

The Shadower's Manual

Hello, and congratulations on being selected to become WCP's newest shadower!

You're about to take on a challenging and exciting function within the company by helping to determine who makes up our pool of walkers. We only entrust this responsibility to our most passionate and dedicated walkers, and we know you will be amazing. But there is a great deal to learn before assuming this new role, and we're here to help get you prepared, starting with this, The Shadower's Manual.

The Purpose of the Shadow

A shadow is an event where a potential (as in, "Potential new hire") accompanies you on your route for the day, so you can show them the ropes, explain the position and the company, and get some information about them as well.

This person has passed through the interviews, and is therefore being seriously considered for a position as a walker. However, the shadow is much more than just a quick look at a route to confirm a manager's hiring suggestion. It is an absolutely crucial step in the interview process, because there is a lot of important information about a potential's capacity for the job that can't be gleaned in a typical interview; it takes a real-world setting to see how a potential would really perform as a walker, and your feedback on their aptitude will be invaluable when the time comes to make a hiring decision.

What's In This Manual?

A shadow chiefly involves the giving and receiving of information, and there's a lot of it to give and receive! In this manual, we've compiled all of the important facts, details, and questions that you're going to need to discuss with the potential as you take them on the shadow. Learn what's in these pages, and you'll be armed with everything you need to thoroughly assess a potential's...potential! We're going to break everything down into three main sections. You'll learn what information you'll need to **Tell** the potential, what you'll need to **Ask** the potential, and what you'll need to **Notice** about the potential during the shadow.

But before we get to all of that information, you're first going to read about how you'll be contacted when you're needed for a shadow, and how to communicate with your manager and the potential to set one up. At the end of the manual, you'll learn about the steps you'll take after the shadow to gather your feedback together and report it to your manager. Let's dive in!

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Pre-Shadow: The Setup

The shadow process begins when the Walker Manager reaches out to you, the shadower, letting you know there's a potential who has passed through the interviews and may have what it takes to be a WCP walker. The Walker Manager will introduce you to your potential by sending you both an e-mail asking you to get in touch with each other to set up a shadow. Since you're both copied on the e-mail, you'll have each other's e-mail addresses and can get in touch easily. There are a few important points to remember with this process:

- 1) Always CC the Walker Manager on all correspondence between you and the shadow, to make sure everyone stays in the loop.
- 2) Reach out to the potential via e-mail as soon as possible, and *no more than 48 hours* after the Walker Manager initially introduces you to the potential.
- 3) As you communicate with the potential to find out what day would work best for both of you, bear in mind that the shadow should happen within *one week* of your reaching out to the potential. If that's impossible, you can stretch it out to no more than 10 days, but really try to get it locked in within a week!

Once you've got your date set with the potential, you can send them some more detailed information about the shadow itself. We've included a [sample template](#) at the end of this document for you to use to prepare the potential for the shadow.

Now that you know how to set up your shadow, let's get to the information you'll need for the shadow itself!

The Shadow, Section 1: What We Tell Them

An important aspect of the shadow is providing information to the potential about how we at WCP conduct our walks. It's crucial to give the potential an accurate and detailed idea of the position and the company, and what will be expected of them if they sign on with us. Not only does this prepare them for the job, but, just as importantly, it lets them (and us) know if they're not interested in what we're about.

You'll notice that the items in the following lists don't have much explanation in them -- if you ever need a refresher on WCP policies or procedures, please refer to the walker manual or ask the Walker Manager.

Now, it's time to tell you what you should tell them! To help you digest all this information, we'll break it down into three main sections. Let's start with...

THE INS AND OUTS

Since the first thing you'll do on a shadow is enter a home, starting with an explanation of the home-based procedures we follow at the beginnings and ends of our visits is a good place to start. Make sure you cover:

LeashTime

- Checking in and out
 - At the appropriate address, and outside for best phone reception
- Accessing the owners' contact information
 - Noting vet authorization, just in case

Entry

- On the shadow, the potential should feel welcome to go where you go, and free to follow you wherever you go.
- Quick survey to check for accidents, overturned trash cans, humans home, or any other anomalies
- Leaving your shoes outside the door if they're dirty/salty
- Cleaning up dog messes
- Getting the dog out efficiently (hopefully within 2 minutes)

Clock

- When we start the clock vs. when we check in through LeashTime
 - Factoring in time for elevators or long walks from building door to dog's door
- Length of total visit versus length of walk
 - Keeping the dog outside for the full time
 - If they won't go out, be patient and keep trying for 5 minutes. Then contact the Walker Manager.
 - If they don't want to stay out the full time, don't drag, but constantly encourage and use your knowledge of the dog to motivate them. Contact Walker Manager if this persists.
 - Exceptions
 - Health
 - Weather
 - Owner specification
- Quick look at the stopwatch functions

Notes

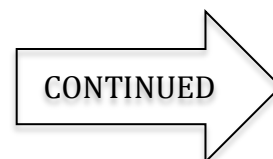
- What the notepad looks like
- How to fill out the written note
 - What to talk about in the body
- How to fill out the online note
 - Reporting doggie bathroom use

- Quickly recapping the walk, or
- Reporting something we'd like the owner to know before they get home
- Checking the introductory notes when starting with a new dog
 - How to find the notes in LeashTime
 - Read these notes to the potential (or have them look on your phone, if you're comfortable) to give them an idea of how they're set up and the kinds of language used therein

Exit

- When to come back in (how much time left)
- Doggie endgame
 - Wiping paws or removing shoes
 - Filling water bowls
 - Giving treats if allowed
 - Returning dog to crate, pen, or other designated area
- "Leave no trace" policy
 - Bathroom
 - Leave the door open/closed (however it was before you used it)
 - Remember to turn the lights back off
 - Return the seat to the closed position
 - If you finish the toilet paper and another roll is immediately available, replace it.
 - If not, let owner know in the online note in LT
 - Clean up after yourself
 - Trash goes in outside cans
 - Wipe up any mud or salt you may have tracked in
- Door check
 - Make sure you have your keys before you exit the front door
 - Triple-check all locks to make sure front door is secure
 - Zero-tolerance policy for mistakes

These basics are easy to explain, because you can demonstrate all of them as you're talking about them at the beginning and end of a walk! Now, let's get into what to talk about once you're on the walk itself.



WALK TALK

It's fair to say that walking dogs isn't rocket science, and shouldn't be! But as professionals, we have different (read: higher) standards in how we walk our dogs, and these should be made very clear to anyone who's interested in signing on with us. Here are the points to cover:

The Rules

- No interacting with other dogs or people
- No letting the dog off-leash
- No dog parks, even ones attached to buildings
- No unauthorized treats
- No walking in groups, unless specifically asked by a multi-dog family
- Observe and heed all signs, such as
 - No trespassing
 - No dogs allowed
 - Keep pets off landscaping
 - Chemically-treated grass
- No one else is allowed on walks, in clients' buildings, or in apartments.
 - Exception: WCP-sanctioned new-walker or check-in shadows.

Routes

- Building a route
 - Typical number of dogs in a route
 - Average length of time for common route build
 - Clustering of dogs on route (no need for cars)
- Scheduling
 - Consistent daily schedule
 - Time windows for each dog
 - Lateness not tolerated

Philosophy of Walking

- Active versus passive walking
 - Keep focused on the dog and the world around you
 - Too many dog walkers treat it as lazy hangout time
 - WCP walkers have fun and we love our dogs, but we take walks much more seriously than your average company
- Force-free, dominance-free walking
 - Positive methods of reinforcement and interaction -- not punishment!
 - Defer to any specific instructions from the owner
 - If you're ever asked to treat a dog in a way that makes you uncomfortable, contact Walker Manager

- Five doggie needs we meet
 - Physical exercise
 - Mental/sensory stimulation
 - Bathroom access
 - Connected human time
 - Safe space maintenance
 - Home space -- their area, especially bedding, is clean, free of trash or bodily fluids (messes need to be cleaned up as thoroughly as reasonably possible)
 - Walking space -- we create and maintain a bubble of safety around the dog when we're outside

Equipment

- How harnesses go together (basic)
 - Clearly demonstrate any harnesses on your route
 - Note that there are so many kinds, and they can consult YouTube or Google Images (or Walker Manager) for help.
- How to put on and walk with a
 - Flat collar
 - Prong collar
 - Martingale
 - Gentle Leader

THE COMPANY WAY

There's one more section of information to impart to a would-be walker! This information deals more with the company than the walk itself, but it's just as important, because these will be big determining factors in whether a potential will find WCP to be a fit for them. It will be your vital (but not too difficult) task to find time throughout the day to cover these points:

Company Structure

- Quick mentioning of the various office positions:
 - Owner
 - Manager
 - Walker Manager
 - Field Supervisor
 - Scheduling Coordinator
 - Marketing and Technology Manager

Communication

- Staff-centric: funnel all communication through the Walker Manager channel rather than owner channel
 - Always ask, never assume

- No question too small or irrelevant to ask Walker Manager or other staff members
- Please feel comfortable bringing anything up, even sensitive topics like:
 - Behavior problems/training concerns
 - Owner instructions that make you uncomfortable
 - Unfortunate owner practices (always leaving trash can open, crate too small)
 - Abuse or neglect -- always report this!
 - Helpful hints for an owner
 - Example: Harness or collar that you think would be more beneficial
- Depending upon staff instructions, communicating with clients
 - Respectful
 - Professional
 - Open to complying with directions
 - Reinforcing training according to client instructions
 - Loop staff in on all client communication

Numbers

- Pay
 - Rates and frequency of pay
 - Incentives/raises
 - Direct deposit
 - Run through the math on a route
 - Example: To get a ballpark for a paycheck, a five-dog route means 25 walks a week, times \$7 per walk, times two weeks in a pay period, totaling \$350 per paycheck

The Quick List of WCP Services

- Pet sits
 - Rates and 24-hour periods versus days
- Dog runs
- Puppy visits
- 1-hr walks
- 30-minute walks
- Cat visits
- More information on these services will be provided at the paperwork stage

The Shadow, Section 2: What We Ask Them

In Section 1, we found all the information you'll need to give the potential over the course of the shadow, to help them know whether they want to walk for us. In this section, we'll flip that around and look at the information you'll need the potential to give you, to help us know whether they'll be a good fit for WCP. Read on to see all the questions you should ask of your potential on the shadow. Fortunately, they break down into three easy-to-remember sections: You'll be asking them questions about their **PAST**, their **PRESENT**, and their **FUTURE**. If you have any questions about these questions, make a note of them, because we'll go over these more in detail at the group orientation later on.

PAST

- Where are they from?
 - If they're not from Chicago, when did they move here?
 - What brought them here?
- What is their dog history/experience?
- What is their job history/experience?

PRESENT

- What other jobs do they have at this moment, if any?
- Other than work, how do they spend their time, or what do they do for fun?
- With whatever their current life situation is, what is their schedule and availability?
- Why do they want to be a dog walker?
- More specifically, why are they applying to be a dog walker *now*?

FUTURE

- How long do they see themselves sticking with dog-walking?
- How do they feel about the 6-month commitment?
- Aside from dog-walking, what are their near-term goals (in the next year or so), personally and professionally?

The Shadow, Section 3: What We Notice

In Section 2, we looked at the information you can easily get from a potential. You ask them a straightforward question, they give you an answer, and now you know a great deal about them. However, your fact-finding mission has not come to an end just yet. There is more that you'll need to know in order to determine whether a potential will truly be an excellent walker; only now, instead of asking them questions, you'll have find these answers out for yourself!

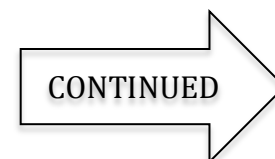
What we want to cover in this section are the intangibles; the subtle clues about a person that can give you a great deal of information about their suitability for the job -- if you can detect them! This is where your awareness and keen eye for detail will need to shine, as you pay close attention to the potential and note these signals that they may not even know they're sending. Like we've done elsewhere in this manual, we're going to break this all down into three main sections. Over the course of the walk, it will be your task to look closely and discover:

THE PHYSICAL

- Did the potential seem comfortable with your dogs, or did they flinch or shy away?
 - Did they react differently to any individual dog?
- Could the potential keep up with your pace?
 - On the walks themselves?
 - Going house to house?
- Did they look like they could move quickly if a situation required it?
- Do they have the size and strength to handle larger or faster dogs, or would they need to walk smaller or slower dogs?

THE PERSONAL

- Did they seem nice and friendly?
- Did they listen well to you as you spoke to them?
- Did they ask thoughtful questions?
- Did they always seem engaged, or did they seem to tune out at times?
- Did they frequently check their phone?
- Were they someone you'd like to be around, or did they make you uncomfortable in any way?



THE PROFESSIONAL

- Did they communicate well?
 - Did they speak to you clearly and capably?
 - Was their written correspondence with you done in a professional way?
- Did they arrive on time?
 - If not, did they communicate in advance that they would be late?
- Did they seem comfortable and confident with the dogs?
- Did they seem comfortable and confident with the overall shadow experience?
- Did they know information about equipment, breeds, or dog care that suggested they knew what they were doing in this industry?
- Would you be comfortable bringing this person to a meeting with a new client?

Post-Shadow: Reporting Your Feedback

When the shadow is over, it would be excellent manners to thank the potential for coming along, and, since you'll likely be finishing up in a different place from where you started the day, making sure they know how to get where they need to go! Once you've parted ways, it's time to come back and let management know how everything went! We've made the process very simple:

- 1) Log in to the Shadows section of the WCP website using the credentials:
NOTE TO MANAGEMENT -- If there will be a universal login, it can probably go here.
- 2) Access the Google Form that has been made available in the Shadows section.
- 3) Answer all the questions on the form as completely as you can -- this is the only way management will get the information they need about the shadow, so spare no detail!
- 4) Submit the form when you're finished, and your feedback will be sent for management to review.
- 5) Because things move quickly around here, we'll need you to submit your feedback no later than the end of the shadow day. There's not a specific deadline hour, but it needs to be submitted in time for management to access it the next morning.

If management has any questions for you about the shadow, someone will reach out to you. Remember that we trust you completely to conduct your shadows capably and confidently, so you should feel comfortable standing by your feedback and explaining it if necessary.



What's Next?

We've come to the end of The Shadower's Manual. There is a lot of information in here, but if you've gotten this far, it means we know you're more than up to the challenge.

Study this manual carefully, because you'll need to be familiar with it in preparation for the next step in your training. The Field Supervisor will be in touch with you very soon to give you more information about your upcoming group orientation, which will build off of the information in these pages. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to the Field Supervisor.



Appendix: Shadow Details Template

Feel free to use the following template as you communicate with the potential!

Hi [NAME],

Thanks for your reply. Here's everything you need to know about the shadow on [FULL DATE]:

- My route is in [NEIGHBORHOOD], with [NUMBER] stops.
- The first house is located at [STARTING ADDRESS]. Please meet me there at [START TIME].
- We will finish up at [FINAL ADDRESS], at roughly [END TIME].
- The weather can make the job much more difficult if one's not prepared, so please check the weather for [DAY] and plan for heat, cold, rain, whatever. And please be aware that we're going to clear a handful of miles on the route, so shoe yourself accordingly as well.
- Finally, there won't be time for us to stop for food or any significant breaks, so if you want to bring any snacks or drinks or anything, that's fine, but know that they'll have to be enjoyed on the move.
- Feel free to use Google Maps or any other means to find out how to get to the neighborhood, and be aware that if you're driving, you may have to park a ways away and walk to the first address.
- With that in mind, I'm sure this goes without saying, but please do whatever you need to in order to get to [ADDRESS] on time at [START TIME] on [DAY] morning.

I believe that's everything!

If you have any questions about anything between now and then, please feel free to reach out.

Even if you don't have questions, please respond to this email no later than [DAY BEFORE], just so I know you received it and read it. I look forward to meeting you. Thanks!

[YOUR NAME]