



Error-proof Guide to Cutting Your Dog's Nails Yourself

BY GINA NAPOLI

Most dog owners leave the chore of cutting a dog's nails to a professional groomer. Good nail care can cost anywhere from \$15 to \$40 every six weeks per dog.

You don't need a professional to cut your dog's nails. Your only investments are a good set of dog nail clippers and a little bit of time approximately every six weeks.

Trainer Amy Powell, a professionally certified PetsMart dog trainer with five years of experience, offers 11 easy steps you can use to comfortably clip your canine's claws.

1. Make sure your dog is relaxed. He doesn't have to be asleep. Choose a low energy time, preferably after he has already eaten.

2. Prepare yourself. Psyche yourself up with patience. Get ready to coo soothingly in your baby talk voice. This will relax your dog and yourself in the process.

3. Choose a well-lit location.

4. Have a good set of clippers

ready. Brand names are not important; sharpness of the blade is. So is sturdiness.

5. Put your dog in the stand position.

6. Straddle your dog backward between your knees. Depending on the size of your dog, his height may be anywhere between your ankles and thighs. If your dog is small, you may kneel on the ground, with your dog between your knees. Face the dog's tail. This position is the key to the method. From your dog's point of view, he can't see what you're doing. Therefore, his anxiety will be less if he doesn't have to watch something sharp hacking away at each of his precious toes.

7. Pull his paw upward and toward you. It doesn't matter which paw you pull first. From your position, you will have a perfect view of the undersides of your dog's nails. This position offers you the greatest visibility, thereby decreasing your chance of errors.

8. Examine your dog's nails. Brush dirt away if necessary. Find the quicks. The quick grows out slightly from the pads of the paw. It may be

a little difficult to discern quick from nail if your dog's nails are black. If his nails are white and the quicks are pink, they will be easier to see.

9. Cut only the nail. Position the blades of the clippers just short of the quick. Clamp the clippers' arms together with one swift motion.

10. Praise your dog. (Hopefully you are still cooing to him in your baby-talk voice.) Give him his favorite treat, even if he did not behave perfectly. You want to associate nail clipping with something positive.

11. Walk your dog on a sidewalk or other concrete shortly after. This files the nails naturally.

Using the backward standing position, the key to this method, the chance of making mistakes is much less. It offers the greatest visibility to you, and provides the least visibility for your dog.

However, accidents do happen. If blood appears, this means that you have cut the quick. Don't panic. Simply wet a cotton ball with antiseptic. Apply pressure to his paw to stop the bleeding. Then rinse with warm water. It's very important to disinfect the wound. Infection in this area may be deadly if left untreated. It's also very important to rinse off the antiseptic. Left to his own devices, your dog will probably find the salve on his paws quite tasty — and poisonous.

If you do make a mistake, you may have to persuade your dog to allow you to touch his paws again. Luckily for owners, dogs are generally forgiving of their master's mistakes. Your dog may not readily offer his paws, but in time he won't resist you when he sees the clippers in your hand.

Because my dog is still quite young, I used a distraction to win her trust again. I buried a chopped hotdog in the bottom of a long bag. Overly preoccupied, her face was stuck down so far in the bottom of the bag that her eyes were covered. Her paws were mine for the cutting.

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