



Fear Free Grooming: How You Can Help Out at Home

The grooming salon can be a source of stress for some pets due to the procedures we have to accomplish. Fortunately, there are a few simple steps you can take at home to help your dog feel more relaxed when in the salon.

Brushing

Set your dog up for success by keeping them tangle free! When left unbrushed your pet's fur can turn into a matted mess very quickly. Here are a few tips to get started with at-home brushing.

1. Use the right tools
 - 🐾 You'll want to use a slicker brush that is medium in firmness
 - 🐾 Don't forget a comb!
2. Introduce your dog to the brush and comb. Let them sniff the equipment and give them treats for showing interest.
3. Start with a mat-free dog. Brushing out tangles can be extremely painful and you can cause damage to their skin. Have your Fear Free groomer get those tangles out for you.
4. Don't press too hard with your brush.

Caution: If your dog has shown aggression with handling or significant fear or avoidance, or if you are not comfortable with being able to read your dog's body language, please contact a Fear Free Certified professional, rather than attempt these exercises.

5. Start brushing in an area that is comfortable for your dog such as the top of their back or chest. After one stroke with the brush or comb give your dog a tasty treat. If the dog is comfortable with being brushed while eating, you can work up to having the dog continuously lick food as you brush them. Use a slow feeder smeared with peanut butter, squeezable cheese, canned dog food, or another delicious spreadable treat.

Watch for the dog moving away from the brush, eating more quickly or more slowly, or stopping eating (freezing).

6. When your dog is comfortable with one area, gradually move to other areas such as behind the ears, legs, and thighs.

7. Give your dog lots of praise and treats for allowing brushing!

8. Once your dog is comfortable being brushed and combed you should focus on proper brushing technique. Line brushing is a very effective way to ensure you are brushing through all the layers of your dog's fur.

🐾 Work on one small section of fur at a time.

🐾 Pull a section of your dog's hair back with one hand until you see their skin. As you are holding the fur back with one hand, brush forward a small section of fur, releasing small amounts of fur as you brush. Once you have brushed through the section of fur, run your comb through to make sure there are no tangles.

🐾 If you run into a tangle with your comb, switch back to your brush pull the hair back, and repeat the step above.

🐾 Line brush your dog all over their head and body. Don't forget to run your comb through each section as you go. You do not need to brush areas where the fur is short such as the groin and for some breeds, the muzzle or front of the legs.

🐾 If your dog is uncomfortable with you brushing a spot on their body, slow down and help your dog get used to the sensation of being touched and lightly brushed in that area.

9. Areas to pay special attention to that commonly get matted are: behind the ears, tail, legs and armpits.

10. Brushing should be a relaxing and fun experience for your dog! If your dog is showing signs of fear, anxiety or stress, ask your Fear Free certified groomer for assistance.



Bathing

The grooming process starts with a squeaky-clean dog. Bathing can be stressful for some dogs. Here are some simple things you can do at home to help your dog feel more relaxed with the bathing experience.

1. Make sure you provide your dog a non-slip surface in the bathtub or shower, to help them feel more secure and less apt to slip.
2. Make the tub a fun place! Start with the water off and encourage your dog to explore by placing tasty treats and fun toys inside the tub.
3. Once your dog is comfortable going in and out of the tub, provide them with a spreadable treat such as xylitol-free peanut butter or spray cheese on a silicone suction cup mat or simply by spreading it on the side of the tub walls.
4. Turn the water on a warm temperature. Gradually run the water over the dog's body. Give your dog lots of praise and encouragement.
5. If you are shampooing your dog, make sure you are using a dog specific shampoo and avoid getting any suds in their eyes. It's especially important that you rinse them very thoroughly.
6. If your dog is showing any signs of fear, anxiety or stress, ask your Fear Free certified groomer for assistance.

Paw Handling

During your dog's groom, they will have their paws and legs touched numerous times. Here are some things you can do at home to help your dog become very comfortable with paw handling.

1. Start by petting your dog in a neutral location such as their chest or shoulder.
2. Gradually glide your hand over to their front leg. Give them a treat when you touch their leg.
3. Gradually glide your hand down their leg and work up to touching their paw. As soon as you touch their paw, give them a treat.
4. Pick up your dog's paw and hold it in your hand for 2 seconds, then give them a treat.
5. Gradually increase the amount of time you are holding your dog's paw before you give them a treat.
6. Try not to get to the point where your dog attempts to pull their paw away: if they do, you have progressed too quickly, so back up a step to farther up their leg. If they are becoming nervous or stressed ask your Fear Free certified groomer for assistance.
7. Repeat the above steps with all the dog's legs/paws. Some dogs might be ticklish or more sensitive on their feet. Keep sessions short – just a few repetitions at a time – then take a break.



Clippers

The sound and sensation of clippers can be scary for some pets. Here are a few simple things you can do at home to help acclimate your pet.

1. The Sound

- 🐾 If you do not have pet clippers at home, you can use human clippers or even an electric toothbrush.
- 🐾 Turn the clippers on and give your dog a tasty treat or feed them a meal.
- 🐾 Once they are comfortable with the sound, slowly move the item around (not touching the dog with it) to simulate the sound of clippers in motion. Give your dog a tasty treat.

2. The Sensation

- 🐾 With the clippers or toothbrush turned off, use the non-cutting or vibrating end and touch the object to your dog in an area they are comfortable with such as their side or chest, then feed your dog a treat.
- 🐾 Turn the clippers or toothbrush on away from your dog, and touch it to your dog. Feed them a treat.
- 🐾 Gradually work up to petting your dog all over their body with the item. Feed them treats for being calm.
- 🐾 Give your dog lots of praise and encouragement!

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Helping pets live happy, healthy, full lives

Table Manners

Being still on the grooming table can be challenging for lots of dogs. Help set a new puppy up for success by frequently bringing them to the pet spaw at an early age to practice remaining calm on the grooming table.

