

Although dogs are less likely than cats to injure someone with their claws, timely nail trimmings help ensure that a dog can walk without pain or discomfort. The nails of very active dogs may not require any trimming, since they're continually worn down by contact with concrete and other rough surfaces. But it's still a good idea to check the nails occasionally to make sure none of them are torn or split.

When you think about grooming a dog, you probably consider bathing him, brushing his coat, even cleaning those floppy ears, but it's a good idea to give dogs a pedicure every few weeks as well. If you've never trimmed a dog's nails, ask for some help from a more experienced person, and keep these instructions nearby.



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1. Stay Sharp

A few different tools are available to help you trim a dog's nails, including those that resemble miniature pliers and those with replaceable sliding "guillotine" blades. Use whichever model makes you and the animal most comfortable, but be sure to replace the blade frequently to make the job easier and prevent the dog from feeling any discomfort.

2. Pull Their Legs

Dogs are often pretty cooperative when it comes to having their nails trimmed, and those who were handled often as puppies are even more likely to comply. Still, you may need to work a little to keep the animal still. If you're working alone, have the dog sit or lie down on the floor or examining table, then trim the nails, one paw at a time.

3. Pull Their Legs, Part II

If you're grooming a larger dog or if the animal is apprehensive, have someone sit him down and hold out his paw, then get to work with the clippers. Have your helper scratch behind the dog's ears to reassure the animal and help move things along a little more quickly.



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4. Take the Edge Off

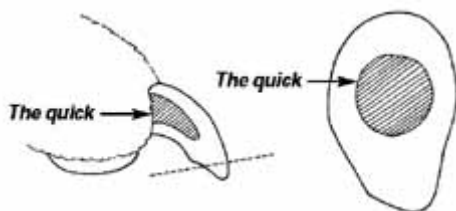
Remember that you should only remove the very end of the dog's nails. You may be tempted to trim off all of the excess, but that would be a mistake. In dogs, the quick—the nerve endings and blood vessels inside the nail—continue to grow as the nail grows. That means long nails must be trimmed bit by bit, over weeks or months, until the quick gradually recedes. Because it's so difficult to see the quick in dogs with dark nails, you'll need to look at the nail straight on (see diagram below) and keep trimming until you see a small dark circle. If you accidentally clip too far and the nail begins to bleed, apply pressure to the tip of the nail or dip the nail in a bit of styptic powder, then make sure the animal is kept inactive for a short time.



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5. Thank Them Very Much

Give the dog a treat or a pat on the tummy to thank him for his cooperation, and things should go at least as well the next time around.



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