



Erin Auerbach

Erin has written a lot. She likes to laugh.

Oct 1 · 4 min read

Instructions for the Pet Sitter

This is the MOST important job you will ever have.



Thank you for agreeing to watch Mitzi (Staffordshire terrier) and Bertha (Shih tzu poo mix), our beloved rescues, while we're on vacation. Know that your willingness to spend the next two weeks at our home is critical to the wellbeing of our fur children, as well as the enjoyment of our journey overseas. Fiji would not be the same if we knew our treasured family members were stuck for that long in institutionalized doggy daycare or pet hotels.

Food/Drink: Mitzi is on a raw diet. I have stocked the refrigerator with her organic meat, which she should be fed in quarter-cup portions. Six mini meals throughout the day work best for her metabolism. If you run out of food, I have left cash on the counter to pay the kosher butcher. For snacks, Mitzi can munch on carrots and apples with the skins cut off.

Bertha is following a vegan diet. Her dehydrated food mix is in the pantry, next to the kale chips. Add three tablespoons of water at 82.1

degrees and let soak for 15 minutes before each of her feedings. Note that the imported coconut milk in the fridge is also for her, as she needs her protein. She drinks at least two cups of it daily. Like Mitzi, she can snack on apples but make sure you stand between the two of them, as Bertha becomes extremely food aggressive if she believes Mitzi's fruit is fresher.

Tip: Playing the theme song from “The Affair” often helps diffuse the tension. Please have it cued up on your phone.

Medication: If the goiter on Bertha's neck is bothering her, administer a morphine pill. These will make her tired. (Note that this is also a good time to give Mitzi apples because Bertha is less likely to attack when she's drugged.) Although both dogs are spayed, Mitzi occasionally experiences PMS, which we think is a result of the memory of her litter-bearing years before we saved her. If she seems kind of bloated or sad, please give her the mild diuretic that I have set aside in the pink box.

Exercise: The girls need three walks a day. The first excursion should be completed before 6:30 a.m. and should last at least 20 minutes. Here is a list of dogs you're likely to encounter during the walk: a friendly pug called Rudy, a rambunctious Labrador named Happy, and a German shepherd mix, Rex, who is in love with Mitzi.

Bertha's second and third walks should be short. Just make sure she eliminates appropriately, especially if she hasn't done so in the backyard. The biodegradable earth scented bags are in the dogs' cubby in the sustainability section. More importantly, Bertha needs the one-on-one attention and assurance that she's well regarded. You'll find her affirmations on a list kept next to her poop bags.

Nighttime ritual: Of course, you're free to watch whatever TV shows you prefer, but Mitzi likes Lifetime movies. She will sit on your left and Bertha on your right. We would like to arrange a nightly FaceTime with the dogs and will pay you an extra \$20/day to facilitate these 10-minute calls each evening at 9:30 (your time).

Bedtime is 10:30 p.m. I have put on fresh sheets for you, but we ask that you sleep in the center of the mattress so the dogs understand that you are not their mother or their father. (This is something Bertha's life coach suggested, and we wholeheartedly agree that we don't want to

cause any attachment confusion issues. Still, we want the experience to be as pleasant as possible for all involved.) Mitzi’s sleep number is 35. Bertha’s is 80.

Additional considerations: While we always encourage kindness, we urge you not to speak to either Bertha or Mitzi in baby talk. It patronizes and belittles them. However, you can use a soothing mid-transatlantic accent like the ones frequently heard on public radio.

The cleaning service will come in on Friday. It’s best if none of you are around while they try to do their work. This may be a good time to hang out at one of the two dog parks that we have approved. Please use the tastefully festooned collars in their cubby in the bag marked “Park.” In crowded settings, it’s important that they look their best and project a certain image, as they are, in fact, a reflection of us.

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Erin Auerbach’s writing has been published in McSweeney’s, National Lampoon, Weekly Humorist and many other places. Feel free to follow her dog on Instagram: @ponyisadog