



Happy Feet! 8 Nail Trimming Tips

Here are a few tips I've found helpful for trimming my dog's nails. I've also included two articles at the end about how to choose nail trimming equipment and how to teach your dog to accept nail trimming

1. GO SLOW and MAKE THE INTRODUCTION POSITIVE. Show the dog the nail clipper with lots of food (before you even try to clip the nails); you can even clip pencils near the dog, so s/he gets used to the sound it makes. If you can only clip one paw (or even one or two nails) at a time, that's fine. If your dog is not used to having feet handled at all, you may have to practice gently handling each paw (pairing with food) before you even begin to THINK about introducing the clipper.



2. TIRED DOG. Clip nails when your dog is already tired or sleepy--the less the energy, the easier to do the clipping (but don't sneak up and try to do this when your dog is already asleep—you may startle him/her, and s/he may bite or nip!).

3. USE GOOD TOOLS. Be sure to choose a clipper that is sharp and removes the nail easily (you don't want to rip, tear, or pull). There are also nail filers and grinders, and some dogs are more comfortable with those.

4. DON'T TRIM TOO MUCH NAIL. Be very careful not to cut the quick (the soft tissue within the nail) --this is painful and bleeds like heck. There are lots of photos of dog nails and quicks on the internet, so you can get to know dog nail anatomy. I find it helpful to turn my dog's feet in such a way that I can see the nail from the underneath, so I can see what nail growth I want to remove and where the fleshy part starts (my dog's nails are black, so I can't see this looking at the top of the nail). At first, if you and your dog are new to clipping, it's okay if you only take a tiny bit of nail off--to make a good experience for both of you as you master clipping. As you clip your dog's feet, you will get to know how much to take off and see new growth more clearly. Use styptic powder or a paste of flour and water to stop the bleeding if you do cut the quick.

5. USE PEANUT BUTTER. With all my dogs, I started with smearing a paw I wasn't clipping with peanut butter while I clipped the other paw. You can also smear peanut butter on the floor or wall (if you have surfaces that are easy to wash), so that your dog stands in one place while you clip, and smearing the peanut butter takes them a little longer to lick up.

6. GET COMFORTABLE. Experiment with ways you can position yourself and your dog to make clipping comfortable. I ask my dogs to sit or stand, and then I take each paw like I would a horse's hoof, bending the hock gently so I can see the underside of the paw and clip. The dog leans against me for balance and I can safely, easily hold the foot and clip. Some dogs prefer to lay down--do what works for you and your dog but be careful not to pull the legs in awkward or uncomfortable angles!

7. HAVE A PUPPY FEET PARTY AFTER YOUR DONE. When I'm finished with a nail trimming session, each dog gets a special playtime party!



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8. NEVER SCOLD OR PUNISH your dog for not being cooperative. That will only make your dog feel worse and more worried about nail clipping (and potentially, about you!).

Two useful articles:

Force-free Nail Clipping:

<https://www.whole-dog-journal.com/.../Force-Free-Canine-Nail-...>

Best Nail Trimmers:

https://www.whole-dog-journal.com/.../2_2/features/5167-1.html