

Grooming Your Dog

- Regular brushing, bathing, and trimming can help keep your dog's skin and haircoat healthy.
- Groom your dog when he or she is relaxed, and start with short sessions.
- Try to make grooming a pleasant experience for your dog. If your dog seems uncomfortable with being groomed, stop and seek professional advice.
- Ask your veterinarian about the best way to care for your dog's nails, ears, and teeth.
- Visit and talk to groomers before bringing your dog to them. Feel free to ask for references.

Grooming Basics

Grooming does more than make your dog look good. Regular brushing, bathing, and—if necessary—trimming can help keep your dog's skin and haircoat healthy, and if you can teach your dog to enjoy these activities, grooming can be another way to strengthen the relationship between you and your dog.

If you and your dog are new to grooming, start slow. Choose a time when your dog is relaxed, and keep sessions short (5 to 10 minutes). Give your dog plenty of petting and praise (and perhaps a treat) for good behavior. As you pet your dog, try to handle all parts of his or her body, including the ears and feet, so that your dog becomes used to this activity. If at any time your dog seems uncomfortable with being handled or groomed, stop.

Brushing Your Dog

Brushing your dog helps to remove dirt and loose, dead hair and to prevent mats and tangles. How often you need to brush your dog depends on the length and thickness of his or her hair. Long-haired dogs, like Yorkshire terriers, may need to be brushed daily. Short-haired dogs, such as boxers, may need brushing only monthly. By brushing your dog regularly, you will learn how often he or she needs to be brushed to keep his or her coat clean and tangle-free.

There are several types of brushes and combs, including:

- **Bristle brushes:** Although these brushes can be used on all types of haircoats, the density, length, and stiffness of the bristles affect how well a specific brush works on a specific coat. Longer coats need longer, less dense bristles, and coarser coats need stiffer bristles.
- **Wire-pin brushes:** These brushes work best on medium to long, dense coats.
- **Slicker brushes:** These brushes have angled wire bristles. They can be used on all types of coats, and they help remove mats and tangles and make the haircoat look shiny.
- **Undercoat rakes:** These combs are useful for dogs with double coats. They help thin out the undercoat, especially in the summer.

If you find a mat in your dog's hair, do not pull on it. Pulling will be painful for your dog, and he or she will not want to be brushed again. Also, do not try to cut mats out—you may end up accidentally cutting

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yourself or your dog. Special brushes and combs are available to help split and remove mats; alternatively, consult your veterinarian or a reliable groomer. Sometimes mats must be professionally shaved.

Bathing Your Dog

The ASPCA recommends bathing your dog about every 3 months; however, certain breeds and dogs that spend a lot of time outside may need to be bathed more often. Mats and tangles are easier to remove by brushing before bathing. Try to make

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bathing a pleasant experience for your dog: use warm water, a mild shampoo made for dogs, and toys, treats, and calm praise as rewards for good behavior. Wear old clothes and keep plenty of large, absorbent towels on hand. If necessary, use a rubber bath mat to keep your dog from slipping. Do not pour or spray water directly on your dog's head.

Finding a Groomer

If your dog is a breed that needs regular trimming, or if you need help grooming him or her, you will want to find a good groomer. Ask your veterinarian if he or she can recommend one. Questions you may want to ask potential groomers include:

- Do you have any restrictions (e.g., size, temperament) on the dogs you groom?

- How long have you been grooming dogs?
- Do you have any references?

You may also want to visit the groomer and see whether the work area is clean and where dogs are kept when they are not being groomed. You may need to try a few groomers before you find the right one for your dog.

Caring for Your Dog's Nails, Ears, and Teeth

Nail trimming, ear cleaning, and tooth brushing are also important aspects of grooming. Teaching your dog to accept having his or her feet and ears touched can help make these activities easier.

Ask your veterinarian or a veterinary technician to teach you the safest way to perform these grooming activities.