

# The Ultimate Vacation Rental Success Guide



Prepare Your Home



Market Your Rental



Secure Bookings



Host Travelers

# What's in this guide?

This ebook will teach you everything required to succeed as a vacation rental owner:

- **Is Your Property Ready for Guests?**  
Learn what needs to be done
- **Marketing Your Vacation Home**  
Attract and book travelers
- **Communicating with Guests**  
Provide essential pre- and post-stay details
- **On-Site Property Services**  
Ensure every guest enjoys their stay

# Who is Evolve?

Evolve is redefining vacation rental management by offering homeowners the easiest and most effective way to generate rental income.

- **Marketing & Distribution**  
We create a professional listing for your home and promote it on top websites like Airbnb and Vrbo.
- **Inquiries & Reservations**  
Our in-house Travel Advisor team responds to every inquiry and confirms bookings 7 days a week.
- **Guest Communications**  
Evolve manages all pre- and post-stay communication with travelers, including rental agreements, booking confirmations, check-in instructions and review requests.
- **On-The-Ground Services**  
Our vetted network of local partners can help you with everything from housekeeping to maintenance.

Share This:



GET STARTED FOR FREE

# Table of Contents

## Getting Started:

- 4 What is a Vacation Rental?
- 5 Service Options for Owners
- 6 Setting Your Goals
- 6 Legal & Tax Preparation
- 8 Cleaning & Maintenance
- 10 Preparing for Guests

## Marketing Your Property:

- 14 Creating a Property Listing
- 18 Setting Your Rates
- 19 Promoting Your Listing

## Renting Your Property:

- 21 Responding to Traveler Inquiries
- 21 Confirming Reservations
- 23 Collecting Payments
- 24 Check-In & Check-Out Procedures
- 27 Issue Resolution
- 28 Requesting Reviews



## Appendix:

- A Cleaning Checklist
- B Amenities & Supplies
- C Photography Tips
- D Sample Pre-Stay Email
- E Sample Review Request

# Getting Started

## What is a Vacation Rental?

A vacation rental is a privately owned property that's rented to travelers on a short-term basis. Vacation rental stays are typically shorter than 30 days.

At first glance, turning your home into a vacation rental may seem as simple as listing your property online, but there are some important things to consider before you get started. This guide is designed to ensure you are armed with the right tools, information, and resources to optimize your income potential by creating the ultimate vacation rental experience for your guests.

As the vacation rental industry continues to grow, the amount of work required to stand out from the competition has increased significantly for homeowners. When deciding how to manage your vacation rental, you must first take into consideration your desired

level of involvement. Some owners prefer to do everything from marketing and booking to cleaning and maintenance, while others prefer to take a much more hands-off approach.



# Getting Started

## Service Options for Owners

There are three standard service options available to most vacation rental owners — we suggest evaluating each option to determine which solution is the best fit for your property:

- **Renting on Your Own:** According to Vrbo, the average do-it-yourselfer spends 9 hours per week managing their vacation rental. Handling everything directly can minimize your expenses, but a significant time commitment is required to generate optimal results.
- **Using a Property Manager:** Full-service property managers alleviate much of the work, but high rates (30-50% commissions), restrictive contracts, and subpar booking performances are unfortunately commonplace.

- **Using Evolve Vacation Rental Network:** By focusing on marketing and booking your home, Evolve is able to outperform traditional property managers for a fraction of the cost (10% commission). Better yet, our vetted network of local service providers are fee-based, so you'll never pay excessive commissions for on-site services like cleaning and maintenance.

“Evolve put together the listing, advised on photography and creatively developed the description. Our property went live and booked its first guest on the same day. We recommend Evolve without hesitation.”  
David  
Evolve Homeowner



# Getting Started

## Setting Your Goals

Before you invest time into preparing your home for travelers, it's important to establish your rental goals. By renting out your home, you are starting a business and every good business has a plan.

Here are some questions to keep in mind when determining your goals:

- How many weeks per year do you plan to make your home available to travelers?
- How much rental income do you hope to generate from your home?
  - Are you looking to offset a certain percentage of your ownership costs?
  - Do you need your rental income to cover all of your expenses?

As you go through the planning process, research similar vacation rental listings in your area. This is a great way to ensure you have established realistic goals and might even save you from making a poor investment.

## Legal & Tax Preparation

Local and state governments are starting to monitor short-term rentals more closely. This makes it essential to understand the regulations and tax requirements that may apply to your property.

### Short-Term Rental Laws

Contact your city and county to check the current laws for short-term rentals in your area. Most resort towns allow daily or weekly rentals to encourage tourism. However, there are some areas that prohibit rentals for periods of less than 30 days.

### Homeowners Associations (HOAs)

HOAs often regulate short-term rentals. To understand the rules and regulations for your HOA, review the Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions (CC&Rs) in your HOA agreement, or contact the president of your HOA.

# Getting Started

## Business Licenses & Permits

You may be required to apply for a business license or permit in order to rent out your vacation home. While this can sound a bit intimidating, it is typically an easy process. Contact your city or county for more information.

## Safety Requirements & Health Code Regulations

Along with the zoning laws, your city and/or county may have safety requirements or health code regulations that you must meet (i.e., smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors, trash disposal facilities, pool maintenance, etc.). Contact your city and county to learn about the specifics for your area.

## Vacation Rental Insurance

Owning a vacation rental can present unique insurance issues. We advise working with a firm that has an established vacation rental practice. When discussing your options with an insurance agent, be sure to disclose that your home will be offered for short-term rentals. Failure to disclose this information can result in voiding your entire insurance contract.

## Tax Preparation

It's likely that you're required to collect sales and lodging taxes from travelers who book your property. These taxes are established by government agencies at the state, county and city level, and are typically referred to as sales, lodging, occupancy, hotel, transient, accommodation or room taxes.

# Getting Started

## How to Collect and Remit Taxes

- Contact your city, county, and state governing agencies to understand the tax requirements for your area
- Register your property (city, county and state)
- If required, apply for a business license (see previous page)
- Collect taxes from your guests
- File tax returns monthly and/or quarterly as set by your tax jurisdiction
- Remit tax payments to the city, county and/or state

## Getting Tax Help

Because the tax rates, laws, and requirements differ by each city, county and state, Evolve recommends using MyLodgeTax to avoid confusion, or worse yet, failure to comply with tax guidelines. For an average of \$15/month, MyLodgeTax will get you licensed, determine the applicable taxes, file your returns, and submit tax payments to the appropriate authority. To find out

more about the services that are offered by MyLodgeTax, visit [www.mylodgetax.com](http://www.mylodgetax.com). Evolve owners qualify for a discount!

## Cleaning & Maintenance

Taking good care of your vacation rental home will be crucial to your success. Travelers expect a clean, fully functional property upon arrival, and anything less can result in a negative review. Unless you live within close proximity to your vacation rental, we suggest hiring professionals to clean and maintain your home.





# Getting Started

## Hiring a Cleaning Service

To find a reliable housekeeping or cleaning service in your area, try the following:

- Contact an Evolve Homeowner Consultant at 1.877.818.1014 (press 2) to see if we have a vetted cleaning company available in your area.
- Ask a neighbor or friend who has a cleaning service set up for their home. Word of mouth is often the best way to find a great company you can trust.
- Ask your local business bureau or chamber of commerce if they can make any recommendations. They will likely be able to point you in the right direction.
- Use the Internet to research various cleaning services in your area. We encourage you to interview each company and do your due diligence in finding the right one. Ask about rates, security policies, experience, supplies used, and references.

## Setting a Cleaning Schedule

At the very least, you should have a cleaning scheduled after each guest departure. Not only do you want your home cleaned after travelers leave, but your cleaning provider will be the eyes and ears of your property and can notify you if there are any maintenance issues or damages.

## Creating a Cleaning Checklist

If you hire an established cleaning company, they will likely have a checklist of services included. Review the list and make edits as deemed necessary for the needs of your home. In addition to the regular schedule, consider seasonal “deep” cleanings.

For an example cleaning checklist, see [Appendix A](#).

# Getting Started

## Property Maintenance

Prior to renting your vacation home, you should complete any outstanding maintenance projects to ensure the safety and security of your guests. Double-check that your locks are in working order (including doors and windows), walking areas are clear of obstructions such as overgrown shrubs, leaky roofs are repaired, and that your home is presented as you would wish to find it.

Most owners, especially those who don't live near their vacation rental, hire maintenance companies to oversee their property on a continual basis. This allows you to know that your rental is always in working order. Additionally, if something should go wrong while guests are visiting, someone will be able to address the issue in a timely manner.

## Preparing for Guests

The success of your vacation rental will largely depend on the feedback your guests provide via online reviews. Following these guidelines will help to ensure that every traveler has a wonderful experience at your home.

### Amenities & Supplies

When contemplating which amenities and supplies to provide in your vacation rental, think about some of the essential items that hotel rooms offer. Travelers have grown to expect that certain items are standard in any vacation accommodation, including your home.

**Comfort & Clutter:** Start by adding and removing items from your home in order to maximize for comfort and minimize clutter. Take out any furniture or objects that don't contribute to your guest's vacation experience. Make sure your home has comfortable seating and good lighting wherever it's needed.

# Getting Started

**Personal Items:** It's your vacation home, but when guests are staying there, it's safest to remove anything that's precious and personal to you. While most renters will be honorable and trustworthy, you should plan for the worst-case scenario — and accidents can happen with the best of renters. Make sure everything in your vacation home is replaceable, and nothing contains your personal information.

**Essential Supplies:** Your vacation home should be stocked with ample supplies to accommodate all of your guests. A good rule of thumb is to have 2 of each item per guest that your home sleeps. (e.g. If your home can accommodate 4 guests, you'll want at least 8 plates, mugs, glasses, etc.) It's always nice to have a few extra sets of bed and bath linens available, too.

For a detailed list of essential supplies and amenities that should be readily available in your home, see [Appendix B](#).

## Local Contact

Hopefully you won't need to communicate with travelers much during their stay. After all...they're on vacation to relax! However, if an issue does arise, someone will need to be available to address the problem.

If you live near your vacation rental, you will have the option to assist guests directly. If you live farther away, you should find someone dependable to act as your local contact. This person could be a friend, family member, or hired professional who lives near your home.

To ensure any issues get handled immediately, always provide guests with your local contact's phone number and email. Also, be sure to request your guest's information, in case you need to get in touch with them.

# Getting Started

## Welcome Book

One of the most helpful amenities to provide for your guests is a Welcome Book. This book should contain essential information about your property, along with details on the surrounding area.

Your Welcome Book can be as simple as a binder or as fancy as a custom printed book. Here's a list of relevant information to include:

- **Welcome Note:** Let visitors know you're glad to have them in your home!
- **Local Resources:** Include your local contact's information, directions to the nearest grocery store, medical center, and any other important resources.
- **Property Instructions:** How to use the WiFi, DVD Player/Cable/Netflix, etc.
- **House Rules:** Quiet hours, HOA rules, pool use rules, etc.

- **Local Attractions:** List popular destinations and activities in the area.
- **Your Favorites:** Tell guests about your favorite restaurant, hike, or anything else you enjoy about the area. Give it a personal touch!
- **Transportation Options:** Include any relevant information and maps for public transportation that's available in your area; list phone numbers for taxi services; provide a map of the surrounding area.

Having this important information in an easily accessible location is a great way to show you care and will set your property apart from other vacation rentals.

# Getting Started

## Special Touches

Travelers will notice when you go out of your way to make them feel welcome. Here are a few additional ways to create a great guest experience:

- Keep your home supplied with single-use toiletries
- Stock your kitchen with common food items like coffee, tea, condiments, fresh fruit, granola bars, etc.
- Decorate your dining table with a vase of fresh flowers
- Have a gift basket waiting for guests when they arrive at your home
- Help celebrate a special occasion! If a traveler tells you they're celebrating a wedding, anniversary or birthday, leave them a card and a small bottle of wine or a birthday cake. They'll be blown away by your hospitality!

"I found Evolve through an internet search. Their services were exactly what I was looking for. I love Evolve!"

Everyone has been wonderful. From putting my listing together, to helping me decide what to charge, and dealing with renters – I couldn't be happier with the service.

I couldn't imagine having to facilitate the rental process, collect the fees, etc. It is just so easy with Evolve. People book, and the money shows up in my account."

-Tracy L.  
Evolve Homeowner



# Marketing Your Property

## Creating a Property Listing

Now that your house is ready, how will you find travelers? We suggest starting out by listing your property online. There are a multitude of options when it comes to vacation rental listing sites, but some of the most popular sites are Vrbo ([www.vrbo.com](http://www.vrbo.com)) and Airbnb ([www.airbnb.com](http://www.airbnb.com)).

Your listing should be viewed as a tool to sell travelers on booking your home. When creating your listing, be as detailed and thorough as possible to provide potential guests with an accurate and complete idea of what your home has to offer.

### Listing Headline

Your headline is the most important text on your listing. It will appear in search results and should be written in a manner that entices travelers to click on your listing. Focus on highlighting the things that make your

home unique. This could be anything from a hot tub to private beach access. Other items to include are: location (the name of the city or area), property type (cabin, townhouse, etc.), and number of bedrooms.

Try to keep your headline concise. If it's too long, some of it might not show up in search results. Here are a couple of examples of effective headlines:

- Stunning 1BR Oceanfront Condo in Princeville w/ Free Wifi & Incredible Bali Hai Views - Steps to the Beach!
- Spacious 4BR Sunrise Beach Home on Lake of the Ozarks w/Private Concrete Dock, Swim Platform, Wifi & Gorgeous Views

# Marketing Your Property

## Property Description

Your property description is a great place to help travelers learn more about your home. Paint a picture of what the guests will see when they arrive, but keep it simple. Online readers prefer to read short sentences and paragraphs.

One thing to note: You should focus on describing your property instead of the surrounding area. If travelers are looking at your listing, they've likely already made the decision to take a trip to your area. Of course, if the home is located close to the beach or has great mountain views, you'll want to include this type of information.

Here are few additional tips for writing a great property description:

- Proofread and be sure to use correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation
- Include info on the types of travelers for which your home is best (families, business travelers, couples, etc.)
- Provide specific information on the sleeping arrangements (how many beds and their sizes)
- Describe what makes your property unique (location, views, decor, amenities, etc.)
- Avoid including an extensive list of rules or policies; save this for your rental agreement and pre-stay email

# Marketing Your Property

## Amenities

Vacation rental marketplaces give you the option to list almost every amenity your home offers. Certain items can seal the decision for travelers, so be as thorough as possible when listing your amenities. This may sound like overkill, but travelers can filter their searches by specific amenities and you might miss out on a booking if you forget to include something!

## Photography

Nothing has the potential to impact the performance of your listing more than the photos. Travelers rely primarily on pictures to determine the quality and compatibility of a property. For the best results, we suggest hiring a professional photographer and including at least 24 photos on your listing.

## Your listing should include photos of the following areas:

**Exterior:** Exterior images help travelers understand the location, size and style of your home. Make sure there are no people or cars in these photos and keep your garage door closed. Try to capture pictures of any unique features such as a pool, views, outdoor kitchen, etc.

**Kitchen:** The kitchen is one of the primary factors for why travelers choose one home over another. To help your listing stand out, be sure to photograph your kitchen when it's clean and free of clutter.

**Dining Room:** Vacation rental travelers are likely to spend a significant amount of time dining at your property. Provide a photo of your fully-set dining room table to help guests envision themselves enjoying meals at your home.



# Marketing Your Property

**Living Room:** The living room is where most travelers plan to unwind at the end of a busy day. Make the room look inviting and capture as much of the space as possible, so guests can get a good idea of the layout.

**Bedrooms:** Include at least one picture of every bedroom in your house to help travelers understand the bedding configuration. The decision-maker will likely be staying in the master bedroom, so try to capture as much of the room and amenities as possible.

**Bathrooms:** Some travelers will avoid booking homes without bathroom photos so be sure to include these images in your listing.

**Unique Amenities:** Don't forget to provide pictures of any unique amenities that will entice travelers to book your home. This could be anything from a Whirlpool tub or a wine cellar to a pool table.

If you prefer to take your own photos, please review our additional photography tips in [Appendix C](#).

## Rules & Policies

It's important to set clear expectations with travelers by including a few essential booking rules within your property listing. However, you don't want to scare away the majority of travelers by going overboard with restrictions.

Here are examples of essential rules that we recommend including within your property listing:

- Minimum age requirement
- Occupancy requirement
- Smoking policy
- Pet policy

# Marketing Your Property

The following rules are better suited for your rental agreement and/or check-in instructions:

- Subdivision/community/complex rules
- Rules regarding amenities like a hot tub or pool
- Departure requirements

## Calendar

Your listing calendar lets travelers determine when your home is available. Always maintain an accurate calendar to ensure your property appears when travelers include specific dates in their search parameters. If you opt to accept reservations through an online booking function, be sure to update your calendar immediately to avoid double bookings.

## Setting Your Rates

Your nightly rates have the potential to make or break the performance of your vacation rental. If your rates are too high or too complex, fewer travelers will book your home. If you set your rates too low, you're likely to leave money on the table and you might attract disrespectful guests.

## Research Your Competition

Review listings for properties that are similar to yours to gauge how much your competition is charging. Also, try to determine how often properties are being booked by checking calendars.

To help encourage travelers to book your home, it can be advantageous to set your rates slightly lower when starting out. Once you secure a few glowing reviews, you can raise your rates to match other properties in the area.

# Marketing Your Property

## Dynamic Rates

Adjusting your rates based on traveler demand is a great way to optimize your rental income. For example, you will likely benefit from charging higher fees during peak season, holidays and weekends. To determine high-demand periods in your area, try researching the rates for nearby hotels.

In addition to adjusting your rates based on seasonal demand, it can be beneficial to offer discounted rates for longer stays. To encourage stays of 7 days or longer, try offering a discount of 10% off the total nightly rate.

## Additional Fees

There's nothing more misleading to travelers than a rental with excessive fees. This "bait and switch" approach might get more people to click on your listing, but you're likely to confirm far fewer bookings. Travelers expect to see additional costs like taxes and

cleaning fees, but all other fees should be included within your nightly rate.

When determining your cleaning fee, it's important to charge a reasonable amount. The standard cleaning fee is \$40 to \$60 per bedroom. Travelers will likely avoid listings that charge more.

## Promoting Your Listing

To get as much exposure for your property as possible, we suggest promoting your home on at least two of the major vacation rental listing websites. Once your listings are created, there are several tactics you can use to promote it.

## Online Advertising

The vast majority of vacation rental travelers search for accommodations online, which makes the internet a great place to generate interest in your home. In addition to listing your property on popular vacation

# Marketing Your Property

rental marketplaces like Vrbo and Airbnb, try promoting your property on local websites such as the visitors bureau or chamber of commerce.

## Email Newsletters

Compile a list of email addresses for travelers who have inquired about or booked your property. Once you have a decent list, start sending email newsletters periodically. Your newsletter should include helpful information about your area, along with special incentives for your subscribers. This encourages repeat visits and reminds travelers of all the great memories they created during their time at your home.

## Social Media

Create a Facebook page for your property and encourage past guests to “like” your page. Regularly update it with new photos, travel information, specials, and more. Be sure to include a link to your listing so travelers have an easy way to book your home.

## Print Advertising

If your area has a visitors guide or newspaper, try running an ad for your home. Get promotional flyers printed out and take them to the local visitor’s center. Anything you can do to get the word out about your property will help.

“Within a few weeks of joining Evolve, my property was booked to over 80% occupancy during ski season. If I didn’t know the prior year’s performance, I might be tempted to write it off as a photogenic home that attracts travelers. But having spent two years with a property manager, it’s obvious there’s much more to it than that.”

-Ryan H.  
Evolve Homeowner



# Renting Your Property

## Responding to Inquiries

Your home is ready for guests, you've listed your property on industry-leading websites, and you've created a solid marketing plan. Now the real work begins! Responding to inquiries and communicating with travelers requires a daily commitment, so try to set aside an hour per day for these tasks.

**Reply Instantly:** Most owners take hours, if not days, to respond to inquiries, but travelers are often ready to confirm a reservation immediately. Providing an immediate response gives you the opportunity to sell travelers on your home before they hear back from other owners.

**Include Specifics:** In your response, provide a quote of their trip, including taxes and fees. Make sure to confirm their specific dates and let them know you're available to answer any questions. Don't forget to provide a phone number in case travelers prefer to call you.

**Follow Up:** Travelers are more likely to book when they speak with you personally, so try to call anyone who provides a phone number. If you don't hear from someone after responding to their initial inquiry, follow up with another call or email within a couple of days.

## Confirming Reservations

Reservations are considered confirmed when a traveler agrees to your rental terms and provides initial payment. Upon receiving the upfront payment, always update your listing calendar and send a confirmation email to your guest.

## Screening Guests

Prior to confirming a reservation, you may wish to screen travelers to help protect yourself against potential issues. To determine if a traveler is a suitable guest, ask a few questions about the purpose of the trip and

# Renting Your Property

makeup of the group that will be staying in your home. If you have any concerns, clarify that abuse will not be tolerated and don't hesitate to pass on a booking.

## Rental Agreement

Your vacation rental agreement should outline what is expected of guests and provide a sense of security for both you and the traveler. Always remember to provide travelers with a copy of your rental agreement whenever you confirm a booking.

Items you should put in your rental agreement include:

- The parties entering into the agreement
- Rental Dates
- Payment Terms
- Maximum Occupancy
- Cancellation Policy
- House Rules
- Check-in and Check-out Procedures
- Damage Policy



Evolve and other vacation rental marketplaces allow travelers to accept the terms of your rental agreement virtually. Requiring travelers to sign a physical agreement is cumbersome for both parties, so we definitely suggest finding a virtual solution. [Click here](#) to see an example of Evolve's rental agreement.

# Renting Your Property

## Collecting Payments

When collecting funds from travelers, it's essential to offer a simple and secure payment process. The optimal approach to payments should let you to collect funds quickly and help travelers feel confident about sending you money.

### Payment Timing

We suggest requiring that travelers pay 30% of the total rate in order to confirm a reservation. The remaining balance should be collected 30 days prior to the arrival date. This gives you ample time to confirm payment prior to sending check-in instructions to your guests. For bookings that occur within 30 days of the rental date, we recommend collecting the full payment at the time of reservation.

### Payment Methods

There are a number of different payment methods

available, but many are not worth the risk or hassle. Here's a quick summary of the most common options:

**Credit Cards:** Accepting credit cards allows you to confirm bookings immediately, and travelers prefer this payment method for security purposes. In fact, travelers are much less likely to book with owners who don't accept credit cards. This option also allows you to use the online booking function on major vacation rental listing sites such as Vrbo and Airbnb.

**Personal Checks:** Personal checks are a secure payment option, but waiting for checks to arrive and clear can be time consuming. If a check doesn't go through, you will also have significantly less time to rebook your home.

# Renting Your Property

**Wire Transfers:** Wire transfers might seem like an easy way to receive payment, but this process can be cumbersome for travelers. Untraceable wire transfer services like Western Union or Moneygram are often used in scams and will raise red flags for most travelers.

**Money Orders:** Money orders and cashier's checks are inconvenient for travelers and are regularly used by scammers. We suggest staying away from this payment method.

a layer of complexity to the payment process (deposits should be held in an escrow account and must be returned if no damage occurs).

**Rental Damage Insurance:** Requiring your guests to purchase rental damage insurance eliminates the hassle of managing security deposits and provides you with increased protection. Travelers typically pay a non-refundable fee ranging from \$50 to \$75 in exchange for an average of \$1,500 in protection against accidental damages.

## Security Deposits & Insurance

Vacation rental owners often utilize security deposits or damage insurance to help protect themselves against property damages.

**Security Deposits:** Many owners require travelers to pay a refundable security deposit of approximately \$200 or 10% of the rental rate. Unfortunately, this approach limits your protection and adds

## Check-In & Check-Out Procedures

Most homeowners set their check-in time at 4pm, and check-out time at 11am. These are up to you – just make sure you leave enough time for a thorough cleaning of your property between check-out and check-in.



# Renting Your Property

Guests will occasionally request an early check-in or late check-out. It's your decision whether or not you will honor these requests.

## Pre-Stay Email

We suggest sending guests a pre-stay email a week or 2 prior to their arrival. This email should include check-in instructions along with any other important information about your property. To keep your home safe, always wait to send property access details until you've collected full payment from a guest.

Important information to provide in your pre-stay email includes:

- Check-in/out times
- Check-in/out procedures
- Lockbox codes/key exchange information
- Local contact information

- Specific policies/instructions (hot tub rules, parking instructions, etc.)
- Personal recommendations (favorite restaurants, shops, activities, etc.)
- Driving directions to the property

See [Appendix D](#) for an example of a pre-stay email.

## Property Access

When determining how guests will gain access to your property, be sure to select a method that's convenient for both you and the traveler.

**Lockboxes:** Using a lockbox is a popular and inexpensive (\$25 to \$35) way to provide guests with access to your home. Lockboxes are typically attached to a door knob and travelers access keys by entering the pre-determined code. Downsides to this option include a difficult process for changing the access code and the risk of travelers forgetting to return the keys to the lockbox.

# Renting Your Property

**Keyless Entry:** Keyless entry lock systems are installed directly on your door and allow travelers to access your property by entering a code into the keypad. This option is more expensive (\$150 to \$500), but eliminates the hassle of dealing with keys and allows you to update the code easily (wifi-friendly systems can be updated remotely).

**In-Person Meeting:** Some owners either personally meet the traveler or arrange for their local contact to exchange the keys. This option adds a personal touch, but scheduling meeting times can be difficult and requires a flexible schedule.

## Post-Trip Inspection

After a guest checks out, your home will need to be inspected and cleaned. It's a good idea to schedule your cleaning provider well in advance, especially if you have another group checking in on the same day.

If you would like travelers to do anything prior to checking out, include these details in your pre-stay email and Welcome Book. Owners will often ask guests to turn down the heat, take out the trash, put dirty dishes in the dishwasher, etc.



# Renting Your Property

## Issue Resolution

Despite your best efforts to make sure everything with your vacation rental runs smoothly, problems will occasionally arise during a traveler's stay. Here are some tips to help you handle upset travelers like a pro.



- **Listen:** Sometimes all a traveler wants is to be heard. Listen to their complaints and make sure you fully understand the issue.
- **Be Empathetic:** Put yourself in the traveler's shoes. Vacations are meant to be a time of peacefulness and relaxation, and when this isn't the case, anyone can get annoyed.
- **Do not Respond While You're Upset:** It's hard to not take things personally when hearing from an unhappy traveler. To avoid saying something that could reflect negatively on you, make sure you're thinking clearly and objectively before you respond.
- **Keep it Positive:** Be friendly and positive in your response. Express gratitude to the traveler for informing you of the issue and assure them that you are working to fix it.
- **Address the Issue:** Let the traveler know what you are doing to fix the issue. This shows them that their concerns were heard and taken seriously.
- **Show Them You Care:** In the case of more serious issues, it can be especially helpful to offer travelers something for their troubles. Offering to buy dinner at a nearby restaurant or extending a discount on a future stay shows your guests that the quality of their stay is important to you.

# Renting Your Property

## Requesting Reviews

Traveler reviews will be one of your most vital marketing tools for your vacation rental. According to TripAdvisor, travelers are 80% more likely to book a property listing that contains multiple reviews.

Here are several ways to ensure you get as many positive reviews as possible:

**Traveler Experience:** The best way to secure tons of great reviews for your property is by providing travelers with an outstanding vacation rental experience. If your property is clean, comfortable, and loaded with great amenities, guests will be sure to leave great reviews about your home.

**Email:** Email guests after their departure to thank them for choosing your home. Explain how important reviews are to success of your vacation rental business and tell them how much you would appreciate them writing a quick review of their stay. Last but not least,

always include a link to the review page on your listing. See [Appendix E](#) for a sample review request email.

**Handwritten Note:** Mail travelers a handwritten note thanking them for their stay and asking them to leave a review. Don't forget to include the web address to your review page! Guests will be impressed that you've taken the time to mail a personalized note and your efforts will be rewarded with great reviews.

“Deciding to work with Evolve has proven to be one of the best decisions we have made! From the very beginning, we were met with tremendous professionalism, superb attention to detail, and excellent advice and guidance, which has continued at every single step along the way.”

-Dr. Kathy D.  
Evolve Homeowner



# Conclusion

Congratulations! Now that you've completed this guide, you're already on the path to being a successful vacation rental owner. It takes dedication and hard work, but the personal and financial rewards can be significant.

If you're having trouble getting started, we're here to help! Over 50% of Evolve's owners are first-timers and we're experts at eliminating the hassle, guesswork, and frustration that often comes with renting out a second home.

To learn more about how Evolve can assist with your vacation rental, [click here](#) or call one of our Homeowner Consultants at 877.818.1014.

# Appendix A: Cleaning Checklist

## Exteriors (if applicable)

- Wipe down and clean patio furniture including chairs, tables and BBQ
- Sweep entrances and deck
- Replace any burned-out light bulbs

## Kitchen

- Load, run and empty the dishwasher
- Clean and sanitize all surfaces including countertops, tables, cabinets, etc.
- Clean and sanitize all appliances including phone, toaster and coffee maker
- Clean and sanitize the inside and outside of the microwave
- Remove all food left in the refrigerator; clean and sanitize
- Replenish supplies including soap, dish detergent, trash bags, and paper towels
- Sweep and mop floors
- Remove trash; clean and sanitize trash can
- Clean and polish windows and windowsills, if needed
- Replace any burned-out light bulbs

## Living Areas

- Dust all surfaces including end-tables, coffee tables, television and shelves
- Dust all appliances and knick-knacks, including lamps, ceiling fans, blinds and picture frames
- Sweep/mop or vacuum floors
- Remove trash; clean and sanitize trash can, if needed
- Clean and polish windows and windowsills, if needed
- Replace any burned-out light bulbs

## Bedrooms

- Dust and clean all surfaces, including dresser, bedside table, headboard, computer screen, and television
- Dust all appliances and knick-knacks, including lamps, ceiling fans, blinds and picture frames
- Wash and change linens
- Sweep/mop or vacuum floors, including underneath the bed
- Remove trash; clean and sanitize trash can
- Clean and polish windows and windowsills
- Replace any burned-out light bulbs

## Bathrooms

- Clean and sanitize all surfaces, including countertops, sink, and faucets
- Clean and sanitize the toilet
- Clean and polish the mirror
- Wash and change towels
- Replenish amenities, including soap, shampoo and conditioner
- Sweep and mop the floor
- Remove trash; clean and sanitize trash can
- Clean and polish windows and windowsills
- Replace any burned-out light bulbs

## Laundry Area (if applicable)

- Make sure the washer and dryer are empty
- Remove lint from dryer
- Replenish amenities, including laundry detergent and softener sheets
- Sweep/mop or vacuum floors
- Remove trash; clean and sanitize trash can
- Replace any burned-out light bulbs

# Appendix B: Amenities and Supplies

The following items are expected by travelers, and should be readily available in your home:

## Bedrooms

- Bed Linens: At least 2 sets of sheets, pillows and blankets for each bed.
- Iron/Ironing Board
- Pack-N-Play
- Alarm Clock
- Hangers

## Living Areas

- TV, DVD player and stereo. Be sure to include instructions for TV remotes, etc.
- Cable, Satellite, or a Netflix subscription
- High-speed internet with WiFi is recommended! If you have a password, make sure it is easy to find.
- Collection of books, magazines, music, DVDs, and board games.
- Door mat and coat rack at entrance
- Fans — If you don't have ceiling fans, provide at least one fan
- Emergency Kit — Include at least a standard first-aid kit and a flashlight with extra batteries.
- Phone book or list of important contact numbers for local maintenance, medical clinics, emergency services, etc.
- Local maps with nearby attractions
- Welcome Book — Important property information in one central location

## Outside Amenities

- BBQ Grill (make sure you meet the fire code, if applicable)
- Pool or Beach Accessories if you're near water
- Snow Shovel - If your home is in a location that gets snow

## Kitchen

- Cookware: Basic items such as pots, pans, knives and ovenware should be provided
- Plates, Bowls, Glasses, and Flatware
- Additional kitchenware: Large serving bowls and plates for family-style meals, ice trays, etc.
- Coffee Pot
- Can Opener
- Wine Bottle Opener
- Wine Glasses
- Kitchen Linens
- Seasonings & Spices
- Coffee, Teas & Hot Cocoa
- Paper Towels & Trash Bags
- Fire Extinguisher
- Dish Soap
- Sippy cups, children's dinnerware, and a high-chair will put your home on the map for families traveling with little ones.

## Bathrooms

- Bath Linens: At least 2 bath towels, one hand towel and one wash cloth per guest
- Hand Soap, Body Wash, Shampoo & Conditioner
- Cleaning Supplies & Toilet Plunger
- Toilet Paper and Tissues
- Hair Dryer
- Sunscreen: Whether your home is near a beach, lake or ski mountain, providing guests with a mini sunscreen will really make an impression.

# Appendix C: Photography Tips

If you prefer to take your own photos, be sure to follow these tips:

## Lighting

- Open your blinds and window shades (closed blinds make rooms look small and uninviting)
- Take photos at dawn or dusk when the light is soft and warm
- Turn on lamps and sources of indirect lighting
- Take one picture with the flash on and one with the flash off to see which looks better

## Staging

- Do not include people or pets in your photos
- Remove clutter and personal items from the shot
- Set the dining room table with colorful dishware and placemats
- Turn off TVs and computer screens (they simply do not photograph well)
- Include fresh flowers or a fruit bowl to brighten up the room
- Arrange pillows or a throw on your sofa, easy chair, or bed to make it appear more inviting
- Turn on the fireplace to make the room appear warm and cozy

## Spacing

- Always take horizontal shots rather than vertical shots (horizontal photos look better on listing sites and usually allow for more of the room to fit into the shot)
- Do your best to fit the entire room into the photo
- Move furniture around a little to make sure it's included in the frame.
- Stand on a chair or ladder to get a better angle
- Think of the picture as 4 equal quadrants and try to feature something interesting in at least 3 of the 4
- Take wide shots as opposed to close-ups (travelers want to understand how rooms are laid out)





# Appendix D: Sample Pre-stay Email

Subject: Your Upcoming Trip: Arrival Instructions & Property Details  
Hi NAME!

Your trip is quickly approaching! I wanted to take this opportunity to confirm your reservation details, as well as provide you with some additional information that you'll need for your stay.

To ensure that your trip goes smoothly, please take a look through the following information and let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

## Reservation Details:

**Check-In Date:** 1/1/2015  
**Check-Out Date:** 1/7/2015  
**Adults:** 4  
**Children:** 0

Below are some important details you will need for your stay, including the exact address of the property, check-in/out instructions, policies, and local contact information:

## Check-In Instructions:

- Check in after 2:00 pm
- The lockbox is located at the front door, the code is the last 4 digits of your primary contact phone number

## Check-Out Instructions:

- Check out before 10:00 am
- Prior to your departure, please tidy up the unit by taking out the trash and returning the unit to the condition in which you found it
- Please turn off all lights and make sure all windows and doors are securely closed and locked when you leave

## Local Contact:

- Local Contact Name, Local Contact Phone, Local Contact Email

- Please contact Local Contact with any questions or concerns you may have before or during your stay

## House Rules:

- No smoking
- No pets allowed
- Must be at least 25 years old to book

## Home Address:

- 123 Main St. Denver, CO

## Driving Directions:

- From LOCATION:
  - INSERT DRIVING DIRECTIONS

## Nearby:

- Grocery: Store Name - Address, Phone Number
- Medical Clinic: Clinic Name - Address, Phone Number

If you have any questions about your trip, please don't hesitate to contact me directly.

Enjoy your stay,  
Your Name

# Appendix E: Sample Review Request

Hi NAME,

Thank you so much for staying at my vacation home in ENTER LOCATION. I hope you had a wonderful trip!

I'd love it if you would please take a minute to leave a review of your experience. Reviews are incredibly important to my success and help to reassure potential guests that my property is a great place to stay.

To leave a review, simply click this link: LINK TO REVIEW PAGE

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your stay, please don't hesitate to reach out. Respond to this email directly or call me at 555-555-5555 and I will do my best to resolve any concerns.

Thanks again and please keep me in mind for your next trip to LOCATION!

Best,  
YOUR NAME



Prepare Your Home



Market Your Rental



Secure Bookings



Host Travelers

## Need Help Managing Your Vacation Rental?

Get Started With Evolve For Free!



[www.evolvevacationrental.com](http://www.evolvevacationrental.com)