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**Get Answers To Important Questions About Dog Nail Trimming**

**By Teresa James**

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Trimming your dog's nails is not usually considered sharing "quality time" with your beloved pet. But when done often enough, with the proper technique, and rewards for your dog's good behavior, it should be one of those regular grooming events that your dog will tolerate if not look forward to.

If not done often enough, with proper technique, and reward-training, it can be frightening and even painful for your dog. In this article are answers to many common dog nail clipping questions as well as tips on proper equipment and technique that will give you the advantage when you approach this simple home dog-grooming necessity.

Is dog nail trimming painful to my dog?

Dog nail trimming is not painful if you use a sharp nail trimmer and don't clip the nails too short. A dull trimmer can put a lot of pressure on your dog's toenail before it actually cuts through the nail. If this happens your dog may feel an uncomfortable pinching sensation. This is because the vein in the toenail is being squeezed. To avoid this always make sure that you're using a sharp pet nail trimmer.

What tools do I need to trim my dog's nails?

You will want to have a sharp clipper designed for dog nail trimming. Dogs come in all sizes so choose a nail trimmer that's right for the size of your pet's nails. The most common types of nail trimmers are the guillotine, pliers and scissor styles.

Guillotine style dog nail trimmers require that the dog's nail be inserted through a hole in the top of the trimmer. As the handles are squeezed together the blade comes down and cuts through the nail. Many people find guillotine style clippers more difficult to use on large breed dogs. Thicker nails can be more difficult to insert into the guide hole in the clipper. These dog nail trimmers have a cutting blade that must be changed frequently to maintain a nice clean cut.

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Pliers style dog nail trimmers work similar to pruning shears. The two notched blades surround and cut through the nail as the handles are squeezed together. Some people like this style because they can see exactly where the blade will cut through the nail. If you have a large dog this type of trimmer works great on thick nails.

Just make sure to select a heavy-duty clipper designed to cut through the thick toenails of your large breed dog. Pliers style trimmers are available for small, medium and large dogs. These dog nail trimmers don't have blades that need to be replaced but they do need to be sharpened when they become dull.

Scissor style dog nail trimmers work just like a pair of scissors. The two scissor-like notched blades surround and cut through the nail as the handles are closed. These clippers are for light duty jobs only. These are not actually dog nail trimmers. They are best used for cats, birds and other small animals.

Some people do use them on small dogs. They're usually labeled as cat/bird claw clippers.

The style you choose for your dog nail trimming needs is a matter of personal preference. If the clipper is the correct size it will get the job done. Just remember to keep your nail trimmer sharp so that it makes a fast clean cut. A dull clipper can pinch the nail, which will result in discomfort to your dog.

In addition to good quality nail trimmers, it is also recommended to have a pet nail file. You'll find that it is much easier to file down any rough edges with a nail file that has been designed for the shape of your dog's nails.

Next on the list is styptic powder. It's always a good idea to have it on hand for those occasional mishaps. A nail clipped just a little too short tends to bleed a lot. Applying some styptic powder will help stop the bleeding.

Finally, keep plenty of dog treats on hand to reward good behavior. You can also use dog treats to distract your pet during dog nail trimming. Treats work great to draw a dog's attention away from a bleeding nail.

Why do my dog's nails need to be trimmed regularly?

When a dog's nails become too long they interfere with the dog's gait and as the nails continue to grow, walking will become awkward and painful. Untrimmed nails can also split resulting in a great deal of pain, bleeding, and a trip to the veterinarian's office. In severe cases a dog's nails can curl under and grow into the pad of the dog's paw causing a very serious and painful infection. These types of ingrown nail problems are most common on the dewclaws.

The dewclaws are the nails located on the inside of the paw. Many breeders have the dewclaws removed shortly after puppies are born, so not all dogs will have dewclaws. If your dog has them remember to include them in your dog nail trimming routine. These nails don't touch the ground, so they don't wear down as fast as the others as your dog walks on rough surfaces. Trimming your dog's nails regularly will easily prevent these problems.

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How do I know when my dog's nails need to be trimmed?

When your dog's nails are beginning to curve is one indication that your dog's nails need a trim. And if you hear a clicking or tapping sound as your dog walks across a bare floor it's definitely time for a nail trimming. But it is best not to wait that long - once or twice a month is usually a good rule of thumb for dog nail trimming.

If you let your dog's nails grow too long then it could take some time to get them back to a healthy length again. Regularly trimming the tips of your dog's nails is the best approach. Some dogs walk and run on rough surfaces and are able to wear down their nails, but most dogs will need some help. You will get to know how fast your dog's nails grow if you routinely inspect your pet's nails.

Even if you don't actually trim them each time, regular inspection will help assure that your dog's feet stay healthy. So, make nail inspection and trimming an important part of your dog's routine grooming.

When should I start trimming my dog's nails?

If you're starting with a puppy the answer is as soon as you bring your new puppy home. If you have an adult or an older dog the answer is pretty much the same - right now. If you start early it probably will not take too long for your puppy to adjust to a nail trimming routine. Make a habit of handling your puppy's feet everyday. Nail trimming will be much easier if your puppy doesn't mind having his feet handled.

Adult dogs, just like people, are usually set in their ways. So if your adult dog initially resists getting his nails trimmed you will most likely need to spend a lot more time getting him used to the procedure. As with a puppy, it's a good idea to start getting your dog used to having his feet handled before you attempt to clip your dog's nails. Be very patient and don't rush into the procedure.

Bring out the clipping tools ahead of time and let your dog become familiar with them. It is important that you remain calm. If you're nervous, your dog will sense it and associate fear or uncertainty with dog nail trimming. If your dog is nervous use gentle reassurance, but don't coddle your dog. Let your dog know that you expect him to behave, but don't push it too far.

If your dog can only manage to tolerate getting one toenail trimmed that's all right. Just be persistent and try for another nail at another time. And always remember to reward good behavior with your dog's favorite treat.

How can I cut my dog's nails when he doesn't like his feet touched?

Have patience and start working on getting your dog used to having his feet handled. This must be done gradually, so don't rush it. Try gently touching one foot while your dog is asleep. If your dog wakes up be very casual about it. Just remove your hand and act as if you didn't even notice that you were touching his paw. Anytime your dog resists don't react, just ignore the fact that you were even holding his paw and try again another time. Repeat this process and over time your dog will adjust to having his feet handled and you should even be able to start touching individual toes without an

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adverse reaction.

Whenever your dog allows you to touch his feet always remember to praise your dog and give him a dog treat. Your dog will begin to associate having his feet handled with a pleasant experience. Bring out the nail clippers when your dog is very comfortable with you handling his feet and you are confident that you have gained your dog's trust.

Will my dog ever adjust to getting her nails trimmed?

Many dogs may never like to get their nails trimmed, but if done regularly over time, dogs can learn to sit through this routine grooming procedure. Other dogs may never sit still. If you can't get your dog to sit still you may need to recruit the help of another person to hold your dog while you trim her nails. While some dogs can be distracted by dog treats alone, others may also have to be held. You may want to try clipping your dog's nails after a full day of exercise when your dog is looking to take a long nap. Tired dogs tend to be less resistant.

If you know that your dog tends to bite when stressed out, for safety sake you should muzzle your pet before you begin a dog nail trimming procedure. If the task of trimming your dog's nails proves to be too much, find a professional dog groomer or veterinarian for this part of your dog's routine grooming. If you can't get your dog to cooperate it's better that your dog doesn't associate you with this negative experience. If you know that your dog tends to react in an aggressive manner, be sure to let your

groomer know what to expect so that the necessary safety precautions can be taken before they begin a dog nail trimming session.

What is the quick and what do I need to know about it?

The quick is the living part of a dog's nail and has blood vessels running throughout. Cutting into the quick during dog nail trimming is painful for your dog and will result in bleeding. If your dog has light colored nails your job will be easier since you will be able to see the quick. It will be impossible to see the quick if your dog's nails are black or dark in color. If your dog has at least one light colored nail you can usually use that nail as a guide for the others. If dog nail trimming is completely new to you, ask your veterinarian or groomer to show you how to trim your dog's nails or consult a good dog care book.

Another important fact to note is that the quick grows with the nail. As a dog's nails grow longer the quick will also lengthen. So if your dog's nails are over grown you will not be able to clip the nails to the desired length without cutting into the quick. You will need to trim the tips of your dog's nails often and over time the quick will shorten. To avoid cutting into the quick you'll want to start by trimming small pieces of the nail until you get the hang of it.

Help, I've cut my dog's nail too short and now my dog is bleeding! What do I do now?

Don't panic. Your dog is in a little pain but the prognosis is good - your dog will live! You've cut into the quick, the blood-filled tissue in your dog's nail. To stop the bleeding take a pinch of styptic powder and press it against the bleeding toenail. Now give your dog lots of treats. The nail should stop bleeding in

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about 5–10 minutes.

Try not to baby your dog too much. You don't want to bring a lot of unnecessary attention to the injured nail. You'll be surprised at how easily your dog will be distracted by the dog treats if you're not making a big deal out of the bleeding toenail. So just stay calm and upbeat and you may be able to finish your dog nail–trimming task.

If your dog is calm and enjoying the treats it's best to continue trimming. If you didn't finish with the paw that you were working on you may want to continue on another paw and come back to that one after you have finished the rest. If your dog is too excited you may need to try again at a later time. Don't be discouraged, even professional dog groomers occasionally cut into the quick.

If my dog's nails are over grown how can dog nail trimming get them back to a healthy length?

You will need to trim your dog's nails regularly. Start by clipping very small pieces of the nail tip until you can see a dark, round, kind of moist looking disk appear in the middle of the nail. This means you're approaching the quick and the nail will bleed if you cut it any shorter.

Try trimming this far every week or two and the quick will gradually recede. Over time the length of the nail can be shortened. Cutting into the quick to shorten a dog's over grown nails could lead to an infection. If your dog's nails are extremely over grown and this condition is causing health issues consult your veterinarian immediately.

Trimming your dog's nails is one of the regular home dog grooming tasks that helps to keep your dog healthy and active. As with most dog grooming tasks, rewarding your dog for positive behavior is an

important part in your dog's acceptance of the activity. It's always best when your dog can associate the attention you lavish on him or her with a positive, happy memory. Learning the tricks to proper dog nail trimming, training your dog with positive feedback, and showing patience and love will make the time you spend together a reward in itself.

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Teresa James is the Webmaster of

a site dedicated to providing dog

care advice on a broad range of dog-related topics. Includes articles, frequently asked questions, recommendations, and tips for dog owners. Free subscription

## **Care For Your Small Dog With These Big-Impact Tips**

**By Blake Kritzberg**

Basic small dog care is much the same as for larger dogs, but owners need to make a few adjustments to best meet their small dog's needs. Consider the following daily dog care routines, and how they're adapted to meet the needs of your pint-sized pup.

### **Feeding Your Small Dog**

Naturally you're going to feed your dog daily, but the standard-size kibble at the grocery store may be too large for your small dog to eat comfortably. You'll need to be sure to buy a kibble designed to fit his smaller mouth (these are easy to find among the premium dog food brands). Canned soft foods are also perfectly suitable for your small dog.

### **Containing Your Small Dog**

All dogs need exercise and a safe place to potty outdoors, and a fenced-in yard provides all the security they need, right? Not necessarily when it comes to small dogs. A fence that adequately holds a bigger dog may have gaps large enough for a small dog to fit between or under, allowing him to escape. Fences also can't provide overhead protection from large hawks, which sadly have been known to carry small dogs and puppies away. A covered kennel run might better meet your small dog's needs.

### **Training Your Small Dog**

Small dogs aren't any harder to train than large dogs, yet the consensus of many pet experts is that many of them end up spoiled. No matter if he fits in a purse or a pocket, your small dog still sees the world in terms of pack behavior, and if you're not leading the pack, he is. It's a wise idea to make sure your small dog is thoroughly housetrained, no matter how small and inconsequential the mess might seem when he misses. Dog experts also suggest you make your small dog work for you, to keep him responsive to your rules. Have him sit or do tricks before you give him a tasty treat or even his meal.

### **Grooming Your Small Dog**

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Small dog care includes some special grooming needs you'll need to keep in mind. Small dogs require more frequent nail trimming than larger dogs, because they typically spend less time on rough surfaces wearing them down. You'll also need to brush your small dog's teeth twice a week if you're feeding a soft canned food diet.

As you can see, small dog care largely follows the same route as care for any other sized dog. The differences may seem like minor details, but paying attention to them can make a big impact when it comes to meeting your small dog's special needs.

Blake Kritzberg is proprietor of Poodle—oo, your source for small dog clothes. Stop by for small dog couture and home decor, designer dog collars, leather dog leashes and the Small Dog Blog.

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