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Dog Grooming

Grooming a dog is not a straightforward procedure. The steps in the process will depend on a number of variables including size, coat type, condition of the dog, and temperament of the dog. By nature some dogs such as those with double coats and those with particularly long coats involve more grooming than short haired dogs with single coats. However, most of the basic tips included in this article will apply to most dogs. Although grooming can be a difficult and time-consuming process, it is necessary because poor grooming can lead to medical problems such as infections.

Assemble all supplies. Before any grooming attempt, owners should ensure they have all necessary grooming items such as brushes, cleansers, trimmers, clippers or any other tools. Dogs will interpret an owner looking for misplaced supplies during the grooming session to be a signal to the end of the session and may take off and run before the owner returns.

Thoroughly brush the dog. It is important to brush the dog before bathing the dog because water will cause mats in the fur to shrink and become even more difficult to remove. Brushing will also remove loose fur, making the bathing process easier.

Grooming should also be done before bathing. This is because wet fur which has been cut will appear different as it dries. This can be avoided by trimming the fur while it is dry. Trimming the fur can be based on function or fashion. Some owners trim their dogs according to certain style guidelines and accepted cuts for the breed while others trim the fur for functional reasons such as improved vision.

Clean the eyes. The eyes should be cleaned carefully to gently remove any discharge accumulating in the corner of the eye. A damp towel can be used to gently remove this discharge. Lightly colored breeds may require additional care if the discharge has stained the fur near the eyes.

Clean the ears. The ears should be cleaned regularly to avoid infections. Cleaning involves applying a small amount of commercially available cleaning solution and using a cotton ball to swab the remaining solution out along with any dirt or wax which has accumulated. Dogs with pendant ears (such as the Labrador Retriever) are more susceptible to ear infections than dogs with upright or prick ears (such as the German Shepherd) because the pendant ears can prevent the water in the ears from drying out quickly after a dog has been in the water. This moist environment is ideal for bacteria to grow.

Clean the teeth. Always use toothpaste designed specifically for dogs when cleaning their teeth because the dogs ingest the toothpaste. In brushing your dog's teeth, use brushes or other devices designed for the dental care of dogs to gently rub the teeth. Dental care can be achieved through regular brushings, administering raw bones or chew toys designed to remove plaque, and regular cleanings by a veterinarian.

Trim the nails. The nails should be trimmed regularly to avoid overgrowth which can make walking difficult. In trimming the nails, remove only a small portion of the end of the nail at a time, being careful to avoid the quick growing beneath the nail. In light colored nails the quick is visible as a pink mass beneath the surface of the nail. The quick is not distinguishable in dogs with dark colored nails. To avoid the quick, trim the nails in small increments until an oval which is pink or gray begins to appear. If you accidentally cut the quick it will be painful for the dog and cause bleeding. Flour is a household ingredient which can stop the bleeding quickly.

Bathe the dog. To bathe a dog, place him in the tub gently and secure him if necessary. Some dogs are tolerant of bathing and require only minimal restraint while others are more nervous and may require additional restraint methods. Wet the dog thoroughly and then apply a [shampoo](#) specifically for dogs. It is also important to select a shampoo which is recommended for your dog's coat type. After applying the soap, work it in gently and then rinse the soap off the dog completely. Be sure to rinse thoroughly as soap left on the skin can dry the skin out and result in excessive itching.

Dry the dog. This is a matter of personal preference. Some owners prefer to let the fur dry naturally while others towel dry first and then use a blow dryer to completely dry the fur. Hair which is dried properly may look more appealing after the bathing session but unless it is a particularly cold day, the dog will not be harmed if the fur is allowed to air dry.

