

# **HOW TO: GROOM YOUR DOG AT HOME**

**FURST CLASS LOUNGE FREE GUIDE**

**MARTIN MAWSON & LEE HOLLINGWORTH**

City & Guilds Diploma in Professional dog grooming

Open College Network West Midlands Animal First Aid

L3 Award in Educational Training

# HOME GROOMING GUIDE

BY MARTIN MAWSON & LEE HOLLINGWORTH



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Consistency is the key to a well-maintained, healthy coat and skin. Your dog is going to love the attention and time you spend with them.

Hello and welcome to the Furst Class Lounge. We hope you enjoy our complimentary guide.

Martin and Lee  
Salon owners & tutors

# ABOUT FCL

With over 13 years of experience, Furst Class Lounge is one of the UK's leading independent dog grooming salons, well-known for understated luxury.

We are dedicated to providing a professional service of excellent quality. Our pet parents expect us to prioritise their dogs' safety, comfort, cleanliness, and well-being.

Our cutting-edge salon was created to ensure dogs receive the best care possible.

FURST CLASS LOUNGE Grooming Training Centre provides training and nationally recognised qualifications to students from across the UK.

See page 58 for Information on how to get started.

## About the Authors

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In 2009, we embarked on our City & Guilds diploma qualifications. Our salon finished second in the prestigious Grooming Salon of the Year Awards in 2012.

This gave us the determination we needed for the next part of our plan. In 2013, we found the premises we needed to build our dream salon.

After completing our teacher training qualifications in 2014, we opened our Professional Dog Grooming Training Centre.

We were one of the few elite grooming salons at the time to be awarded the Grooming Gold Standard by SAIGlobal Independent Auditors in early 2016.

We were excited to be contacted by a Chanel 5 TV producer in August of the same year to discuss our participation in the shows versus challenge with presenters Ortis & Amy. The show aired on October 28th, 2016.

And the rest, as they say, is history.

# THE MOST IMPORTANT NEEDS FOR YOUR DOG ARE:

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**Exercise** and exhibit normal behaviour

**Discipline** with freedom from pain and distress

**Affection** in a suitable, safe, and protected environment with or apart from other animals

**An Appropriate Diet** for Health and Vitality

**Grooming** the coat so that it is fit for purpose. To ventilate the coat, allow the skin to breathe, and protect against the summer sun or the winter cold and rain

# **WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THIS GUIDE**

The aim of our guide is to give you the know-how to pick up basic tools and use them effectively to brush, shampoo, blow dry, cut nails, and clip your dog's coat, if your breed needs clipping. More about that later.

# **WHAT NOT TO EXPECT FROM THIS GUIDE**

This is not a 'how to become a dog groomer manual. Professional groomers spend a long time training and studying, then years perfecting their skills. FCL offers comprehensive training courses leading to formal qualifications and produces competent grooming professionals who are proficient in animal first aid and safety standards.

There are inherent risks involved in grooming dogs, and variations in breed, age, condition, coat type, medical history, behaviour, and temperament all contribute to the considerations needed to complete grooming safely.

Safety is at the very heart of everything we do at Furst Class Lounge. All our procedures and planning for accepting dogs into the grooming salon are based on safety, and even then, on rare occasions, accidents can still happen. Grooming salon tools and equipment such as scissors and clipper blades are sharp; they need to be in order to trim all the various coat types presented by the many different breeds we see. Animal first aid qualifications are required by all FCL groomers, as well as dog handling and behavioural experience. Dogs can be unpredictable at times, and limitless patience, care, and attention to detail are required to qualify as an FCL groomer or professional dog groomer anywhere in the world.

We could not, therefore, include comprehensive grooming techniques and breed specifics in this guide, but we can offer you our advice and knowledge to do what you can do if the correct equipment, confidence, and handling ability are accessible to you.

# WHEN TO START

It is essential to introduce your puppy to the world of grooming the right way. There are many benefits to socialising a puppy, but the window of opportunity is small, so it's important to know what you need to do and when.

A puppy should ideally be introduced to the salon environment soon after their final vaccinations, at 10 to 12 weeks of age.

A puppy should be socialised and acclimated to everything in the environment they live in, including people, other animals, and grooming, especially if they have a coat type that requires regular maintenance.

A lot of work must be done to ensure that your puppy grows up well-adjusted and free of undesirable habits such as biting and separation anxiety. Introduce a few new experiences daily, including brushing, so that your puppy is fully socialised by 16 weeks.

Find a reputable puppy trainer in your area and have some fun together.

# COAT TYPES

## DOUBLE

In addition to the various coat types we will identify here, your dog's coat may also be double-coated. These coats have two distinctive layers to fulfil different roles.

This is a coat type adapted to all weather conditions and includes the Bearded Collie, German Shepherd Dog, Australian Shepherd Dog, Border Collie, Golden Retriever, Pomeranian, Yorkshire Terrier, and Pembroke Welsh Corgi.

Additionally, all dog coats fall into two major categories: undetermined length (UDL) and predetermined length (PDL). Some people use the terms hair (UDL) and fur (PDL) to distinguish between these two types. The length of hair, like ours, will just grow and grow until it is cut. Fur will grow to a certain length and then stop growing.

Each of these different coat types requires very different grooming approaches, tools, and care.

In winter, when it's cold, wet, and dirty, the longer guard hairs protect the undercoat. When the undercoat is dry, your dog's skin will stay insulated from the cold. This same protective functionality is also designed to keep your dog comfortable in hot weather. This coat also protects the skin from biting insects and the sun's damaging UVA and UVB rays.

Remove the coat, and we remove the skin's natural protection. A dog's skin is much thinner than our own; the fur is there for that reason. Dogs with double coats will naturally shed the warm, dense undercoat as the weather warms up, leading to a finer coat perfectly suited to keep the skin cool, shaded, and protected from the intensity of the summer sun.

The key to keeping your dog's coat fit for function is to brush and comb it at least three times a week, if not daily, with a brush that is suited to this coat type, preferably a professional-quality slicker or pin brush. The undercoat must be kept free from mats and tangling to keep the whole coat healthy and well-conditioned. Clipping certain breeds with this coat type, whether long or short, could damage the coat, resulting in patchy, fluffy regrowth, which looks unsightly and will take a long time to regrow and get back into a natural growth cycle. This also applies to all-naturally coated dogs where the coat grows to a pre-defined length. Long-haired Chihuahuas and

Pomeranians, for example, may have permanently damaged coats if clipped unnecessarily.

So whatever the weather this summer, FCL would not be looking at shaving off your Border Collie, Golden Retriever, Shetland Sheepdog, or Samoyed. Instead, always provide your double-coated dog with shade on sunny days and provide fresh, clean water at all times. Keeping the coat free from shedding undercoat with effective regular brushing and combing is the key to keeping the coat in perfect condition, which in return will take care of your dog.

Brushing is a need for the breed. A Pyrenean Mountain Dog, Newfoundland, or Bearded Collie will require effective daily brushing. Missing just a few days of effective brushing can result in serious matting where the tight coat causes discomfort and can lead to additional skin problems if left unattended.

Dry air in summer or winter will also make the undercoat mats more easily removed. Dogs kept indoors with central heating are just as susceptible as those kept outdoors, so keep brushing whatever the weather, season, or environment. If you have neglected to brush the coat according to the needs of your breed and it has become matted or felted (pelted), then clipping the coat very short may be the last resort for the welfare of your pet to reduce further discomfort.

# WOOL / CURLY

Wool or Curly coats include the Bichon Frise, Poodles, Bedlington's and the popular poodle mixed breeds like Labradoodles, Cavachon and Cockapoo.

This coat can be thick, curly and has a lot of volume.

This coat requires the maximum amount of regular effective daily grooming. The owner who is successful in keeping this coat in good condition will brush daily.

This is one of the hardest coats to maintain. It mats very easily and can grow quite quickly and these dogs have continuous growth throughout the year.

The term 'hypoallergenic' is often confused with easy care which couldn't be further from the truth. These coats are often referred to as the Non-Shedding Coats. Whilst the undercoat will indeed not fall out it will need to be removed manually by brushing, involving lots of time and effort to prevent matting and tangling.

This is one of the most expensive coat types to be professionally groomed and the one that tends to incur additional costs due to lack of effective daily grooming.

# SMOOTH

Smooth-coated dogs are the easiest to maintain and require the least amount of grooming. Their coat lays flat against the skin, is shiny, and lacks texture. They do shed their coat, but it is minimal, and you won't notice the hair loss so much on your clothes or in your home. This coat type includes the Whippet, Greyhound, French Bulldog, Staffordshire Bull Terrier, and Boston Terrier.

# SHORT

Short- to medium-coated dogs have two layers of short coat, making these coats very dense. They tend to arise in breeds that spend a lot of time outdoors to protect them from the elements. The hair is short in length, typically 1 cm to 3 cm. This coat has more texture, and you can put your fingers through it. Pugs, Boxer dogs, Labradors, Australian Cattle Dogs, and Beagles, for example, require only occasional grooming. The coat, however, will hold more water, take more time to dry, and tend to hold on to smells.

## SILKY/LONG

Silky coated dogs have a long coat which require a lot of maintenance. This coat needs effective brushing at least three times a week, preferably daily. Breeds include Old English Sheepdog, Shih Tzu, Maltese, Lhasa Apso, Afghan Hounds, Tibetan Terrier and the Yorkshire Terrier. Long coats vary in texture from coarse to silky. This is also one of the most expensive coat types to be professionally groomed and another one that tends to incur additional costs due to lack of effective home grooming.

## COMBINATION

Combination coats are another unique coat type. A breed with a combination coat has areas of long hair and short hair. The two types of coats are easy to tell apart. Generally, the shorter coat is on the body and the long coat is on the ears, legs, and tail. This coat type tends to require regular grooming to brush out dead hair from the longer areas of the coat around the rear, chest, and ears to prevent matting. This includes the English Springer Spaniel, Border Collie, and Irish Setter.

# WIRE

Wire-coated dogs have specialised grooming requirements. Full grooming generally needs to be done by a professional groomer or someone who is trained to deal with this coat. This coat type includes the Border Terrier, Irish Terrier, Affenpinscher, Scottish Terrier, and the West Highland White Terrier.

The correct way to groom the wire coat is through a process called hand stripping. Hand stripping maintains the colour of the wire coat and the coarse texture. This is a process that must begin with a puppy. Once the coat is clipped, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to get the texture back by hand stripping. Neutering and home bathing may affect the texture of the coat and therefore the ability to strip the coat comfortably. Hand stripping has to be taught and is labour-intensive. Hand stripping will make grooming more expensive than clipping the coat.

Hand stripping involves pulling out the dead outer coat of wire-coated and rough-coated breeds by hand rather than with clippers. This allows the new, harsh wire coat to grow. Wire coats pull out very easily once the coat is ready, which should be a comfortable experience for your dog. The wire or rough coat has a unique structure, which is why it is

so specialised. The coat consists of a soft undercoat, semi-hollow hair, and a wire outer coat. When your dog's hormones decide, the coat will be ready to shed and becomes very lightly anchored into the skin. At this time, the hair can be removed by hand and retain its natural texture and colour as it regrows.

When you clip the coat with electric clippers, the coarse wire hair will be removed, and all that will be left is the semi-hollow hair or the soft base. This will make the coat soft, and the colour will be diluted. That's why some black dogs, when they are clipped, begin to turn grey or their chestnut brown coats turn pale.

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## HAIRLESS

Hairless dogs usually do have some hair on the top of the head, feet, and tail and do still require gentle bathing to keep the skin in good condition, but are essentially easy to maintain. Sunscreen is recommended when outside in the sunshine.

## CORDED

Cording is a technique in which dog coats are separated into dreadlocks. Dog breeds that are often corded are the Puli and the Komondor. The cords are carefully separated into clumps of fur in a regular pattern and tended until they are long enough to grow on their own. These coats collect dust and debris and can be difficult to maintain if the owner is unfamiliar with the breed and coat type. The coat must dry naturally after bathing.

# HANDLING

This is not a guide to training and behaviour, but these are both very important when it comes to grooming dogs, and they are disciplines that will affect how your dog reacts to being groomed. Training and handling are responsibilities that we begin the moment a dog arrives in our home. If they are not, problems will arise due to overlooking one of the most important aspects of dog ownership.

This guide presumes that you have completed a reasonable level of training and discipline.

If you are struggling to cope with your dog's behaviour, just bear in mind that your dog is a silent communicator and that the word no is the most overused word in dog language and means nothing to your dog unless strongly associated with a particular command or action.

Use energy to project your leadership and presence through your body language rather than speech. Always handle your dog in a safe location and remain calm in all situations.

If you need to interrupt unwanted behaviour, use a sound like a loud, short, sharp hiss with a T at the beginning, 'TSSSS. This really works with a bit of eye contact, without any physical contact, just energy

and sound. But don't force your dog into standing for you all at once; it may take a while to get your dog used to standing still. Always use a small favourite treat to reward good behaviour.

## **EQUIPMENT**

Now that you are more familiar with your dog's coat type and handling, we can take a look at some of the basic equipment you will need to maintain all areas of your dog's basic hygiene needs. When it comes to tools for grooming dogs, the groomer really can blame his or her tools. Quality counts, and you will need to supply yourself with the best and most appropriate you can get. Otherwise, it will be like hammering nails into a wall with a rubber mallet; it's just not going to work safely or effectively.

# BRUSHING

Some dogs coats are easy to maintain, while others require almost constant attention. Smooth and short-coated dogs, like Boston Terriers, Boxer Dogs, and bulldogs, benefit from occasional brushing and massaging with a rubber curry brush to keep their coat in good condition.

Double-coated breeds need more frequent attention to ensure their coats are free from dead undercoat and tangles that, if not removed by regular brushing, will start to form mats and tangles pretty quickly.

If you are an owner of any breed with this coat type, you already know this. These breeds include Akita, Alaskan Malamute, Chow Chow, Golden Retriever, Labrador, Spitz, Pomeranian, Shiba Inu, Siberian Husky, Old English Sheepdog, German Shepherd Dog, Bearded Collie, Rough Collie, Bernese Mountain Dog, Pyrenean Mountain Dog, Leonburger, and Saint Bernard.

Wool or curly-coated breeds like Poodles, Bedlington Terriers, and Bichon Frise have a coat with little undercoat and also tend to mat easily without continued maintenance due to friction from harnesses and collars and the hair wrapping around itself to form mats that can be very difficult to remove if left unattended.

If we mix two breeds, one with an undercoat and one with a curly or wool coat, they will appear to shed very little, and therein lies the problem because the undercoat becomes trapped in the curly hair as it is shed. This will be exacerbated during heavy shedding and growth seasons like summer and winter. The same can be said for breeds with a long coat; bearded collies or rough collies, for example, also tend to mat easily.

As groomers, we need to ensure that matting does not get out of control due to a lack of good maintenance for the breed. This is why we recommend six- to eight-week professional grooming appointments and highly recommend effective home maintenance between visits. In extreme cases, the dog's coat will become what groomers call "pelted" or "felted" when matting is very tight to the skin, preventing proper airflow.

Matting and felting prevent proper temperature regulation, can cause skin irritation, hide parasites like fleas and ticks, and cause discomfort and pain. If not removed, the undercoat continues to grow faster than the topcoat, feeding the felting to form a thick pad; this often looks like the skin to the untrained eye and can mislead owners into thinking they are brushing down to the skin, but sadly, this is not the case.

The most important thing you can do to prevent this from happening is to brush and comb your dog's

coat regularly enough to prevent tangles turning into knots, knots turning into mats, and mats turning into a felted coat. In the case of woolly or curly-coated breeds mixed with double-coated breeds, effective daily brushing and combing are required; sorry, it's just how it is. These mixed breeds include the Cavachon, Cavapoo, Cockapoo, Labradoodle, Golden Doodle, Shihpoo, and most other poodle mixed breeds.

So where does it all go wrong? From the paragraph above, you can see that the number one mistake is not brushing down to the skin. Surface brushing is the error that leads to most problems.

Brushing promotes healthy skin, removes dead hair that may otherwise end up on your furniture and clothes, and prevents matting and tangles. Brushing strengthens the bond between you and your dog. We know it may not seem that way when your dog dives for cover every time you get the brush out, but if the coat is not healthy, it will hurt to brush, and dogs don't do hurt, so they will avoid that experience next time. Keeping the coat free of knots and tangles will ensure your dog loves being groomed. Trust us, we groom dogs all day long (usually), and if they have a healthy coat, they really do love it.

Regular brushing helps you spot any potential health issues on their skin, such as lumps, warts, growths, sores, and parasites. Brushing stimulates the sebaceous oil glands and distributes these natural

oils over the coat and skin, lubricating the coat, making it shine, and making it easier for you to brush.

We recommend brushing all coat types every other day. Double-coated dogs and those with wool or curly coats should be brushed every day.

If your dog likes to walk in any weather, jumps in water, or you bathe your dog at home, even more reason to ensure there is no undercoat left in. The undercoat is like cotton wool. It shrinks when wet and holds on even tighter to the skin and surrounding hair. So brush out before bathing.

Brushing is by far more important than cleaning with shampoo and water. You can brush a healthy coat clean. A well-maintained coat is ready for all occurrences. If your dog rolls in an unsavoury patch of organic nastiness, no problem; bathe, brush, and go.

Using a good quality slicker brush regularly will remove the undercoat. Check through the coat with a metal comb to ensure it glides through the coat from the skin outwards. Dip into the coat with your comb and lift the coat up in segments. If it stops and gets stuck, brush the area again until the comb glides through.

Sorry to throw another spanner in the works here, but you can over brush. Brushing too vigorously in the same spot for too long can result in sore, red, or

broken skin, known in the trade as slicker or brush burn. Keep an eye out for that.

The trick is to brush methodically in quick, light strokes in the direction of coat growth. Longer coats may need segmenting so that you get down to the skin. The longer the coat gets, the more you will need to keep on top of your maintenance schedule, but unless the coat is matted and tangle-free, do not attempt to use clippers; it will hurt.

In professional grooming, preparation is vital before finishing and styling can even be considered. The same is true for home grooming. Brushing and condition are far more important than length. We can do anything with a long coat in good condition, but a long coat in bad condition may need removing. So, don't get the clippers out; get the brush and comb out instead.

Our tip for reducing friction-related mats is to always remove collars and harnesses after a walk. This also helps settle a dog after a walk. Mats are often created underneath your dog's collar or on the parts of their chest and armpits where their harness rubs. These areas need particular attention when brushing, along with the backs of the ears, ears, armpits, inside legs, bottom, and tail.

Regular professional grooming and keeping the coat trimmed to a reasonable and practical length are the way to go.

# NAILS

It is important to maintain a healthy nail length for the health of the foot. The easiest action you can take is to walk your dog on a hard, solid surface that will naturally wear down the nails. This is the preferred option because, as the nails are worn down naturally through friction, the nerve inside the nail is stimulated into receding as the nail is worn down. This natural process allows for a shorter, healthier nail.

In the absence of this natural wear process, by walking on grass and soft ground, the nails will get longer and the nerve and blood vessel inside will grow longer, making it impossible to cut the nail back to a healthy length. If the nails are trimmed regularly, every two to three weeks, the nerves and blood vessels will recede over time with this method too. This is why First Class Lounge offers a free nail trimming service between grooming appointments for existing customers.

If your dog has dewclaws, which can be present on the insides of the front or back feet, they will not come in contact with hard ground and should be checked regularly to make sure they are not curling into the pad.

Most dogs will allow their nails to be trimmed once they are acclimated to having their feet and nails handled correctly. If your dogs' nails are getting too long, the question during the lockdown is where to go if you can't trim them yourself. While the Furst Class Lounge remains closed, your vet nurse may be able to help. Give your practise a call if your dogs' nails need to be cut.

If you have had previous experience or training, you may want to trim your dog's nails yourself. A good rule of thumb, if you need a refresher, is this: cut the nail a little at a time and look at the cut end of the nail. If it looks solid with no inner centre circle visible, you can cut a little further.

Once a white circle with a dot at its centre appears, stop there.

Be confident in your handling while holding the foot firmly but gently in the palm of your hand and the nail between your thumb and finger so that you can see clearly.

If you cut the nail back too far, the inner circle may look pink. If that happens, avoid trimming the other nails so close to the quick. If you trim further still, the nail may bleed. As a precaution, keep a paper towel and bleed-stopping powder handy, and apply pressure to the end of the nail and hold it there until the bleeding stops.

If you have never trimmed your nails before, please contact your veterinarian at this time until FCL is back up and running so that it can be done safely.

If your dog will not allow for nail trimming, then perhaps you can take some time to start desensitising. Taking a few seconds to touch the feet and hold the nail with a nice morsel of chicken or a treat in your other hand where they can smell it. If your dog is calm and relaxed, stop touching and feed the treat with a happy 'yes!' to reinforce the good response.

Repeat for as long as it takes. This is better done when your dog is a puppy (less than six months old), but it is still possible with a mature dog; just be patient; it will take time, but the investment is worth it.

In the meantime, walk on hard ground to wear the nails down naturally, if possible, and ask if your vet can help if your dog's nails need cutting. As a bribe or distraction, especially when trimming nails, natural peanut butter works well, smeared on the back of the hand holding the foot.

# EAR & EYE CLEANING

**Oto Fluid** is a cleansing and refreshing solution that soothes itchiness and inflammation of the auricular canal. It keeps the auricle in optimal condition and protects it from external agents.

Place a few drops in the middle of a cotton pad and gently wipe inside the ear as far as your finger will go. Never use cotton buds in the ear canal. Use multiple pads with fresh Oto fluid until the ear is clean. Do not get the fluid on the hair. It will leave the hair greasy.

**Hydrocol 3 Eye Cleanser** is a highly concentrated eye lotion made from vegetable extracts and distilled water with a protective and soothing action. Thanks to its natural properties, it can be used on the eyes as well as the surrounding areas.

You can use a dilution of warm water and salt to clean the corners of the eyes. If you're struggling to remove debris or hardened matter from the corners of the eyes, soak the area first using cotton wool and use a soft child's toothbrush to help sweep away debris and eye secretions, working down and away from the eye.

# ANAL GLANDS

Dogs have two little sacs (the anal glands) that sit at about 4 o'clock and 8 o'clock under the skin on either side of the anus. The sacs are each connected to the anal passage by a tiny duct. These delicate sebaceous glands contain pheromones suspended in a very smelly liquid. Although not at all pleasant to you or me, this liquid contains a lot of biochemical information that dogs use to effectively communicate with one another.

We all give our dogs the same disgruntled look when we catch them having a good sniff at another dog's poop on our walks, but your dog is catching up on his or her version of canine social media, checking out 'who's who'. As a dog poops, the faeces expand the colon and give the anal glands a gentle squeeze, and a little bit of stinky secretion is deposited onto their poop, awaiting the arrival of another dog who takes an inquisitive sniff to catch up on all the latest news regarding your dog.

So, this exchange of biochemical information has been going on for thousands of years without the need for a veterinary or dog groomer's helping hand, and health issues regarding these little glands are often the biggest subject in the grooming salon.

In the early, old school days of dog grooming and as dogs became 'family members', it was considered routine to express the anal glands to empty them of that offensively smelly liquid that nobody wanted to notice in and around the home. But when you try to fix something that isn't broken, there are consequences. In the case of anal gland expression, the consequences could be unnecessary trauma to the delicate tissues and the muscle surrounding them.

The routine expression or squeezing of the anal glands can lead to swollen, irritated, and inflamed ducts, causing them to close. This is where the problem becomes a major issue for you and your dog.

With the anal glands producing more biochemical fluid and no way of releasing it into the anal passage, the glands may become painfully impacted and infected. Regular expression of the anal glands, when completely unnecessary, also causes the loss of muscle tone, which impacts the normal function of the anal glands.

Dog groomers should not be routinely expressing anal glands. It is the responsibility of your veterinarian to determine what may have gone wrong with this usually natural process. There may be underlying inflammatory issues or gastrointestinal conditions that your veterinarian can identify and is

capable of recognising. Only they may help alleviate the issue with medically trained expertise applying the correct amount of pressure that will not cause further trauma and in the event that your vet determines that the anal glands are working normally and not impacted, they should be left alone.

## SHAMPOO & CONDITIONER

Using human shampoo and conditioner on your dog is never a good idea because their chemical makeup and PH balance are completely different from yours.

Choosing the best shampoo or conditioner for the coat is determined by the coat's condition and quality. Some coats will only require a gentle shampoo, others will require a deep clean, and others will require hypoallergenic shampoo. Choose a high-quality, PH-balanced shampoo that can be diluted with warm water and applied to a dry coat if possible.

Conditioners aid in the treatment of dry coats by locking in moisture and making them easier to brush.

# BATHING & DRYING

**Top tip: Before getting your dog's coat wet, brush out any dead undercoat, mats, or tangles.**

Our recommendation would be to choose from the Home-Line range of products made by ReQual. Other high-quality products are available, but having tried and tested ReQual for over 13 years, we can give them our seal of approval.

Before moving your dog into or out of the bath, ensure that you have everything you need in one place. If you have a suction-cup bathing restraint, use it to prevent your dog from slipping around the bath or jumping out.

Prepare your shampoo and your bath. Professional or appropriate dog shampoo is always diluted. Mix shampoo in a large jug of warm water; check that the water temperature is hand-warm. Transfer the shampoo solution to your dog's dry coat and massage to thoroughly wet the coat with the solution down to the skin. Use a shower scrunchy to transfer the liquid shampoo to your dog's coat. Avoid the eyes, and don't allow water to run into the ears. Add more shampoo if you need it.

**Shampoo:** starting with the tail, wash the head last so that the shampoo is around the eyes for the least amount of time.

**Rinse** the head first and continue towards the tail. Rinse thoroughly. When rinsing around the ears, use your thumb to shield the ear canal to prevent water from entering the ear.

Apply conditioner if required, making sure the conditioner you use is PH-balanced for use on dogs, and rinse thoroughly again.

Squeegee excess water from the body, legs, tail, and ears with your hands. Rinse the coat again if there is any leftover shampoo. Leaving product in the coat can irritate the skin and dull the coat.

## **DETERGENTS AND SURFACTANTS**

At the base level, shampoo cleans the hair using detergents, just like every other cleaning product you use. Obviously, these aren't the same detergents as those found in dog shampoo, which are specially selected and developed.

But a detergent, whether harsh or gentle, is meant to remove dirt. The detergents used in dog shampoo,

however, are specialised for that job because of the way a detergent must work to rid the hair of excess oil.

The sebum on the skin and hair is hydrophobic, meaning it can't be removed just by rinsing the hair with water. In other words, water can't dissolve this type of oil.

A detergent molecule in a shampoo works as a surfactant, meaning it lowers the surface tension between the water and the sebum. This makes it easier for the detergent molecule to bind with oils and dirt particles.

Then, when you rinse the shampoo out, the hydrophilic part of the molecule (the part that binds to water) takes the dirt out with it when it's rinsed away.

# ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT

You really don't need to spend a lot to get a good job done. You just need to select the appropriate tools for the job.

The type of equipment you need depends on the coat type your dog has. Dogs with double coats have different needs from those with wool or silky coats.

All dogs, apart from smooth and short-coated dogs, will need the following equipment:

## **Comb**

A comb with medium-spaced teeth or a combination comb that has both fine and wider-spaced teeth will be a good all-rounder. Use the comb to find tangles in the coat. When you find areas that are tangled, use a brush to remove them. If your dog has thicker hair, for example, a wool type, choose a comb with wide, longer teeth. Choose combs made of metal.

## Brush

A slicker brush is the universal brush of choice and is especially useful for thick, woolly, wool-mixed, or double-coated breeds with an undercoat. Short and smooth-coated dogs will benefit from using a rubber or silicone ‘curry’ brush to remove loose hair and condition the coat. Bristle brushes are also excellent choices for short or wire coats.

Medium- to long-length silky coats will benefit from using a wire pin brush to detangle and tidy the coat.

De-shedding tools will remove the shedding coat from double-coated breeds like Border Terriers, Cavaliers, Border Collies, and Labradors.

## CLIPPING THE COAT

If your dog’s coat needs to be clipped, you will need a good electric clipper and blades.

If you would prefer your dog's coat to be longer than 1 cm (10 mm) in length, you will also need comb attachments, which are placed over a fine blade to enable longer clipping styles.

## **Electric Clippers**

This will probably be the most expensive piece of grooming equipment you will invest in. The best and most effective are sold by grooming supply specialists. We recommend Redcape Grooming Supplies ([www.redcape.co.uk](http://www.redcape.co.uk)) for clippers, blades, and other essentials.

**We only recommend using electric clippers if you have had previous experience or training. Due to the possibility of causing injury, caution should always be applied.**

# **PREPARATION IS ESSENTIAL**

Following a bath and fluffing dry, if your comb does not glide through every inch of the coat being groomed, you will not achieve a high standard of finish. Particularly when using comb attachments to achieve the desired length of the coat.

Comb attachments work by gliding over the skin and trimming the coat to the correct length from the skin out. Any tangles left in the coat will snag on the attachment and may cause harm to your dog, as well as leave the finish patchy.

Potentially, the comb attachment may spring off the blade. We recommend using a #30 or #10 blade under the comb attachment. If the attachment does come off the blade and you inadvertently continue trimming, you will remove all the coat down to the skin. The reason a #30 or #10 is used with a comb attachment is because it is a fine blade that gives a nice finish to the coat and does not add any notable length to the finish, being only 0.5 mm in depth.

Wool and wool mixed coats in particular, or any coat that you will be using a comb attachment on to create a nice finish, needs to be fluff dried. The coat should be standing up on end, as fluffy and straight as possible, to allow as much hair as possible to pass through the blade. The coat must not be at all damp.

If you encounter mats and tangles in isolation within the coat that will not brush out, they must be removed by clipping out with a body blade. We recommend a 7F blade for this purpose, which trims the coat to 3.5 mm and reduces the chance of irritation to the skin. Under no circumstances should you leave mats, tangles, and knots in a dog's coat. If you cannot remove them by brushing and they are covering large areas of your dog's coat, you may need to consider carefully removing the affected areas with a 7F blade.

Professional groomers have specialised equipment and scissors that can be used to remove isolated areas of the matted coat. We do not recommend their use by anyone who has not undergone basic training.

### **Recommended Electric Clippers**

Wahl Power-Grip Mains Clipper

Heiniger Saphir Cordless Clipper

Wahl Moser Max 45

[www.redcape.co.uk](http://www.redcape.co.uk)

## **FINE OR SURGICAL BLADES**

Any blade with two numbers is a fine or surgical blade. These are for areas on the dog that require extremely short hygiene trims and would never be used on the body of any breed.

## **Size 30**

Very fine for trimming poodle feet and faces and terriers ears (not WHW or Cairn) used under comb attachments.

## **Size 15**

Poodle face and tail, Terrier ears.

## **Size 10**

For the hygiene areas.

Use with caution. May cause clipper rash in dogs with sensitive skin. Use a 7F if at all unsure.



## **Body Blades** (F denotes a Finishing Blade)

### **Size 7F**

Spaniels, Schnauzers, and Long Legged Terriers: reversed for Cocker Spaniel Heads and Long Legged Terriers

## Size 5F

Used on the bodies of Poodles and West Highland White Terriers.

## Size 4F & 3F

Used for longer trims if you don't want the coat too short.



Avoid clipping the hair covering the skin around the testicles of intact males with a hygiene blade to reduce sensitivity (blade rash). Only clip if necessary.

Never trim along, up, or down the edges of thin areas of skin, e.g., ears (Schnauzer, Long-Legged Terrier, or WHW). The skin may be thin enough to fit between the teeth on the blade and could cause serious harm. The area of skin in the tuck-up (the skin that stretched from the tummy to just below the flank and above the rear knee joint) When trimming the edges of thin skin, run the blade flat over the

edge so you do not run the risk of catching skin in the clipper blade.



## CLIPPERS AND TRIMMERS

Clippers are larger than trimmers and are compatible with a variety of snap-on blades.

Trimmers tend to be smaller and are fixed with a short blade for detail work or an adjustable blade for short detail work.

The adjustable type is often supplied with clip-on comb attachments, but they are generally for lighter work and are not suitable for clipping through a thick or matted coat.



### ***TIP***

Generally speaking, for most breeds and coat types, always clip in the direction of coat growth, not against it.

## **COMB ATTACHMENTS**

Stainless steel comb attachments will glide through a well-prepared coat. Best used in conjunction with a No. 30, it can also fit 15 or 10 blades.

Sizes range from 3 mm to 25 mm.

**TIP**

The comb attachment is attached at the base of the blade and then pushed up and over the tip of the blade. Springs keep the attachment in place. Always switch your clippers on and off and listen for normal sounds. If the attachment is wrongly placed on the blade, you will have already turned the clipper off and possibly saved your blade from serious damage. Realign the attachment, repeat, and listen for normal sound. Check the comb regularly for trapped hair.



Wahl Competition Comb Attachments (to fit a snap-on blade)

# SCISSORS

There are three types of scissors most frequently used for styling or finishing.

## **7- to 10-inch Straight Scissors**

A longer scissor is generally used on medium or large dogs for neat finishes and straight lines, but can also be used to create shape and curves.

## **4 to 5-inch Foot or Detail Scissors**

Used for small tasks where detail and control are required. To shape around feet and ears.

## **Thinning or Blending Scissors**

Ideal for soft edges, thinning out the heavy coat to reduce weight and bulk, and great for blending away lines between short and longer areas of coat, e.g., skirt lines.

Practise holding a pair of grooming scissors and using only your thumb to drive the blade without moving your fingers. Resting your ring finger on the table to stabilise your fingers while only moving your thumb is a good exercise to practise. Maintenance is very important. Adjust the tension screw so that when held by the finger ring, the scissor shaft does not fall open, but equally, when using your scissors,

you shouldn't feel any resistance. Clean and oil the scissors after use, and never drop your scissors or use them for any purpose other than cutting clean dog hair. They will need sharpening by a reputable specialist when they become blunt. It's a good idea to keep a spare pair on hand for when your scissors are being sharpened.

If you are left-handed, it is possible to buy 'lefties'. To make sure you have the correct pair for you, the tension screw will be facing you when holding the scissor correctly. Scissors for use in either hand will have a finger rest on both finger rings.

Scissoring is a technique that should ideally be taught by a grooming tutor. Grooming scissors are very sharp, and great caution should be exercised while working with your dog.

## **SCISSORING EYES, FACE & BROW**

If you're experienced or confident enough to scissor the corners of the eyes, please do so with caution.

A short comb attachment, 3 mm, can be used to trim long hair from the corner of the eye in the general direction of the nose to reduce overgrowth, but

make sure the tips of the comb guard do not catch the lower eyelid.

Before scissoring with small detail scissors or, safer still, thinning scissors or blunt-ended safety scissors, ensure any hardened matter or eye secretions are cleared away using a fine comb and or eye cleaner.

**The tip of scissors should always be pointing away from the eye.** Up between the eyes or down towards the mouth, using the middle of the scissor to keep the tip away from the eye. Especially when using pointed detail scissors.

Trim the hair to the corner of the eye this way, and do not scissor too close to the skin.

If you have a clipper with comb attachments, the head, brow, cheeks, and face can be clipped down to your preferred length.

Remember to always backcomb or lift the coat up first with a comb or brush clipping with a comb attachment.

Follow the lay and direction of coat growth, and make sure the hair is clean, dry, and free from any knots or tangles before starting to clip.

When trimming under the jaw, clip from the bottom lip towards the throat.

The sides of the face can then be combed down and the ends tidied up with scissors, in a half-circle towards the ear if you wish.

**Ensure the tongue is out of the way at all times.  
Take this area slowly and carefully.**

The brow can be combed forward over the eyes, and using thinning scissors, trim a half-circle from the corner of one eye to the other to the desired length. Repeat by combing the hair forward again and scissoring along the same line until the brow is neat and tidy.

The ears can also be trimmed in a half-circle. Make sure the hair on the ear is completely brushed out, and then comb down to the ends, inside and out. With your palm on the inside of the ear and your thumb on the outside, slide your hand down until you feel the end of the ear (the ear leather). Trim the underside of the ear in a half-circle, protecting the ear leather with your hand and thumb to make sure you are not scissoring too close to the skin.

Brushing and condition are more important than length. The corners of the eyes, however, are

considered a hygiene area and should, if possible, be kept short and clean.

Keep hair out of the ear canal by using a thumb and finger to pinch the hair out without pulling too much. Any loose hair should come out easily. If hair does need removing, pinch the hair out gently, little by little. Follow with a soothing ear cleaner and cotton wool.

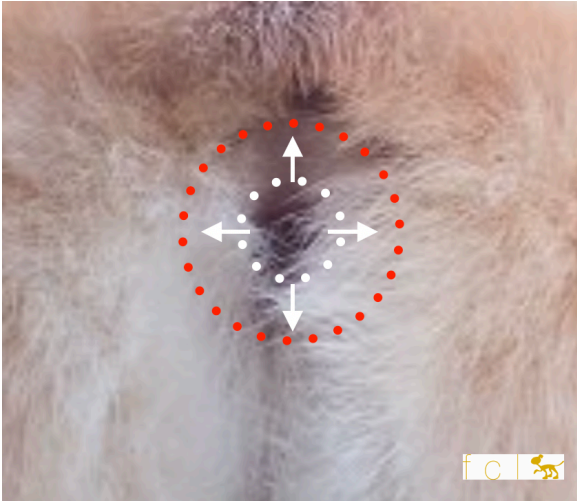


# TRIMMING BOTTOMS (ANUS)

The hair overlapping the anus can become overgrown, collect faecal material, or become knotty if not brushed in longer-haired breeds.

This area may need to be clipped from time to time to keep the area hygienic and easier to clean. The image below indicates the area to clip and the direction. Only the hair covering the anus should be clipped unless matted.

The inner white circle is where to start clipping, and the red circle is where to stop. The arrows indicate the general direction. Be careful not to come into contact with the delicate skin in this area. We recommend using a short body blade, e.g., 7F (3.5 mm), to avoid irritation here and in other hygiene areas. The area outside the red line is considered part of the leg trim and should be trimmed using a comb attachment and/or scissors to suit the needs and requirements of your breed. Clean the area with a diluted shampoo solution, rinse thoroughly, and gently pat it dry. If after removing hardened material the areas look red, medicated talc may help reduce soreness. If in doubt, see your vet.



## TRIMMING PAWS

By paws, we mean the hair that grows over the pads on the underside of the feet and between the toes. Use a hygiene blade, e.g., #10, to skim over the pads to remove hair so that you can see all the pads. Hair that grows over the pads reduces grip and may result in your dog slipping on smooth surfaces or grass.

Hard mats can form between the toes and should be removed, but this may not be easy for the novice. Seek the help of your vet while we are closed.

Don't use scissors between the toes unless you have been trained.



### Quick recap

Just do your best! Try to follow a routine so that you are confident in what you are doing and be patient. Dogs can pick up on your stress, so make sure you are starting the routine in a calm and relaxed frame of mind.

Problems like mats and tangles can develop surprisingly quickly without regular grooming and

are not always easy to see. Don't wait until it's too late. Brushing out mats and tangles or felted coat is painful for your dog and may lead to skin problems. All breeds with a thick coat, including all poodle mixes, Poodles, Bichon, Shih Tzu, Lhasa Apso, Pomeranian, Akita, Chow, Spaniels, Border Collies, Bernese Mountain Dog, Pyrenean Mountain Dog and Schnauzers need brushing frequently if not daily.

Check your dog's nails regularly. Overgrown or in-growing nails can cause pain and stress. When dogs are uncomfortable they demonstrate it with uncooperative or unwanted behaviour.

Know when your dog is trying to tell you they are stressed or anxious. Look out for yawning, trembling, excessive licking, panting and drooling.

If your dog is unlikely to stand still for long or becomes stressed in any way, groom him little and often and always in a safe, calm space, not on slippery surfaces.

If you cut your own dog's nails and they are stressed, just trim a few at a time when you can. Remember the happy yes when things are going well and acclimatise your dog slowly to stressful situations. Give tasty treats to help associate the things they don't like with a positive experience. Avoid the word no." Be kind and patient, reward good behaviour, ignore the bad, and eventually your dog will become accustomed to being handled

correctly and being groomed. Don't rush; this can cause stress to you and your dog.

Select good-quality grooming equipment that is suitable for your dog's coat type. If you are not sure, ask us; we know your dog's coat type inside and out.

Brush and comb effectively, from the skin out. Don't surface brush, and check every inch with a comb. This is especially important before bathing.

The wrong shampoo can irritate and exacerbate skin problems. Choose professional-quality shampoos and avoid those with perfumes.

Bathing too often or unnecessarily with an inappropriate shampoo will strip the coat of its natural oils. This can cause skin and temperature regulation issues.

Bathe your dog in a warm place when it's cold so that your dog's body temperature does not drop too quickly, and always towel dry thoroughly before using a dryer. Rinse well to get all the shampoo out.

Use dryers, especially human dryers, with caution. The noise is higher pitched than groomers dryers and can be very stressful for some dogs. There is also a risk of overheating with hair dryers. It's okay to allow your dog's coat to dry at room temperature, then brush through.

If you have to clip your dog's coat, go slowly and always follow the direction of coat growth.

## USEFUL EQUIPMENT

A folding grooming table for small to medium-sized dogs is a really useful piece of home grooming equipment. It will allow you to elevate your pet to gain access to harder-to-reach areas while brushing and drying, keeping your dog safely restrained.



Thank you for taking the time to read our guide, and we hope you have picked up some useful tips that will help make grooming an enjoyable experience for you and your dog.

All our love and best wishes

Martin and Lee

## **GROOMING TRAINING**

Begin with our Day Taster to understand the real world of dog grooming. This will assist you in determining whether dog grooming meets your expectations. After completing our Day Taster, you would enrol in our in-house training course to gain experience and confidence before proceeding to formal qualifications.

Contact us to reserve a place on a Day Taster and to learn more about how flexible training can benefit you.

<https://furstclasslounge.co.uk/grooming-training-centre/>



## **Step 1**

### Day Taster

Dive right in and learn more about the grooming industry. This one-day course can help you learn how to groom your dog, a specific breed, or decide if professional grooming suits you.



## **Step 2**

### In-House Grooming Course

For those looking to complete a comprehensive dog grooming course without formal qualifications or assessments. This course precedes formal training and focuses on hands-on training to gain experience and confidence in grooming and preparation techniques.



### **Step 3**

AIM LEVEL 3 Certificate in Dog Grooming (Beginners Course)

Formally known as Open College Network West Midlands



### **Step 4**

AIM LEVEL 3 Dog Grooming Diploma (Experienced Course)

Formally known as Open College Network West Midlands