

How to Trim Your Dog's Nails

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



Your dog's nails should just touch the ground when he walks. If his nails are clicking on the floor or getting snagged in the carpet, his nail trimming session is way overdue.

We recommend you trim your dog's nails a little bit every week to two weeks, depending on growth, to avoid possible snagging and tearing problems, which can be very painful for your pet.



To trim, you will need the following supplies: A high-quality [trimmer](#), [nail file](#), and [styptic powder](#) or [pads](#). If your pet is not accustomed to having his feet handled, you may need to take time prior to nail trimming to get your pet used to having his feet handled. To do this, simply pick up your pet's paw and rub his feet. Also, if your pet's hair is long, you may want to trim it with short blunt scissors to give you better access to his nails. .

STEP-BY-STEP:

To begin, make yourself and your pet comfortable on the floor; have him lay on his side, so all four feet are easily accessible to you.

You want to trim only the portion of the nail that extends beyond the quick, the blood vessel that runs down the nail. On light nails, it is very evident where the quick begins. You will notice a black dot appear in the center of the nail as you clip your small slices. This is the start of the quick.



The problem with trimming dark nails is that it's difficult to see the quick. This is why we recommend trimming claws in several small cuts instead of one large cut. On dark nails, you will see a dark or pink dot in the center of the nail as you approach the quick. It will also have a different texture. This is your cue to stop.

Pick up a paw, position the clipper correctly against the paw and make a series of very thin clips on a 45-degree angle. This is safer than making one large cut.



Reward your pet with petting or a small treat after each clip in the beginning. This distracts him while you work on his nails.

If you accidentally cut the quick, apply styptic [powder](#) or [pads](#) with gentle pressure. This will stop the bleeding and the cut will heal in a short time.

Brittle nails can splinter when you clip them. If this happens, file the nail to remove burrs and smooth it. Use several strokes, working from the back of the nail toward the tip. (A dull trimmer can also cause splintered nails; if this is the case, we recommend you replace the blade.)



If your dog gets anxious, take a break. Try another session tomorrow. Don't forget the dewclaws, if they have not been removed.

An alternative to trimming is the use of a [nail grinder](#).

SUGGESTED PRODUCTS



Resco® Deluxe
Small/Medium Pet Nail
Trimmer



Drs. Foster & Smith
CutStop® Styptic Pads



Oster® Professional Spin™
Li+Ion Cordless Nail
Grinder