

# Trimming Your Cat's Nails

- Nail trimming should be a calm, stress-free experience for you and your cat.
- If your cat experiences pain from nail trimming, you will probably have trouble trimming his or her nails in the future, so make sure that you clip just the tip of each nail.
- Contact your veterinarian if you are unsure of how to cut your cat's nails or if you experience difficulties.

Nail trimming should be calm and stress-free for you and your cat. Teaching your cat to accept having his or her feet touched can help make nail trimming easier. Ideally, cats should be introduced to nail trimming when they are kittens. Most cats require nail trimming every 10 days to 2 weeks. Contact your veterinarian if you are unsure of how to cut your cat's nails or if you experience difficulties.

### The Setup

Collect your clippers and something to control bleeding in case it occurs (see below for suggestions and more on bleeding). You can use scissors-type, guillotine-type, or even human nail clippers. Find a chair in a quiet room where your cat can sit comfortably on your lap while facing away from you. You may want to place a folded towel or blanket on your lap in case your cat's nails are very sharp and he or she tries to jump down before you've completed the nail trim. Choose a time when your cat is relaxed or even sleepy, such as after a meal or a period of activity. Ensure that other pets aren't around and that your cat won't be distracted by activity outside nearby windows.

### The Technique

To trim your cat's nails, put your thumb on top of a paw and your fingers underneath it for support. Gently press your thumb and fingers toward each other to extend the nails. Clip only the very tip of the nail (no more than 1/16 of an inch). Clip from top to bottom, not side to side. If your cat has light-colored nails, you might be able to see a pink area (called *the quick*) on the part of the nail closer to the paw. This is where the blood vessels and nerves are, and accidentally cutting it causes pain and bleeding. If your cat experiences discomfort or pain during nail trimming, you will probably have trouble trimming his or her nails in the future, so make sure that you keep the experience as pleasant as possible and clip just the tip of each nail.

If you accidentally cause the nail to bleed, apply styptic powder to the tip of the nail. If you don't have styptic powder, gently dab the tip of the nail on a bar of soap or in a little flour or cornstarch.

If your cat struggles, talk to him or her calmly. If this doesn't help, take a break and try trimming some nails later. Never punish your cat for not cooperating, but be sure to reward good behavior with praise or a treat.

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