The Numbers Behind a Pet Sitting and Dog Walking Side Business

A free field guide from Bytell Press. The figures come from our example financial model for a part-time, one-person pet sitting and dog walking business. They are planning assumptions, not quotes for your market; the worksheet at the end is for your own numbers.

Almost anyone can afford to start walking dogs for money. The question to answer first is how many standing clients it takes before the work pays you a steady amount every month.

1. How the work is priced

The work is sold **by the visit**, and the backbone is the client who books the same walks every week. The example model uses these lines:

Service	Model price
30-minute dog walk	$20–$30, about $24 in the model
60-minute dog walk	$30–$45
Drop-in visit, about 30 minutes	$20–$30
In-home overnight sitting	$75–$100 a night

| Additional pet | $5–$10 extra | | Holiday surcharge | $10–$15 extra per visit | | **Blended across the mix** | **About 70% gross margin** |

The 70% is what is left after fuel, supplies, software and any booking commission. The owner's time is not counted as a cost. One dog walked three times a week at $24 is $72 a week, about $312 a month, and about $218 of gross profit. Overnight sitting is the extra: a week at $90 a night adds about $630.

2. What it costs to open

The example model opens on about **$1,200**, within a range of about $700 to $1,500, paid from savings with no loan.

Startup item	Model range
Background check	$30–$60
Insurance, first payment	$200–$350
Pet first-aid and CPR training	$50–$120
Basic gear (leashes, bags, first-aid kit, lockbox)	$150–$300
Scheduling software setup	$0–$50
Local fees	$50–$150

Startup item	Model range
Starter marketing	$150–$350
Total	**About $700–$1,500**

The model also starts with about **$1,500 of opening cash**. Each $24 walk leaves about $17 after direct costs, so roughly 70 walks earn back the $1,200.

3. What it costs to stay open

The model carries about **$110 a month** in fixed costs: insurance, the software subscription, phone and membership fees.

The fixed costs exclude owner pay. The model adds it as a separate **owner draw of $1,300 a month**, which brings the monthly total to cover to **$1,410**.

Two small costs move with revenue: card processing at about 2.5% and marketing at about 4%.

4. The break-even: the one number to know

Break-even revenue = monthly fixed costs ÷ margin.

The margin to use is the 70% gross margin less the two costs that move with revenue: 70% – 2.5% – 4% = **63.5%**.

With the owner draw included: $1,410 ÷ 0.635 = about **$2,220 a month**. At $24 a walk that is about 93 walks a month. At $312 a month per client, it is **about seven standing clients** walked three times a week.

Without the draw the sum is $110 ÷ 0.635 = about $173 a month, which is about seven walks. The seven clients are what pay you.

5. The risk the numbers show: the ramp

The model brings in about **$765 in the first month** and takes roughly six months to reach a steady $3,600 a month, built on ten to twelve standing clients.

In that first month, $765 leaves about $486 after direct costs, card fees and marketing. Take off the $110 of fixed costs and about $376 is left toward a $1,300 draw. The $1,500 of opening cash will not carry a full draw for six months. Plan to draw less while the book fills.

After the ramp, the model's steady month swings from about $3,060 in the slow stretch to about $4,500 at the December holiday peak. Both are above the $2,220 break-even.

6. Your numbers

Fill this in with your own rates.

Question	Model	Yours
Price of a 30-minute walk	$24	_____

Question	Model	Yours
Monthly revenue from one standing client	$312	_____
Margin after direct costs, card fees and marketing	63.5%	_____
Monthly fixed costs	$110	_____
Monthly owner pay you want	$1,300	_____
Break-even revenue (fixed costs plus pay ÷ margin)	$2,220	_____
Standing clients to break even	About 7	_____

If your break-even needs more walks than your free hours allow, fix the plan before you start: raise the walk price, add overnight sitting, or lower the monthly pay you expect.

This guide is general business information, not legal, tax, accounting or investment advice. The figures are illustrative assumptions from an example model and are not a forecast or a promise of results. Licensing and insurance requirements vary by state and are not covered here; check yours with the state agency.

Bytell Press publishes the full business plan, the editable financial model behind these numbers, and the operating playbooks for a pet sitting and dog walking side business.

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