

Pay Grade / Stepping Out

■ The job: Dog walker

■ **The pay:** Varies with region and level of service; most dog walkers earn about 50% of the service fee. In California's San Fernando Valley, a walker at Your Dog's Best Friend makes \$25,000 to \$30,000 a year, including tips, while in Westchester County, N.Y., a sitter at Fetch! Pet Care can make \$7,000 to \$10,000 annually—before tips.

■ **The hours:** Shifts range from mornings to evenings; midday and overnight services are also on offer. Most employees—who usually walk just one dog at a time—are able to schedule 20- to 45-minute walks to fit their needs.

■ **Benefits:** Dog walkers are commonly contract employees and don't receive benefits, though some employees at pet-care companies are eligible for standard packages.

■ **Other incentives:** Tips are probably the biggest incentive. It also isn't unusual to receive sports and movie tickets, gift certificates and baked goods during the year from celebrity or high-profile clients, says Brock Lacy, a 26-year-old dog walker at Your Dog's Best Friend.

■ **Career path:** For a young person, veterinary school could lie ahead, although that's a leap. Perhaps more likely, training with a



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local dog-walking company could pave the way toward owning a pet-care business.

■ **Best part of the job:** The flexible hours, and working outdoors. "The weather isn't always the best part but when it's beautiful I'm out there," says Ana Herda, 26, a sitter at Fetch! Pet Care.

■ **Worst part of the job:** Pooper-scooping and bothersome neighbors. Laura Vorreyer, co-owner of Your Dog's Best Friend, says most employees complain that neighbors hassle them about obeying curb laws.

■ **Hiring:** Most dog-walking companies require background checks. Many recruit workers with ads on craigslist.com. Also visit www.yourdogsbestfriend.org and www.fetchpetcare.com.

—Aja Carmichael