions (5 minutes)

- **General Background:**
 - Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your background?
- **Context Setting:**
 - When and why did you start using Trusted Housesitters?

- Where are you based? Do you have a favorite location to do sits?
- How often do you do a sit? Have you done any repeat sits?

III. Exploratory Questions (10 minutes)

- **Current Experience and Behaviors:**
 - Can you please walk me through your typical process when searching and applying for sits? (What do they filter/look for, green/red flags) How do you communicate with the owners? (just texting, video call, in person meet up)
- **Challenges and Pain Points:**
 - What are your most common challenges or frustrations during a sit?
 - Can you tell me about either the worst or most recent bad sit experience you've had?
 - Have you had any sit cancellations? What happened?

IV. Deep Dive into Motivations and Decisions (10 minutes)

- **Emotional and Rational Drivers:**
 - "How does doing a bad sit make you feel?"
 - What are the most important aspects of a sit for you?
- **Understanding Decisions:**
 - What do you do when you have a bad sit (contact customer service? Write a review? Do you feel like you can be honest in the review?)
 - Have you ever contacted customer service about a bad sit? Why or why not? How was your experience? (can customer service do anything to make the bad sits better)
 - How important is customer service to you when you use Trusted Housesitters?
 - What factors influence your decision to use Trusted Housesitters over other platforms? (other exchange sites, or paid sitting like rover) Have you considered switching? If so - why?
 - Do you know other sitters? (in person or virtually? do you want to know them?)
 - What do you say about yourself on your profile that you think pet owners find important?

V. Probing Future Needs and Aspirations (5 minutes)

- **Anticipating Changes:**

- How do you see yourself using Trusted Housesitters in the next few years? Will any of your needs change?
- **Innovation and Improvement:**
 - Is there anything you think THS could do to facilitate better sit experiences? (What information would you ideally see on each listing to help you better identify good matches?)
 - “What would your ideal interaction with THS customer service look like?”

VI. Wrap-Up and Reflection (5 minutes)

- **Final Thoughts:**
 - “Is there anything we haven’t covered that you think is important about your experience?”
 - “Do you have any additional feedback or questions for us?”
- **Thank You:**
 - Express gratitude for the participant’s time and insights.

Send a thank you email and gift card to each participant within 24 hours of completing their interview.