

Establishing a Grooming Routine with Your Puppy

Canine Connections
www.k9-connections.com

It's very important to have your puppy become accustomed to being handled by people from the very start of its relationship. Having your puppy be comfortable with people handling it will greatly influence its grooming routine and also help with veterinarian examinations.

Before you can expect your puppy to behave well for grooming, they must first learn to accept being handled on all parts of their body. A massage is a good way to train your puppy to be touched. Begin by stroking your pet's favorite spots, such as her/his belly or ears. When he/she has relaxed into enjoying this, begin to massage other areas, including paws, hocks, tail and thighs. Be sure to praise your puppy for lying quietly.

We advise keeping initial massage sessions short, but not to end a session just because the puppy squirms or protests. Unfortunately many owners stop at the first protest. You should continue despite wiggles and squeaks, otherwise your puppy will learn that squealing and nipping will get him his own way. It's important that you, the owner, decide when to end the handling and ultimately any grooming session.

It's also important to remember that good grooming is more than just brushing. Care of the nails, eyes and ears should be part of the regular grooming routine. Even if early grooming sessions are brief be sure to check your dog's toes and pads, examine his teeth and gums, and lift his tail to check the anal area. Once your puppy is comfortable with massage you can introduce brushing or combing, tail trimming, and bathing. We advise keeping initial grooming sessions short and gradually lengthening them over time.

Your Puppy's Grooming Needs

Each breed will have different grooming needs. Some will require regular professional grooming, haircuts, or stripping. Consult with your breeder, an experienced groomer, or a good book about your breed to find out more about the grooming requirements for your breed. If you have a mix-breed, check in a book or with a groomer to determine the breed, which your dog most closely resembles. All dogs will need a grooming routine that includes brushing, nail clipping, dental hygiene, bathing, cleaning eyes and ears.

Brushing your Puppy

The brushing and combing requirements for your puppy will vary according to the breed or coat characteristics. The following is a breakdown of different brushing or combing tools used on dogs:

Slicker Brush

1. Great everyday brush - wood or plastic handle and bent-tooth metal pins set close together.
2. Used on double, drop, or densely coated breeds.
3. The bent teeth snag tangles and help you find mats that can then be combed out.

4. Choose a brush size appropriate to dog and one with more give in the teeth to prevent pulling your dog's hair or causing brush burn.

Pin Brush

1. Wooden or plastic handled brush with metal pins set in a rubber base.
2. Used on drop coated breeds or long, straight coats (Shih Tzu, Lhasa Apso, Afghan Hounds).
3. The blunt-tipped pins provide a delicate action that helps profuse mats prevent mats, thinning, and splitting.
4. Use a Slicker Brush for removing undercoat.

Bristle Brush

1. Brush made up of natural or nylon bristles with a wood or plastic handle.
2. Used on short-coated dogs (Beagles, Bulldogs, Basset Hounds, Boxers, Doberman, Chihuahuas).
3. Bristles loosen debris, spread natural oils to add shine, and remove dust.
4. Does not pick up shedding hair.

Rubber Curry Brush

1. Pliable tool made to fit in palm of hand, often oval shaped pad with short, firm, widely spaced teeth.
2. Attracts and removes shedding coat on short to medium coated breeds (Dachshunds, Parson Russell Terrier, Beagles).
3. Used in circular motion as light massage, also used to work in and rinse out shampoo.

Hound Glove

1. Rubber mitt or strap that fits over your hand and is set with bent-tooth metal pins or sisal, horsehair, or rubber nubs.
2. Removes dander and shedding hair from short-coated breeds (Beagles, Bloodhounds, Bulldogs, Basset Hounds).

Comb (or Greyhound Comb)

1. Comb with metal teeth often set closer at one end and wider at the other.
2. Use on drop coated breeds, long, straight coats to work out mats following brushing.

Rake

1. Comb like instrument with metal teeth that are perpendicular to the handle (looks like small yard rake).
2. Double-coated breeds (Chow Chow, Collies, Samoyeds, Newfoundland) to remove undercoat.

Shedding Blade

1. Plastic or leather handles hold a looped, metal blade with serrated teeth.
2. Used on heavier shedding coats (German Shepherds, Golden Retrievers, Rottweiler, Corgis, Springer Spaniels).
3. Stroke Blade over the back and sides to remove shedding coat then follow-up with Brush or Hound Glove
4. Use sparingly, because they may cut or scrape the hair shaft.

Flea Comb

1. Plastic comb with finely set teeth.
2. Used to comb out a few fleas or flea dirt in order to dispose of them.
3. Not to be used with an infestation
4. Dispose of fleas in water and dish detergent mixture.

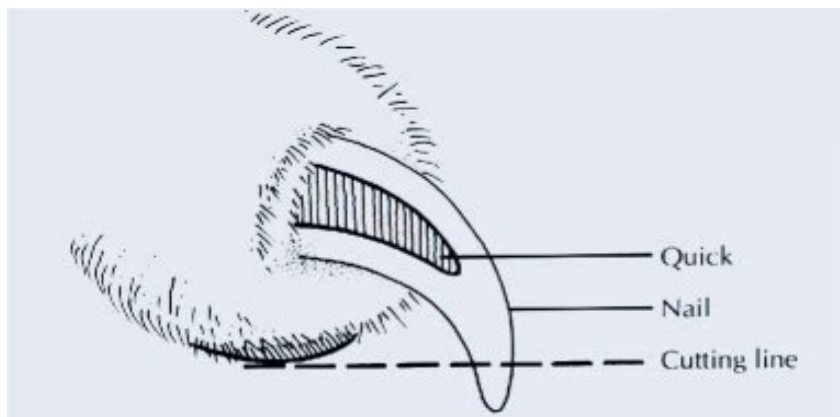
To introduce brush or comb, place your puppy in the handling position and let the puppy smell the brush or comb. Run the brush and comb over your leg and let the puppy see the brush in action and to hear the noise the tool makes if any. This may sound silly, but "pat " the brush and gently run the brush or comb over his back. Massage him gently as you brush. Don't try to forcibly restrain him. Give him some time to get used to the feel of the brush. Most puppies will find this very pleasurable after a while.

Nail Clipping

It is difficult for many dogs try to walk on nails that are far too long. Many dog owners are literally afraid to cut their dog's nails. They think that they will hurt the dog, or that their dog just "won't let them".

Some older dogs become very protective of their paws and will not allow people to handle their toes and nails. This behavior is a direct result of the puppy not being exposed to proper and consistent handling at an early age. Make a practice of handling your puppy's paws and toenails daily. Be gentle, but insistent. This type of handling should become a regular part of your puppy's daily routine. Grooming and hygiene chores will be much easier for the rest of his life.

Again, by starting nail trimming early, the nail trimming process will gradually become just another part of the dog's normal routine. By trimming off a little each week, you can give the puppy the practice he needs and at the same time encourage the quick of the nail to recede. The quick is visible in white nails so clipping black nails may be more difficult. For this reason, it's a good idea to take off a little bit, just a little more often.



Your veterinarian or an assistant should be able to assist you in the learning process. Even if you decide to always let your vet or groomer trim your dog's nails, you should still make a point of getting your puppy used to having his feet and nails handled. This will make the job easier for whoever does it and less stressful for the dog. If you're not comfortable trimming the nails yourself make a commitment to having it done at least once a month by your vet or groomer.

The proper nail trimming tools will make the experience easier on you and more pleasant for your puppy. You will also need a good pair of nail clippers and a file for smoothing rough edges. The following are different options of tools used for nail trimming:

Guillotine Style

1. Has a stationary ring that you place over the nail and a metal blade that moves up and down when you squeeze the handles (like a hold punch)
2. Keep the clipper perpendicular to nail to prevent splintering or crushing nail. Never place blade parallel to nail.
3. Cutting blade should face you and not dog when trimming the nails.
4. Some have a guide to prevent you from cutting too much nail.
5. Some will have a replaceable blade.

Scissors Style

1. Double sided blades that come together from the sides.
2. You hold the clipper like wire cutters or pliers.
3. Useful on all dogs.
4. Make sure to fit clipper to size of nails

Cat Claw or Bird Nail Trimmers

1. Scissor type trimmers with looped handles.
2. For use with small dogs and some puppies.

Emery Board or Nail File

1. The same board you use on your fingernails.
2. Removes rough spots and snags after you trim nail.
3. Use a sturdier board to make it more effective.

Electric Grinder

1. Dog Nail Grinder or a Dremmel drill fitted with the fine sand paper ring on it.
2. Consult with a professional trainer or groomer to learn more about the proper introduction and usage.

You should also have some **coagulator or styptic powder or gel** on hand in case you should cut too close to the quick and the nail should bleed. If the quick is cut, the dog will often bleed profusely. Do not panic. Dip finger or paper towel into powder or gel and then hold finger or towel against nail. The bleeding should stop within minutes.

Dental Hygiene for Dogs

Poor dental hygiene can cause more problems for your dog than just bad breath. A tooth socket that becomes infected can spread infection and bacteria throughout the dog's entire body. To prepare your puppy for dental care as an adult, practice gently opening your dog's mouth and rubbing your finger along the gum line.

There are products on the market such as rubber "bones" with nubs that will massage the teeth and gums. These flexible nylon bones help remove tartar and plaque buildup on the teeth while massaging the gums. The gum massage promotes good circulation and also helps to alleviate some of the pain associated with teething. Puppies love these bones and they are available in different sizes for all breeds and ages.

When your puppy is older, there are "finger toothbrushes" you can use to keep teeth clean as well as special moistened dental pads that you rub on the teeth and gums. Your veterinarian can advise you on preventive dental-health practices for your dog.

Remember that the more preventive maintenance you can do yourself, the easier it will be in the long run for your dog. A major cleaning at the veterinarians must be done under general anesthetic.

Cleaning the Ears

Check the puppy's ears weekly for dirt and wax buildup. This is especially important for long-eared breeds: Retrievers, Spaniels, Beagles, etc. Look for signs of irritation; report any to your veterinarian. There are commercial ear cleaning products available that can be used to gently swab the outer ear clean.

Eyes

Some breeds have a narrowing of the duct running between the nose and the eye that causes the eyes to run almost constantly. This fluid interacts with bacteria found in the air and on the skin causing it to darken and turn a brownish color. This reaction can cause staining of the hair under the inner corner of the eyes. Certain breeds are more prone to this than others; the Bichon Frise and Poodle are examples.

It is important to clean the under-eye area daily. If this discharge is not removed on a regular basis it can build up and form a very hard crust that can get matted into the hair. This is not only unpleasant to look at but removal of a mat under the eye can be extremely uncomfortable. There are solutions available that are specially formulated to clean the under-eye area that are geared especially for light colored dogs. The solution also neutralizes the bacteria that cause staining.

Almost every breed will at one time or another have matter in the inner corner of the eyes. You should simply wipe this away gently with a tissue as soon as it appears to prevent it from drying and forming a crust. Make sure to wipe down the dogs muzzle to the nose to prevent debris from entering the eye. If your dog has profuse eye discharge or if the discharge should have a yellowish color, consult your veterinarian at once. This could indicate conjunctivitis or other eye problems.

Bathing

Dry shampoo is nice to have on hand for young puppies. Opinions are mixed on whether or not puppies should be bathed in water and at what age. A dry shampoo is a nice way of cleaning the puppy without running the risk of chilling him.

If you do decide to give your puppy a real bath let him get acquainted with the bathroom, bathtub, running water, etc., by first taking him into the bathroom with you when you bathe. Never use human shampoo on a puppy (or grown dog for that matter) because the PH is different for dogs versus humans. "No Tears" puppy shampoo is available in pet stores and mail order catalogs.