

# DIY Grooming Guide



**No More  
Professional Grooming!**

**EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW  
ABOUT GROOMING YOUR PET AT HOME!**



**1** WHY SHOULD YOU BE GROOMING YOUR PETS



**7** WHY BRUSHING YOUR PET IS IMPORTANT



**2** BENEFITS OF PET GROOMING: GOOD FOR PETS AND GREAT FOR PET OWNERS TOO



**8** BATHING YOUR PET HASSLE-FREE



**3** THE ESSENTIALS OF A GROOMING SESSION



**9** HOW TO GROOM A DOG / CAT USING SCISSORS



**4** BREED SPECIFIC GROOMING REQUIREMENTS



**10** WHAT TO DO AFTER GROOMING A DOG / CAT



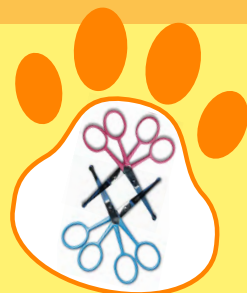
**5** THE RIGHT GROOMING TOOLS FOR YOUR PET



**11** SOME MORE GROOMING TIPS AND TRICKS



**6** GETTING YOUR PET READY FOR THE GROOMING SESSION



**12** KEEPING YOUR GROOMING TOOLS IN TOP SHAPE



# Preface

## **Why Do You Need This Pet Grooming Guide?**

Pet owners are willing to go out of their way to keep their furry pals healthy and happy. So, it comes as no surprise that pet grooming is a massive \$5.2 billion industry (2015 sales in USA)! We are talking about 65% of households owning one pet with 42% of households owning more than one pet. That equates to around 79 million homes across the country that have one or more pets!




On an average, pet owners are spending \$36 for every trip their pooch takes to the salon. Surprisingly, mobile grooming centers charge more at \$51 for similar services. Depending on the size and the breed of the pet and the animal's specific grooming requirements, the spending can quickly multiply. And, this is what brings us to the importance and feasibility of home grooming!

Sure, it is convenient to leave your pet at the groomers while you grab a latte or go about your day and most pet grooming establishments do offer the best pampering that money can buy. However, at the end of the day, your pet is still just a money making tool for them. So, the personal touch will undoubtedly be lacking, regardless of how much moolah you are willing to spend.



Add to this the fact that most pet groomers see 15-17 clients per day, and it is easy to understand that in the midst of the pandemonium, mishaps can occur, like the one in which a dog died after being left in the drying cage for too long. Of course, we are not judging all pet grooming establishments based on one incident, but the truth of the matter is that nobody can give your pet the TLC and the personalized attention that you can.

It also goes without saying that your pooch or kitten will simply love the extra time he/she gets to spend with you. So, why don't more pet owners consider home grooming? Three reasons:

-  No time
-  No tools
-  No experience/knowhow

## Time

The time constraint can easily be remedied. You don't have to set aside a fixed time each day for pet grooming. Instead, simply include a few minutes of grooming in your daily interactions with your pet and you will have less workload at the end of the week or month.

## Tools

As far as the tools go, there are a mind boggling number of options available and not all of these are suited for every type and breed of animal. Actually, a lot of pet owners harbor the misconception that buying grooming tools would cost them a small fortune. Yes, it would if you intend to start your very own pet grooming business.

However, if you are dealing with 1, 2 or 3 of your own animals, you only need the basics, which can be bought for less than what you would spend on professional grooming for a month; not to mention that quality tools will be yours to use and keep for years.

## Experience/Knowhow

Finally, let us talk about the knowhow. Will it take patience and effort? Yes, but apart from the savings, you will also have one happy pet on your hands if you choose home pet grooming. So, without further ado, let us embark on this exciting and fulfilling journey of learning how to home groom your pets! Here is wishing you and your pet babies: Happy Paws and Wagging Tails all along the way!





# Chapter 1

## Why should you be grooming your pet?


If you are a first time pet owner, you are bound to have this question. After all, the phrase "pet grooming" often conjures up images of poodles with over the top hairstyles and manicured paws. Does your outdoorsy pet really need all of that. In one word the answer is, "no".

However, it would be a mistake to assume that pet grooming is only about hairstyles, bows and bandanas. Even if you were to leave all the bells and whistles out of the picture, pet grooming would still be required to keep your furry pal and you happy.

Yes, you heard that right, pet grooming is not only essential to keep the pooch happy but also crucial for the comfort and convenience of the pooch's owner. Experienced pet owners will quickly point out that grooming is not about vanity.

If you ignore the grooming needs of your animal, you will have to contend with obnoxious bad breath, nails that are long enough to leave scratch marks all over the leather sofa and car seats and even rip apart expensive rugs and carpets.





Of course, the most harrowing and horrible problem attributed to the lack of grooming is that of shedding. You will discover that regular cleaning and vacuuming will prove no match to your pet's ability to leave a layer of his/her coat on your bed, couch, curtains and all over your house. But, these are just problems from the perspective of the pet owner.

When you consider the issues that crop up due to the lack of grooming from the perspective of your pet, things get truly alarming. In fact, before you know it, you may be dealing with a dangerous or even fatal health problem that could have easily been avoided if you were to have spotted it early on.

A lot of pet owners also wonder why the need for grooming when their furry babies have evolved from ancestors who roamed and survived in the wilderness, without a single grooming session. Well, the first answer to this question is that wild dogs and cats were seldom invited inside the house, so the problems encountered by modern day pet owners were unheard of. After all, nobody would have an issue with a dog/cat shedding all over a rock or the grasslands.

The second point to consider is that selective breeding has led to the introduction of specific physical traits, including certain coat types and hair length. While this has certainly produced aesthetically pleasing results, it has also created special grooming needs. Finally, with advancements in veterinarian science, pets are living longer and fuller lives. This means that without proper care and grooming, things can quickly get unmanageable for pets as well as pet owners.

As a matter of fact, given the importance of grooming for the health of animals, most experienced pet breeders will start introducing puppies and kittens to short grooming sessions when they are 3 to 3.5 Weeks old. This gets the animal habituated to being handled even before he finds his way to his permanent abode.

If you have adopted or bought a pet, the right time to start grooming would be now. The sooner you start, the easier it will be to win over the confidence of your pet and to build a bond with the animal.

Remember, grooming is essential for all pets, regardless of their breed and the length of their coat. Of course, the individual grooming needs of animals vary; for example, a long haired dog or one with a double coat would need more frequent grooming sessions than a short haired dog; ditto for long haired cats.

However, the important thing to understand is that you simply cannot do away with grooming altogether. Still not convinced about the necessity of pet grooming? Read chapter 2 to find out why pet grooming is an integral part of responsible pet ownership.





## Chapter 2

# Benefits of pet grooming! Good for pets and great for pet owners too!

The simplest way to explain this is to create a mental image for you - imagine going without a shower for about a month, your body reeking of the pungent stench of perspiration and dirt, your hair matted to your scalp, infested with lice, your clothes dirty and stinky and you continue to add more parasites and dirt to your body with regular jaunts outside.

Would you feel energetic under the circumstances? Will you feel like socializing, going out or hanging out with your friends? "No," you say? Well, your pet feels the same way when you let it go without grooming for weeks and months.



In fact, it would be safe to say that pet grooming transcends the bounds of mere cleanliness; it is not just about keeping your animal looking good and smelling good. Grooming is essential for the maintenance of your pet's physical health and good behavior.

## The top 10 benefits of pet grooming are

### 1. Well maintained coat

Regular brushing helps to remove dead hair, skin cells, dirt and dandruff from the coat. It also spurs the secretion of natural skin oils and helps to spread it all over the coat, keeping the fur healthy and shiny. Moreover, with grooming you can prevent hair tangles and mats and ensure that the overgrown coat does not impede the normal movement of the animal.

### 2. Prevents skin issues

Grooming is also a fabulous way to keep skin ailments at bay, which are best dealt with sooner than later. Whether the cause of itchy skin can be traced to parasites like ticks and fleas or skin conditions like mange, when you groom your pet, you will be able to keep an eye out for these problems and get them treated at the earliest.

### 3. Spot abnormalities

If you have a pet with dense fur, the best time to spot abnormalities is during a grooming session; you will easily find wounds, pus filled boils and even tumors that may be lurking underneath all that hair.

### 4. Good for eye care

Dogs with long coats need to have the hair around their eyes trimmed. Overgrown fur around the eyes causes vision problems and itching. When your pet uses his nails to scratch, this can easily lead to wounds and eye infections.

### 5. Ward off ear issues

In some breeds, the hair grows out of the ear canal or very close to it and it can quickly turn into a harboring ground for ear mites, as the natural waxy





secretion gets trapped in the hair, leading to mats. In fact, you may not even realize that your pet is in the throes of an ear infection till the discharge of pus leads to a foul smell. On the other hand, with regular pet grooming you will be able to prevent ear infections and catch them in time.

## **6. Reduce the risk of deformities in young animals**

Hair matting can create added weight on the body of the animal and quickly turn into a painful condition that makes it uncomfortable for a young pup or kitten to move. To prevent the pain, the animal starts to compensate by making unnatural strides, which can lead to lifelong deformities. However, regular grooming will help to prevent the formation of mats, nipping the issue in the bud.

## **7. Prevent behavioral problems**

Depending on the breed of the animal, the mats in long hair can run deep enough to create circulatory issues. The problem can get so serious that even a gentle pat can be very painful for the animal. Your pet may start shunning your loving overtures and face constant anxiety and depression at the thought of the pain. This can have long standing behavioral repercussions such as aggression or extreme shyness. However, timely grooming interventions can eliminate these problems.

## **8. Prevent the nails from turning into a hindrance**

Grooming is not only about maintaining the animal's coat; it also includes ear, nail and dental care. Overgrown nails can make it hard for the animal to walk and if not corrected in time the nails can turn back and pierce the paw pads, causing severe infection. Overgrown nails are also responsible for causing walking disfigurement. Again, this is an issue that can be prevented with timely grooming.

## **9. Weather proofing your animal**

If you have a pet with a double coat, regular brushing is the best way to prevent extra coating, which can lead to heat stress. While shaving the animal off will leave the pet vulnerable to weather elements, grooming is the optimal solution. Regular combing and trimming also helps to remove grass seeds which cause abscesses, scratching, wounds and infections











## 10. Maintain dental health

The buildup of tartar and plaque can not only cause bad breath in pets but also lead to teeth loss and deadly infections. Dental issues are very painful and will reduce the pet's appetite while the infection can damage internal organs such as the kidneys and the liver. All of these health concerns can be avoided with regular teeth brushing.

### Benefits of pet grooming for humans

Apart from the fact that you will find it easier to cuddle and play with a pet that is clean and smells good, there are also several other advantages of regular pet grooming such as:

-  It will be easier to find a boarding facility for a well-groomed animal.
-  Other pet owners will not have a problem letting their furry pals hang out with your animal.
-  Your pet will be well behaved and happier with regular grooming.
-  You will reduce the risk of transmittable ailments like lyme disease, which are caused due to tick bites.
-  You will spend less on veterinarian bills as health concerns will be caught early on.
-  Vet checks will get easier because your animal will be more comfortable as he is used to being handled.
-  With frequent grooming, you will be able to make your pet friendlier and more sociable as grooming is a positive experience for the animal.
-  Shedding will be considerably reduced with regular grooming.

If you are all set to try your hand at pet grooming, this ebook has all the information you will need. However, if you are not comfortable with the idea of handling a new pup or kitten, particularly the latter since the fear of being clawed does run deep, a first time session with a professional groomer will instill confidence in you and the animal. Plus, it will, turn out to be a learning experience, as long as you are around to see what is being done and how it is done.



Do not shy away from asking questions about the tools that are being used and how they help. Also, notice how the professionals handle the animal. You will find that a professional grooming salon will have several tables to tether the animal. This would certainly be a worthy investment. However, if you want to try your hand at a few grooming sessions before you make the purchase, any old table that is waist high and can be placed in the garage will do. The point of the exercise is to avoid you getting a sore lower back.





# Chapter 3

## **The essentials of a grooming session!**

Pet grooming can be divided into two categories; sessions that you undertake daily or once every few days and those that involve a more long drawn out process. The lengthy grooming sessions will be needed once every month or few months. As far as every day grooming goes, a round of brushing should be more than enough to prevent coat and skin issues.




If you have a short haired pet, brushing the animal once every few days or once a week will suffice. However, given the longer duration in between each grooming session, it would be best to pay attention to the other grooming needs of the animal such as nail trimming, ear and eye cleaning. Generally, a grooming session should include the following:



## Top 7 essential elements of a grooming session






### No. 1 Brushing

You simply cannot downplay the importance of regular brushing regardless of the coat type. Undoubtedly, the brushing needs of each animal will be different, but the constant factor is that brushing makes it easier to keep coat and skin issues away. Plus, it is a surefire way to deal with shedding. Although, you will find breed specific grooming information in chapter 4, here is a brief look at what is needed:

-  For long haired dogs and cats, you will need to brush the coat everyday to prevent tangles and mats.
-  For medium-haired breeds, a weekly or biweekly (twice a week) brushing session is a must.
-  For short haired felines and canines, you can work with weekly brushing sessions or you can let 1-3 weeks go between two grooming sessions.

### No. 2 Bathing

Next to brushing, bathing is the most important part of maintaining pet health and hygiene. As far as the frequency goes, a variety of factors have to be considered. For instance:

-  Long haired animals will have to be bathed more often than short haired pets because bathing is required before hair clipping to get the dirt and debris out of the fur.
-  A dog that spends more time outdoors, even if it is in an enclosed yard, will need to be bathed more often than a pooch that is happy with 2-3 walks on a leash.
-  Overall, dogs need to be bathed more frequently than cats who are champs at self-grooming.
-  If the animal has a skin condition, weekly baths will be needed
-  Bathing with warm water can be very soothing for older animals, including cats and those that suffer from joint and bone related issues



All in all, a bath every month for dogs and once every 3-4 months for cats should be adequate. However, if you would like to give your pooch a good wash down once every week, there is no harm in doing so. In fact, there are pet owners who are only too happy to call their dog or cat into the bathroom every second day for a quick bath.

### **No. 3 Hair trimming/cutting**

Cats with long hair and canines with continuously growing hair like shih tzus and poodles will need trimming every 2-6 weeks, depending on the style you prefer and hair growth. If you have opted for a simple cut, you won't have too much trouble clipping the animal's hair at home.

Of course, it can be just as easy to maintain a hair style after a professional grooming session, as long as you regularly take off the new growth. For show dogs, you may need to avail professional services and buy a breed specific pet hair styling guide. You will also find a lot of information along with pictures on the internet that will help you to maintain a consistent look.

### **No. 4 Ear care**

Unless your dog has a chronic ear disease, you can leave this step out till after the bathing session. However, watch out for any kind of odor as this is a tell-tale sign of ear infection. Typically, dogs with floppy ears and long hair around and inside the ear will need routine ear cleaning.

If you are not dealing with an infection that needs to be tackled with special cleaning products and medication, a regular canine ear cleaner for the dog and feline ear cleaner for the cat should be enough.

### **No. 5 Eye care**

Once again, pooches and felines with flowing locks of hair will need more care around the eye area. You will need to trim the hair every week to keep them away from the field of vision. Also, you will have to wipe the eyes daily to prevent tear stains. Watch closely for any discharge or excessive scratching, which may be signs of trouble.



## No. 6 Nail trimming

One aspect of pet grooming that is detested by cats, dogs and their owners alike is nail trimming. In fact, most dogs and cats loathe the idea of having their paws handled, let alone allowing a trimmer close to their nails. This means that you will have to get the animal used to nail trimming as early as you can. The most important part is to get the animal to sit still through the process.

Dog and cat owners are often uncomfortable with the idea of nail trimming because the slightest error can lead to profuse bleeding and they fear hurting their pets. Animals will quickly develop an aversion to nail trimming once they experience pain. So, this is not a task that you can rush through. Usually, you will need to trim the nails of your animal once every month.

You can add or take away a week from that depending on the breed, etc. If you are apprehensive about nail trimming, you should consider rotary tools that file the nails instead of actually cutting them. While you are trimming the nails, it is also crucial to check the paw pads for lesions or wounds and clean the dirt from in between the paws. You may also need to trim the hair in this area.

## No. 7 Teeth cleaning

Dental care is another part of pet grooming that is best introduced at a young age. Again, this is a chore that is universally hated by pets and their human owner, but it is a necessary evil. Once you let the buildup of tartar get out of hands, bloody and infected gums will be quick to follow along with loose teeth. All of this can lead to mammoth veterinarian bills, to the tune of \$500-\$1000 or more.

On the other hand, a pet tooth brush and tooth paste cost less than \$10 and brushing is not at all painful. Generally, you will need to undertake dental cleaning twice a week for cats and dogs. Before you brush, it is always a good idea to lift the flap around the mouth and check the health of the gums. If you notice foul odor, bleeding or inflammation, promptly seek the advice of your veterinarian.





# Chapter 4

## **Breed specific grooming requirements**

As discussed, dogs and cats have very specific grooming requirements. In fact, how often you put the brushes and combs to use will depend on the type of coat that the animal sports. However, this is what you can generally expect:

### **8 Types of coats for dogs**

#### **Type 1 Single or smooth coat**



These breeds include boxers, italian greyhounds, dalmatians, vizslas and weimaraners. Their coats are small and short with just a stiff top or upper coat. Since there is no undercoat, once you deal with the topcoat, you are all done. So, it is no wonder that dogs with this type of coat need the minimum





amount of coat care and are the easiest to groom. They rarely need hair trimming, except for areas around a wound or if the coat is matted due to dirt that cannot be washed off.

## **Type 2 Medium coat**

A few examples of breeds with this type of coat are pugs, rottweilers, australian cattle dogs, labradors and russell terriers. The coat on these dogs grows to a predetermined length. However, they do have both an undercoat and a top coat, which means that they need to be groomed once or twice a week. In terms of hair trimming, you may only need to shorten the hair around the eyes, ears, tail and the paws.

## **Type 3 Double coat**

More hair means more effort; it really is as simple as that! Double coated breeds have a soft undercoat that provides thermal insulation and a hard upper coat with stiff guard hair. Two coats equate to more shedding, but regular grooming can help to significantly tone down this problem. Popular breeds in this category include siberian huskies, german shepherds, akitas, shiba inus and welsh corgis. Although clipping their hair is not advisable, these breeds do need trimming in certain areas of the body.

## **Type 4 Heavy coat**

If you thought two coats would be hard to handle, these breeds have three. So, you are going to be dealing with a long silky coat on top which is predisposed to tangles and mats, an undercoat that is dense and areas with short hair. Some of the breeds that are known for their heavy coats include pomeranians, rough coated collies and chow chows. They do need frequent trims all over the body.

## **Type 5 Silky coat**

The smooth coat on these animals, which is a combination of long and short hair, is a joy to touch. However, it is also quick to get tangled and matted. So, they will need regular brushing and trims. Breeds that have silky coats are irish setters, gordon setters, cocker spaniels and english springer spaniels.



## **Type 6 Long drop coat**

The name says it all; breeds with this type of coat have long hair covering the entire length and breadth of their bodies. Some of them may even have a short undercoat. In either case, the long upper coat is prone to heavy matting and tight tangles. So, you have to brush them daily and frequently trim their fur. The maltese, lhasa apso, havanese, yorkshire terrier and old english sheepdog are some of the breeds that have this type of coat.

## **Type 7 Curly coat**

This immediately brings to mind the curly riot of hair on a poodle. Like in humans, curly hair does call for extra grooming and frequent brushing and trimming to prevent tangles. If you let the coat mat, the only option would be to shave off the hair given their texture. A few breeds that have this coat type include the poodle of course, the kerry blue terrier, the bichon frise, the bedlington and the portuguese water dog.

## **Type 8 Rough or wiry coat**

Breeds like the wire-haired dachshund, the cairn terrier, the west highland terrier and the airedale terrier all have an extremely long and dense top coat, with wiry hair covering every inch of their body from the nose to the toes. They also have a soft undercoat, which is just as dense. Considering the type of coat, its density and the hair texture, these dogs need regular brushing and frequent hair trimming, albeit not all over the body.

## **Cats and their coats**

### **Short haired**

Short haired cat breeds include the siamese, russian blue, british and domestic shorthairs and the legendary sphynx. Like with dogs, they need minimal grooming. Typically, you will only need to take your grooming scissors to them when you have to expose the skin in case of a wound or allergy or if you are dealing with unnatural dirt that cannot simply be washed out, such as chewing gum or concrete.



## Long haired

Long haired cat breeds include the ever so popular persian, himalayan, ragdoll, maine coon, domestic long hair and the turkish angora. As stated above, the longer the coat, the more grooming the animal will need and this also holds true in case of cats. Like their canine pals, these cat breeds suffer from hair tangles and matting. So, they do need extra grooming and regular trimming. In fact, the longer the hair, the higher will be the shedding and of course the propensity of hair balls and vomiting.

Here is a shocking bit of information - a large persian cat can shed enough hair in just one summer to knit the sphynx a coat or two. These breeds need vigorous combing/brushing, no less than 3-4 times a week and they also need haircuts every 4-6 weeks. In fact, the hair around the eyes and ears will need to be trimmed more often than that. They also require vanity cuts in the hind quarters to prevent feces from sticking to the hair.





# Chapter 5

## The right grooming tools for your pet

Buying the wrong tools for grooming would be a waste of both time and money. At best, the wrong brushes, combs and scissors will seriously compromise the efficacy of the grooming session and make it hard for you to get through the process. At worst, you may end up with the very issues that you were trying to prevent in the first place, such as hair tangles.

Also, if you invest in quality tools, these can last you for years. So, it is advisable to choose the most appropriate tools for the job. When picking a grooming tool, you should emphasize on two factors: suitability and quality. Ensure that the brush, comb, scissors, rakes, etc. are right for the type of coat and that the product is built to last. That being said, here are the innumerable options that you will come across on your shopping spree:



## **Tool 1 The Brushes**

### **Pin brush**

These are used as a finishing tool and are close cousins of the brushes used by humans. They work best when used to finish long, curly or wiry coats that have already been detangled and for fluffing at the very end of the grooming session. Wire pin brushes are available with and without rubber points and they can be used on pets with long, wiry, curly as well as medium coats.

### **Bristle brush**

Another finishing tool, this again looks like the brushes used to tame human manes. The bristles make them ideal for spreading the natural skin oils across the animal's coat, leaving it shiny and smooth. Bristle brushes are meant for pets with short, smooth and drop coats. As a thumb rule, you will need to go for brushes with bristles that are longer and set wider apart if you are dealing with a pooch that has long hair.

### **Slicker brush**

With bristles made from fine wire, slicker brushes are used to lift hair away from the body and pull out dead hair. They are available in a range of sizes and are especially useful for detangling and de-matting, as long as the mats are not too tight. The slicker brush is a true multi-breed brush that works wonderfully on all types of coats. In fact, it can also be used to remove dead hair from the soft undercoat.

### **Curry combs**

These earned their name from their use on horses, but the serrations on the rubber pads work just as well on cats and dogs. The short rubber bristles/fingers are exceptionally potent when it comes to removing dead hair and massaging shampoo into the coat. However, a curry comb should only be used on medium and double coated breeds. With dogs that have long and silky hair, you run the risk of tangles when using the curry comb.



## Love glove

This is basically a mitt with soft and short rubber bristles on the outside. You simply put it on and run your hand over your pet's body. It can be used on cats and dogs with short and medium coats and even on the furniture when faced with a shedding problem. Because it is all plastic, it is easy to clean. The bristles, although short, do a fine job of removing loose hair. However, the love glove should only be used on short and medium coated animals.

An important thing to remember when using a brush on your pet is to start gently and take your time with the brushing. The movements should be deliberate and slow, particularly when you are dealing with tangles. Your pet should enjoy the brushing session if you want to incorporate it into your regular grooming efforts.

Even a bit of roughness or pain will cause the pet to shy away from future brushing sessions. And, that is not the reaction you are going for! What you want is for the animal to enjoy the attention and the stroking. The best way to make brushing as painless as possible is to brush the coat every day, preventing painful snarls.

## Tool 2 The Combs

You are probably wondering, why the need for combs if you already have an assortment of brushes? It is important to understand that while brushes remove loose and dead hair and even work on tangles, combs serve very specific purposes such as:

### Shedding combs





With teeth of two different lengths, shedding combs are designed to lift the upper coat and reach the soft undercoat, to remove dead hair packed into this layer.

### Metal combs

These are available in a range of sizes, teeth space gradients and colors. Generally, the spine is either round or flat and the spacing between the teeth differs from one end to the other. These combs can be used for everything from detangling the coat to finishing the grooming session



and even to free the face of debris and dirt. You will find combinations such as:

-  Medium and coarse comb: one half of the comb will have teeth that have medium spacing in between them while the other half will have greater spacing making them ideal for freeing tangles. These combs are also effective as a de-shedding tool and for fluffing medium, long and curly coated breeds.
-  Fine and coarse comb: this fine/coarse toothed comb will have closely placed teeth on one side and significant spacing on the other. It should be used after you are done running the medium/coarse comb. Fine/coarse combs are used to handle any leftover tangles and knots that may have been too small to be targeted with the medium toothed comb. After this step, your pet will be ready for hair trimming, if need be.
-  Face combs: as their name says, these combs are used to clear dead hair and dirt from the face, the neck, around the ears and from the fur on top of the head.
-  Tail combs: these usually have close spaced teeth but a longer spine that can be used to part the fur for rolling drop coats or creating top knots.

## Rotating pins

While most metal combs have static teeth, it is also possible to find those with rotating pins that make it easier to brush the animal. Because the teeth move effortlessly, there is little pulling. Above all, the spinning teeth prevent the formation of tangles and hair breaking.

## Flea combs

These have very closely spaced teeth that trap fleas and foreign matter. The tight spacing makes these combs effective against dander, dead hair, fleas, flea eggs and excrements and dirt particles.



## **Tool 3 Tools for De-Matting**

### **Rakes**

These have long, serrated blades with blunt tips that cut through the mat. Because rakes have longer teeth, they are best used when the mat has reached the undercoat as well.

### **Combs**

De-matting combs also have serrated blades for teeth. These are designed to cut through the mat and work in areas that are hard to reach. Use de-matting combs when other efforts for detangling the hair do not yield the desired results.

### **Mat-breakers/splitters**

They are used to break up large mats since it is easier to deal with smaller tangles than one large mass.

## **Tool 4 Tools to Control Shedding**

### **Carding tools**

These are tools with serrated blades on a handle. You simply have to run them through the dogs coat to remove the dead hair in the undercoat without clipping the top coat. Carding tools are meant for breeds with medium, dense and double coats but can also be used on silky coated dogs.

### **Rakes for grooming**

The pins on these rakes are long enough to reach the undercoat by digging into the top coat with the minimum use of pressure. Grooming rakes are designed to help remove the dense undercoat on dogs with medium, double and heavy fur.













## Shedding blade:

This is simply a blade with serrations on one edge and handles on both ends. It can be curved to achieve a sickle shape. You can use it curved to target small areas. When straight, you can run the serrated edge along the coat, from head to tail a few times to achieve the desired results. These blades are also called undercoat strippers as they help to remove loose and dead hair from the undercoat without too much trouble.





## Stripping knives:

These are specifically used on dogs with wiry coats and they are meant to remove hair only from the top coat, leaving the undercoat unharmed. The tines on these tools are short, so they don't reach the undercoat but they are sharp like the blades on de-matting tools. You will find stripping knives with varied teeth spacing, starting at extra fine and going up to coarse.

### Tool 5 Tools for Long Haired and Double Coated Dogs

-  Bristle brush for removing the tangles
-  Metal comb to work out the knots, even if you have a non-shedder on your hands
-  De-shedding comb
-  De-shedding blade
-  Shedding rake
-  Pin brush
-  Slicker brush
-  Friction rubber brush

#### Tools for short haired dogs

-  Bristle brush
-  Slicker brush
-  Flea comb
-  Rubber curry brush



## Tool 6 Grooming Tools for Cats

For short haired breeds, you will need a love glove, a slicker brush and a flea comb. For a long haired feline, keep a medium/coarse comb handy along with a slicker brush, an undercoat brush, a mat splitter and a flea comb. You may also want to consider investing in alternative grooming tools such as claw covers, which are caps that fit over the claws. It can be hard to get them on but they come in a range of colors. Pet wipes and sprays can also come in handy as they eliminate the need for a full blown bath.

### The Essential Tools

Apart from the combs, brushes, rakes and blades, you will also need, pet grooming scissors, both curved and straight bladed; bathing products like shampoos and conditioners, which again are breed specific as well as nail trimming tools such as clippers, grinders and styptic powder. If you intend to use hair clippers, choose durable pet clippers instead of human clippers for better results. You will also need clipper lubricants and clippercide to keep the blades clean and germ free.

Finally, don't underestimate the importance of a grooming table. After all, you do not want to end up with back pain. Also, being placed on the grooming table will eventually turn into a ritual for your pet. Over time, the animal will learn to sit still and expect the brushing and hair trimming when he is perched on top of the grooming table.





## Chapter 6


# Getting your pet ready for the grooming session

At least when it comes to grooming, all that starts well also ends well. In other words, it is imperative to get things right from the very beginning. So, the first step is to get your tools ready. It can be harrowing to manage your pet while hunting down the tools you need, as you go through the different steps of grooming.

Whether it is a cat or a dog that you are dealing with, a bit of preparation can go a long way in helping you to foster a trusting relationship with the animal. Particularly, when dealing with feline companions, it would be best not to alarm the animal by suddenly launching into a grooming session; chances are the results will be painful for both you and your cat.

Even with your dog, it is prudent to start slow and continue to build pace. If you have never tried your hand at grooming, start with brushing





and steadily build your confidence by watching professional groomers do their job every time your dog goes in for some salon time. If you are an old hand at grooming, you probably know that your pet's mindset can make all the difference in the world. So, relaxing the animal is of prime importance.

For an overenthusiastic pooch, this could mean some play time in the park to work out all the bubbling energy. Your four legged friend may find it easier to sit still and tethered when tired. With cats and dogs that are not exceptionally sprightly, spending 15-20 minutes in tender petting will do the trick.

You could also use the love glove or the curry comb at this point. Just remember to be gentle so the moves feel more like strokes than combing. Praising the animal and offering a treat at the end are effective tricks to build trust and create positive memories.

If at any time through the grooming session you find the animal showing signs of discomfort, it would be best to stop and continue later. Eventually, be it a dog, a cat or any other pet, the animal will get accustomed to being groomed and touched even in sensitive areas such as the paws, ears, near the eyes and the belly.

As far as the sequence of grooming is concerned, you should start with brushing/combing, proceed to de-shedding and de-matting, then go to bathing, followed by nail trimming, ear and eye cleaning and end with dental care. For cats, nail trimming should come before the bathing.

A lot of pet groomers recommend that you get the ears and the eyes before bathing. However, since you are bound to get some water into the ear canals when bathing the animal, at least ear care should be left for later.

When it comes to eye care, if there is significant discharge, wipe the eye area before the bath, but leave the trimming and the administration of eye drops for later. To make the animal more comfortable, cover the ear canal with cotton wool and use protective eye drops, which will prevent smarting.





# Chapter 7

## Why brushing your pet is important

We have already spoken about the benefits of regular brushing and how it can help to prevent skin ailments, hair tangles and matting while keeping the coat soft and shiny. After all that information, you are probably aching to work with your newly bought grooming tools. So, this is what you need to know about brushing cats, dogs and other animals.

The very first tip is to always brush in the direction of hair growth. In fact, except for two types of canine coats, all others need brushing in the direction of the grain and never against it. Particularly, with cats you want to follow this approach judiciously because *hell truly hath no fury like a feline scorned*.

### Brushing your cat

Also, be exceptionally gentle and careful when handling the hair around the belly and the chest. Cats are not very keen on getting their bellies



touched, so you will need to gently and slowly work up to the point where your kitty develops enough trust to allow you to touch its belly.

With dogs, things will be easier but hard tugs and painful pulls will cause the animal to develop a fear of grooming and that is not what you want. Another consideration is that being too rough in areas around the ears, on the neck and chest and around the belly can cause bruising. That being said, this is how you should proceed with regular brushing sessions for your cat.

### **If you own a short haired cat**

The first round of brushing should always start with a fine-toothed comb. The aim is to get all the dirt trapped in the fur out before you start working on the hair. Always run the comb through the entire length of the body in the direction of hair growth, starting at the head and going right up to the tip of the tail. Keep an eye out for small sand-like, black specks, which are a sign of flea infestation. Next, use a soft rubber bristle brush to remove any loose hair and finish with a round of love gloving to give the feline's coat a noticeable shine.

### **If you have a long haired cat**

When grooming long haired animals, keeping in mind their predisposition for tangles and matting, you will need to go the whole nine yards with your efforts. Cats are generally very conscientious about keeping themselves clean and well groomed. So, you will rarely encounter a scenario when fluffy, even if she is an outdoor cat, walks in with her body covered in mud and grime.

However, cats rely on their licking skills to keep the body clean and there are some places they simply cannot reach. Also, they are ill-equipped to handle foreign material that sticks to the hair; this can be sticky bits of chewing gum, concrete, grass seeds, other thorny seeds, etc. So, with a long haired cat the first order of the day should be to rid the fur of all foreign matter and dirt.

For this, you will need a wide toothed comb that will not only remove all the debris trapped in the fur or stuck in the hair but also it will untangle the knots. Be very gentle with the animal; cats sure don't take kindly to pain and have lightning fast reflexes. So, you may end up with multiple scratches. If you do encounter a tangle, use a conditioner



to soften the hair and then use a de-matting tool that will gently cut through the knots.

You could also use a sharp pair of scissors but never cut too close to the skin. In fact, if you are going to use a pair of scissors, make sure that you have one with very sharp blades that will cut the mat into half. This way you will have a shorter mass to deal with and it will be easier to simply work the comb through the tangle and unsnarl it.

If you are not comfortable using a pair of scissors, stick to de-matting combs and blades and remember to always work your way outwards, away from the skin. These tools do have very sharp blades and you run the risk of nicking yourself and the animal if they are not used properly.

Once the tangles are out, use a de-shedding tool, a rake should do because it will strip the loose hair right out. Finally, brush the coat with a wire or a bristle brush. For the face use a finishing or fine comb, specially targeting the fur on the neck, around the ears and on the side of the face.

Short haired cats need to be brushed once or twice a week but with long haired cats, you will need to turn brushing into a daily ritual.

## **Brushing your dog**

In general, dogs tend to get dirtier than cats. With their penchant for rolling on the ground, in mud, grime and puddles, what were you expecting? So, when brushing a dog, whether a short, medium, long, curly or double coated animal, you first need to tackle the mud. For this, use a bristle brush, which is softer and less abrasive than the slicker brush.

Brush vigorously all over the body to dislodge the dirt, while paying close attention to any folds of skin that may be covered in mud. In areas with a light covering of fur, use a rubble bristle brush to loosen the dirt without damaging the skin. Also, brush the underside of low slung dogs. Once you have removed the grime, you are all set to start your regular brushing sequence.

The best tool for the next step is the slicker brush. Start at the top of the head and move the brush all over the body. For the neck and the chest, raise the muzzle, so you get better access to the fur as the skin tautens.

If you have a fidgety dog, one way to get the animal to be still is to lift the front leg and hold it up. This way, your pooch will be less inclined to move away while he is on three legs, lest he falls down in the process.



Remember, for a dog the fear of falling is greater than the fear of actual injuries or pain that he may suffer from as a result of the fall. And, that is one of the reasons to consider investing in a grooming table.

The slicker brush will quickly tackle all loose hair, even those on short haired dogs. The ironic thing is that in terms of shedding, long haired breeds that have their coats trimmed and are brushed regularly pose the least trouble for their owners. On the other hand, short coated dogs can leave a lot of fur behind, short hair that is harder to get off the upholstery and carpets.

After covering the back of the dog, work on both flanks, easing up loose skin folds so that the brush can remove all tangles. If you do have mats to deal with, use a de-matting tool at this point. If you are dealing with an exceptionally large mat, use a de-matting blade, and as mentioned earlier, always move the tines above and away from the body. If the mat is no more than half an inch in size, a de-matting comb will do.

With a thorough round of brushing and de-matting done, you will be ready for the comb. Work the canine's body over with a fine toothed comb if he has short hair, combing in the same direction as you did with the brush. In case of a long haired dog, stick to a medium/coarse comb. Make sure you also comb the hair on the face, around the ears and the eyes in this round.

Finally, use the rubber love glove for a finishing touch. Rub it vigorously on the legs in up and down movement while using circular strokes for the body. This way, you will get all the dead hair out, leaving the dog's coat with a healthy sheen.







# Chapter 8

## **Bathing your pet hassle-free!**

As far as dogs are concerned, you will need to bathe the animal every one to three months, depending on the breed, your pet's skin condition, how much time he spends outdoors and the age of the animal. Of course, you could also turn bathing into a monthly or weekly ritual for your pet. Regardless of the time spent in between baths, this is how you go about giving your pooch that much needed shower.

### **Preparation is the key to success**

Even if your pet does not hate the idea of being bathed, it would still be prudent to start with all the supplies within arm's reach. This includes the shampoo, the conditioner, the hose, the towels, a plastic pitcher and the non-slip mat that goes in the bath tub. Put some cotton wool into the ears of the animal to prevent water from seeping in.



Before you usher your pooch into the bathroom, fill the tub with about 3-4 inches of lukewarm water. You could jostle with your pet while you are bent over the bathtub but this will be very harsh on your back. Instead, make provisions to sit down. This will also give you better control over the animal.

Next, use the spray hose to drench every inch of fur on your wiggle butt. Use the pitcher if you need additional help. However, make sure that you do not spray water directly into the eyes, on the face or into the ears. In fact, you should avoid the ear area altogether. Squirt the shampoo directly on the body and massage into a lather, running your hands all over the pooch's body. Reach for areas that are vulnerable like the belly and the chest.

Once you see the animal covered in soapy lather from head to toe, it is time for a rinse. Continue rinsing till you have all the shampoo out. Dry the dog thoroughly with a big towel. Keep a small face towel handy. Wet the fabric and squeeze out the excess water, use the damp cloth to wipe the face.

If you own a breed that is known for its facial wrinkles such as pugs or shar peis, you will need to make diligent effort to clean the grime and dead skin from in between the wrinkles. After wiping, dry the area thoroughly before taking the dog out of the bathroom.

Pups are notoriously goofy at bath time and just getting them to stay in the tub can prove to be a daunting task. The simplest way to hold their attention is to put a floating toy in the bath tub. This will keep the little fella entertained and you will be able to go about your business.

Whether you are bathing a puppy, an adult dog, a cat or a bunny, it is imperative to choose bath products made for the specific breed and animal type. Under no circumstances should you use human products. If you find yourself in a jam and cannot get shampoos that are meant for cats and dogs, you can make do with "no tears" baby shampoo, but do not make a habit out of this.

Often, human shampoos contain fragrances and colors that cause skin allergies in animals. Also, these formulations are harsh on their eyes. Even plain water may make your pet's eyes smarten; in this case, you administer sterile, lubricant eye drops before starting.

## **Bathing Your Cat**

If you thought bathing a dog is hard, imagine the plight of cat owners. After all, felines are known to be water-haters. In all fairness, some breeds do relish a dip in the basin or the bath tub, but for the better part, you will



be hard pressed to find a feline that enjoys bath time. So, it is crucial that with cats, you start the bathing culture early on. The younger the cat is, the simpler it will be to establish the routine. Fortunately for cat owners, felines don't need to be bathed as often but when it is shower time, this is what you can do to make the process easy for you and for fluffy.

A crucial point that has to be reiterated - always, always keep your grooming items ready. So, you should have your shampoo, towel, pitcher and hose right where you want them to be. Install the non-slip mat on the floor of the bath tub and fill the tub with 3-4 inches of water. Get the water temperature right, too cold and you will see a vivid demonstration of your cat's displeasure at your lapse.

Unlike with a dog, start by pouring water on the cat gently with the pitcher. You want the animal to get comfortable and not freak out. Wet the fur and start working the shampoo in, spreading the lather all over the body. Rinse thoroughly but gently, avoiding the nose, the face, ears and eyes at all cost. Finally, pat dry the animal with a large towel.

A quick but important tip, unlike with dogs, if your cat needs nail trimming, this should be done before bath time and not after.

### **Drying Just As Important As The Bath**

Leaving damp areas will prove to be a recipe for trouble. Before you know it, you will have a case of hot spots and skin infections on your hand. So, just towel drying is not enough! You will need to use a blow dryer to remove all the moisture from the hair. If you are using a human hair dryer, set it on cool.

This is extremely important because when set on warm, if you hold the dryer too close to the body, you will cause burn injuries. The safest option is to of course invest in a pet hair dryer. When using a human hair dryer, test the airflow on the back of your hand before turning it towards the animal.

The air should not feel warm. Next, use a bristle brush to lift the upper coat and dry the downy under coat of the animal. Continue drying till the coat is completely dry.





# Chapter 9

## **How to groom a dog/cat using scissors?**

While some pet owners are all for electrical hair clippers, unless you are dealing with a large breed with an extremely coarse coat, clippers are not needed. Another problem with these mechanical trimmers is that the blades get very hot to touch and can easily burn the skin if you are not careful. Also, complete clipping is never really required, let alone complete shaving, even when you have a double coated or a heavy coated pet.

Actually, if you do take the top off completely or trim it extensively, there is always the risk that it may not grow back to its original length and texture. Also, by removing the top coat, you are leaving the animal vulnerable to weather elements, including freezing temperatures and uv rays.

The best approach is to give dogs with long hair an overall trim to keep their coat manageable and with other breeds stick to trimming only in the areas of the body that need it. For example, you may want to trim the hair



around the ears, the whiskers, the hair around the eyes, hind quarters and the tail and the fur in between the paws.

Usually, a trim every 4-8 weeks should do. If you have a wiry haired dog, remember to only trim in problem areas and hand strip the hair on the body, once or twice a year. If you have never tried giving fido a haircut, a round of professional grooming will prove to be a learning experience. Plus, at least for a few months, you will only have to take out the hair tips as they grow out.

If you intend to tackle the complete job on your own, tell your groomer to go for a simple haircut that does not require too much maintenance. You will find a wealth of information on different breed specific haircuts on the internet. Another way is to take a few pictures of your pooch/feline right after the professional grooming session and try to recreate the look on your own.

The most important thing to remember is this - pet and pet owner safety come first. You will be working with very sharp scissors. In fact, trimming with blunt scissors will prove to be an arduous experience. But, sharp blades increase the risk of cuts and injuries. So, you need to be careful; put safety before results.

Till you get comfortable, try the snip and check approach. Take off a tiny bit of hair and then comb to see the results and then cut off some more, if need be. You can always shorten the hair if you find them too long but you can't stick the trimmed fur back on! Finally, before you get ready for action, know this - if you do go wrong, no big deal. It is only hair and it will grow back!

## Getting ready for the show

Trimming should always come after brushing, bathing and a second round of brushing. Prop your pet on the grooming table and tether the animal. Once again, keep your tools in close reach before you bring the pet to the table. You will need a metal comb, straight and curved scissors, bristle brush and a finishing comb. You may also need thinning scissors; these are meant to thin out the upper coat and not to trim/shorten it.

Typically, if you have de-shedding blades/rake and the straight and curved scissors, you should be good to go. The easiest cut is the natural cut. This means that you trim the hair just enough to get a look which seems completely natural, like the fur on the animal's body has never been subjected to a round of trimming. Usually, you will need to snip, an inch or less in most parts and a bit more in the problem areas.



## Pick the right tools






The scissors you use can and will make a world's difference to your success and your pet's comfort. Ideally, for a small/ medium sized animal, a pair which is 4.5 To 6 long will be enough. Stainless steel should be the material of choice since it does not rust and can be cleaned easily. Moreover, you can sharpen steel blades when need be.

Actually, if you choose a well-made product like ciseaux pet grooming scissors, you can count on stellar performance for months on end and you will never have to bother with sharpening the blades as the shears come with a lifetime warranty. The ciseaux set has straight, serrated blade scissors as well as a pair of curved, non-serrated blade scissors.

When it comes to the weight of the scissors, the lighter the better, as long as there is no compromise on blade quality. Heavier tools will increase finger fatigue. Also, pick shears that are not too noisy, pets are easily alarmed by the sound of the blades being snapped close. Ciseaux scissors have a coating on the finger holes, which are soft on your fingers and virtually silent.

As far as usage is concerned, the straight scissors should be used for areas that are closed and when you need a clean, sharp and straight line. On the other hand, curved blade scissors will be very useful when you are working in contoured areas, like on the rump, around the eyes and the legs.

## Essential Safety Tips

-  Always use a comb to put some distance between the blades and the skin of the animal.
-  Never try to pull a mat out in an attempt to cut it out with the scissors. You will nick the skin as it is pulled taut.
-  When trimming the hair in the hind quarters, hold the animal's tail up and out of the way.
-  If you need to trim the fur around the ears, hold the hair in between your fingers and then trim the length that grows out of your grasp. This way, you will eliminate the risk of nicking the leather.
-  Always, use ball pointed scissors. With a regular pair of shears, there is too great a risk of poking the animal in the eyes, the ears or even in the belly.



## Grooming your pet with the straight scissors

Always start at the face, using a finishing comb to smooth the hair out. The fur should be combed in the direction of the growth so that it lays flat on the body. Then, check for hair that has grown beyond the regular length of the coat.

### Step 1

First, go for the hair on top of the animal's head. Comb it down, towards the eyes and then while holding the comb in place, cut as much as you need to clear the field of vision. Start with the hair on one side of the forehead and then match the length on the other side with it.

### Step 2

Next, target the hair around the muzzle. With your straight scissors, cut the hair that is food or saliva stained. You also want to remove fur that hangs below the lower jaw. Remember, you need to make small cuts, comb and check before proceeding. While you are dealing with the muzzle/mouth, go ahead and trim the whiskers as well.

### Step 3

For the ears, let the flappy portion fall flat against the cheeks and comb the hair down. Lift the flaps up and feel for the thick leather, hold the hair in between your index and middle fingers like you are trying to scissor the hair out with your fingers. Trim in a straight line to create even length. Do the same on the other side.

### Step 4

Although the flanks don't come next in our trimming sequence, since we are talking about using straight scissors, we will deal with this part of the body before others. Comb the hair straight down, from the spine to the floor. Your aim should be to trim the fur that grows an inch or more beyond the body line of the animal.

You will need your metal comb for reference here. Start at the front of the body, just behind the forelegs and continue trimming, matching the length till you reach the hind legs. Repeat on the other side of the body.



## Step 5

The fur at the rear of the body, particularly hair on the upper thighs that surrounds the rectal area has to be kept very short. This is closed space, so you need to work very carefully. With your straight scissors, trim the hair to a point where it is no more than a few millimeters long. You will be working very close to the skin and with only one hand, since you will hold the tail up with the other. So, you need to be extra cautious and slow. Take your time and trim till the rear of the animal looks neat.

## Grooming your pet with curved scissors

All the areas on the body that are contoured should be handled with curved blade scissors. The trick here lies in how the blade is held against the skin. While straight scissors are held parallel to the reference point, be it a comb, your fingers or the natural body line of the animal, curved scissors can be held with the blades in a convex or concave position for added safety.

For example, when you are working in an area of the body that protrudes out and you want to ensure that the blades stay far away from the skin, hold the scissors such that the blades lie concave against the body, this way you get an additional margin of safety. That said, here is a step by step approach to using the curved blade scissors in your ciseaux grooming kit.

## Step 1

On the face, you will need curved blade scissors to remove tear stained hair and any fur that is matted with eye goop. First, wipe with damp cotton from the inner corner of the eye, down to the muzzle in the direction of the tear track. Then, pat with some tissue to absorb excess moisture. Next, lift the hair up gently with your fingers and trim with the last half inch of the blades.

You don't have to worry too much if you are using ciseaux curved blade scissors because they have ball tips on both blades, so there is no risk of poking the animal in the eyes. Yet, remember to hold the tip of the blade away from the eyes. Move to the side of the animal and you should be able to see goopy mats right below the lower eye lids, take these out, while keeping the scissors concave and at least half a centimeter away from the waterline of the lower lid.





Trimming as you stand on the side of the body will give you better view and precise control. Finally, move to the outer corner of the eye, drawing the hair out, towards the ears. Trim the fur that is stained or long enough to get into the eyes.

## **Step 2**

After the face, move to the neck and the chest. Comb the hair down and take out hair that stands out instead of falling flat against the body. Then, go for the hair that hangs below the chest. Always use your metal comb as a reference when trimming in this area and hold your scissors concave to mimic the natural line of the body in between the forelegs.

## **Step 3**

Next, go to the forelegs. Again, you will need to comb the hair straight down. If you are going for the columnar look on the legs, your curved scissors sure will help a lot. Simply, follow the natural contour of the legs while holding the scissors concave and begin trimming till you get the desired length. Always work on the outer side of the legs first and then go for the inner side. It will be easier if your dog/cat is sitting on its hind legs when trimming the hair on the chest, neck and forelegs.

## **Step 4**

Move to the hind legs and repeat the procedure on the outer and back side of the limbs. On the inner side, this is the part where the thighs are connected to the torso, cut the hair with the straight scissors since you need a clean and straight line. Use a comb to get the right length and a neat line.

## **Step 5**

For the tail, you may not need trimming unless you have a long coated animal. In this case, comb out the hair with the tail down. Then, lift the tail up and straight, in line with the spine of the animal. Trim the hair that hangs low. You will not need a comb for this area as you won't be cutting the hair too short.



## Step 6

Go to the paws next. First, check in between the pads for tiny stones or plant matter or even ticks. You may need tweezers to extract these out. Hold the leg firmly, gripping just below the paw while the animal is lying on its side. Another way is to lift the leg and fold at the joint. Trim the hair that is growing out from in between the paw and the toes. With both hands occupied, you won't get to use your comb, so hold the scissors concave, with the curve of the scissor blades above the round paw pad.

## Step 7

As the penultimate step, make the animal lie on its side, and check for unruly fur growth near the belly and on the upper part of the abdomen. Comb straight towards the rear of the animal and take off the excess length. Use your comb for reference because you will be working close to the skin. Finally, give the animal a quick brush, just a round or two with the bristle brush and check for any stray hair that you may have missed.

### A few more hand scissoring tips

The way you hold and move the shears can have a huge impact on the results of the grooming session and the level of confidence you develop. So, here are a few tips that will help you to master hand scissoring:

With your middle finger and your thumb inside the finger holes of the scissors, make sure that you move the blades by only moving your thumb. This means that your middle finger should stay steady.

Practice, opening and closing the shears with just the movement of your thumb, while keeping the rest of your hand steady. The scissors should stay balanced and should be held at right angles to your index finger.

Trimming an animal's coat requires your whole body to work as one unit. You will need to bend sideways and to the front. You will have to hold the animal with one hand while you use the scissors with the other. Your feet should uniformly balance the weight of your body as you complete the grooming session.

If you need to bend forward, the grooming table has to be adjusted to the right level. Ideally, you should not have to bend your upper torso more than 10 to 20 degrees on the side; never lower yourself by bending your knees. This will cause strain on the legs and distract you.





## Chapter 10

# What to do after grooming a dog/cat?

Once you are done with the trimming and brushing, apply a flea or tick control product. This can be a lotion or a powder that will ward off parasites. If you are using powder, sprinkle it all over the body and run your hands over the coat, from head to tail. Do not forget to use your brushing glove on the animal for finishing; this will prevent matting caused by the powder.

Regardless of whether you trim the animal's coat or not and even if you forego the bath, checking the eyes and the ears, nail trimming and dental care cannot be excluded from the grooming session. So, here are a few more tasks to complete before you have a truly well-groomed pet on your hands.

### Ear care

Check the ear for odor, inflammation and discharge. You will notice this before bath time when covering the ear canal with cotton wool. With the



rest of the grooming out of the way, take the cotton wool out if you have not done so already. Wipe the ear clean with some tissue, including the inside of the ear canal, without pushing the tissue paper too deep inside.

With the straight scissors, trim the hair that grows out of the ear cavity, exposing the ear canal. Next, sprinkle ear powder on the ear flaps and inside the ear canal. Massage the leathery flaps to work the enzymes in the powder into the skin. These will loosen the dirt and ear wax buildup. Dab clean with some tissue before applying an antiseptic ear cleaner with some cotton.

Breeds with floppy ears such as bassets and spaniels are particularly susceptible to ear infections as the low hanging floppy ears prevent air circulation. So, the moisture remains trapped inside, harboring fungal growth and bacteria. Similarly, maltese and shih tzus are also vulnerable to ear issues as they have more hair inside the ears.

Although breeds with pricked ears generally don't suffer from ear infections, it is still important to maintain ear hygiene by cleaning the leather and the ear canal with an antiseptic ear cleaning liquid. You can find otc products for this or ask your veterinarian to recommend the right ear powder and lotion for your pet.

## Eye care

Keeping the eyes clean and the fur around the eyes trimmed is essential when you have a pet with long hair. In fact, you should frequently check for sensitivity and inflammation, especially in the corners of the lids. Excessive discharge, tearing and scratching around the eyes all point to irritation and infection.

Assuming that you have already trimmed the hair around the eyes, you will only need some cotton wool, a fine toothed comb and some saline solution for tear stains. First, wipe the eyes with a piece of dry cotton wool, tracing the tear track from the corner of the eye down to the muzzle. Then, use cotton soaked in the saline solution to wipe out the debris, tears, and goop. If the dirt is stuck to the hair, use your fine toothed comb to dislodge it.

Even when you are not giving your pet a complete haircut, you will need to trim the hair around the eyes. Use the curved blade scissors from your toolkit for the job and carefully cut any hair that is growing inwards and may get into the eyes. To finish, take a fresh piece of cotton wool soaked in the saline solution and wipe the eye area clean, going from the inner corner of the eye towards the ears. Also, wipe between the skin folds around the eyes.



## Nail trimming

We have already discussed that if you are not comfortable with trimming your pet's nails, you can always use a nail grinding tool. However, this can be time consuming and although not painful, you may have a hard time getting your pet to sit through the nail filing session.

So, it would be best to start working with a pair of nail clippers. In cats as well as dogs, the biggest problem with nail trimming is the hazard of cutting the "quick". This is the blood vessel inside the nail. If you puncture it, your pet will bleed profusely. Although the bleeding can easily be stopped and is not dangerous, it can be quite alarming, more so for the pet owner than the pet.

Hence, it is necessary to get yourself acquainted with the anatomy of your pet's nails. Usually, with a light colored animal, it is easy to spot the "quick". It is the pink, fleshy part that is behind the white translucent tip of the nail. When trimming, you have to make sure that you stay 3-4 millimeters away from the pink portion inside the nail.

However, if you have a dark colored animal or one with black nails, it can get daunting to see the "quick". In this situation, you want the animal on its side, so that you get some time to examine the paws and the nails. If you hold the paw up with the pad facing towards you, you should be able to see the fleshy part inside the nail and you need to work away from it.

Another way is to clean all the mud and dirt from the paw with a soft brush. If you are trimming the nails after a shower, you won't have too much trouble because the paws will already be clean. If you cannot see the "quick", take off the hook and you will see a dark black circle at the center of the nail. After this, continue trimming no more than 2-3 millimeters at a time till you reach a point where you see a white spot in the center of the black circle. This is your signal to put the clippers away.

One more thing to remember about nail trimming is that not all dogs need it, regardless of the breed. If you have an animal that spends a lot of time outdoors, particularly on rough surfaces, nail trimming will not be required. The best part is that prancing on abrasive ground files the nails and pushes the "quick" back.

But, if your pooch is a homebody, trimming will be your only option. That being said, if you ever end up snipping the "quick", sprinkle styptic powder on the wound and apply pressure to it. This will help the blood to clot faster.

Without a doubt, dogs are more trusting of their owners than cats. So, while fido may sit still as you trim his nails, your cat will need some mental



conditioning to warm up to the idea of nail trimming. Here is a simple exercise that will help:

Every day spend some time massaging the cat's feet, running your hands along the legs and touching the paws. Once your cat stops reacting to this stimuli, start raising the paw and gently massaging the feet. Press your thumb on the pad of each toe to get the claw out. In about a week or two, your cat won't mind being handled in this way and that is when you try trimming. Remember to cut only the white tip and snip parallel to the claw.

## Dental care

Your pet does not need regular flossing, two rounds of brushing each day and gargling with mouth wash, but you cannot ignore your pooch's dental care requirements. Toothache is as intense for animals as it is for humans. So, spend about \$10 and get a cat/dog tooth brush and pet tooth paste. Never use your toothpaste as it may prove to be toxic.

Pet toothpaste is formulated to be ingested. Tooth brushes for pets are available in two designs. You will find those with long handles like human tooth brushes, just with slender and longer tails. You will also see brushes that can be worn on the index finger.

For brushing, put a small amount of toothpaste on the finger brush and allow your pet to smell and even lick it. Gently lift up the muzzle or the mouth flaps and massage the molars. Also, brush the inner surface of the teeth using the handle brush which will easily get to all the hard to reach spots.

Finally, go for a round of gum massage. For this, you will need a special type of finger brush, one that has shorter and softer bristles than the regular wearable brush. You don't have to rinse out the toothpaste; your doggy or kitty will simply eat it and that is all there is to brushing your pet's teeth.





# Chapter 11

## Some more grooming tips and tricks

The biggest pet grooming mistake that you can make is to approach the task at the wrong time. For one, set aside 15 minutes of the day for grooming; treat it as your bonding time with your pet and your personal wind down time. Ideally, the best time for grooming is when the pet is relaxed. So, you may want to take the animal for a walk if he is in the mood for some playtime. With your cat, some tender petting will be enough.

However, it is not just the pet that should be relaxed; you too should be in a calm state of mind. So, don't try grooming the animal when you are stressed out or have had a bad or lengthy day at work. When you are tired or anxious, it is easy to lose both your patience and your temper. If you are not in one of your best moods, either leave the grooming for later or take some time out for yourself. A brisk walk always helps to clear the cobwebs, plus it will leave you feeling invigorated.

If you were to ask pet owners for the most annoying aspect of pet grooming, aside from a wiggly pet, they will all point to the trouble they



face when getting ready for the task. After all, rummaging through a dozen drawers to find 6 or more tools can be exasperating. Fortunately, there is a simple solution to solve this issue; it is called organization. Keep all your grooming tools in one box or bag. You will be surprised that this one step alone can reduce the total time spent on pet grooming by 15-30 minutes.

## Dealing with hair mats

Hair mats are a pet owner's worst nightmare and rightly so. They not only make the animal look unkempt but also cause severe discomfort and skin issues. The tight clump of hair often serves as a breeding ground for parasites. The worst part is that it can hide serious health concerns such as lumps, rashes and lesions.

Fortunately, hair matting does not happen in one day. In fact, all hair mats start as manageable tangles. Even when you ignore the tangles, the mats remain tiny for the first few days or weeks, depending on the length of the hair and the accumulated debris. The problem gets exacerbated when you continue to ignore the tangles, as they get progressively larger and tighter.

Do not make the mistake of underestimating the power of hair mats. This is not a problem that sorts itself out if left alone. On the contrary, the matting will spread all over the body and then your only solution will be to shave off the entire coat. There have been severe cases of neglect in which animals were left struggling with 20-35 lbs of hair mats.

The good news is that 10 minutes of hair brushing each day is all it takes to keep even long haired felines and canines tangle free, and no tangles means no mats. However, if you do encounter a mat, this is how you can deal with it:

### Step 1: Assess the situation

There are mats that can be untangled and those that have to be cut out. The solution will depend on just how intense the problem is. To begin with, it is imperative to understand the difference between a tangle and a mat. A tangle is a hair knot. When brushing the coat, your comb will come to a halt at the tangle. But, this does not mean that you cannot unsnarl the knots.

A bit of teasing with a long bristled brush will usually resolve tangles. On the other hand, mats are noticeably denser than tangles. In fact when you touch them, they feel like woven fabric, thick and stiff, pretty much like your





carpet. The knots are so tight in the mat that you will not be able to see your finger through the mass of hair.

Typically, mats are tighter and denser away from the skin and you will feel them even without a brush or comb as you run your fingers through the dogs coat. Before finding a solution to deal with the mats, you need to ascertain how deep the problem runs. Hold the matted clump up and see if the hair closest to the skin seems free of knots. If this cannot be visibly discerned, use your tail comb and see if you can put the pointed handle through the mat and if it comes out on the other side without resistance.

You can also use a plastic letter opener or your ciseaux scissors for this. Open the blades and only push one of them through the hair. Remember to hold the sharp side of the blade away from the skin. If you have a few millimeters of room, this would be enough to push the tines of your de-matting tools through. If not, clipping the mat may be the only option. However, leave that one out till all else fails.

## **Step 2: Conditioner to the rescue**

Leave in conditioners and de-matting solutions will soften the hair and make it easier to unsnarl the knots. Generously spray the solution over the matted portion of the coat, leaving it in for a minute or two, so that it can work its magic.

## **Step 3: Divide and conquer**

While the hair is still damp start teasing the mat slowly, dividing it into smaller portions that can be tackled individually. You will find that mats usually have a trouble center where the tangling is at its tightest, while the fur at the periphery can be teased out of the knots with a bit of effort. So, you may not need to shave off all the matted hair. In any case, it is easier and less grueling to work on small parts instead of one humongous mat.

## **Step 4: Start with the lowest level tool**

That is your metal comb! To ensure that you do not tug on the coat and cause pain, hold the hair at the base tightly in between your fingers as you work on the mat. Try the comb on the outside of the clump first where the knots will be loose and then slowly make your way to the base. If at some



point, you simply cannot get the comb to work, it is time to bring in the heavy artillery.

## **Step 5: The de-matting tools**

Once again, start with the least powerful weapon and move your way up. A crucial thing to remember is that all de-matting tools have sharp blades on them. Although the tines will have blunt tips, the sharpness is enough to cause nicks. So, always work away from the skin. The first tool to use is the de-matting comb. While continuing to hold the matted hair at the base, start moving the comb over the edge, trying to get the tines to pierce the tangle.

If the mat proves too much for the humble comb, move up to the de-matting rake. The long, curved tines on this tool are sharper and have a lot of space in between them, which makes it easier to run the blades through the matted hair. Hold the hair at the base as tight as you can and start moving the rake blades over the mat.

If you do not see the hair being freed, move to the last weapon on the list, the mat-splitter. This is the sharpest tool in your box. So, you need to be extra careful. Work with it the same way you did with the rake. You will be able to divide the mat into smaller vertical or horizontal parts with the mat-splitter.

### **Using scissors and clippers**

The only time you should use your scissors to defeat the mat is if you can't push your comb through the hair at the base of the mat. This will protect the skin from the blades. Make the cut right above the surface of the comb and you will have the mat out in your hands. But, you should only do this if the mat is too tight.

If there is any hope at all or if you are tackling feline hair matting, cut off just half of the mat; that is the horizontal half. Leave the rest alone for two or three days and the mat will either grow out or what remains will respond well to simple brushing and combing. This trick works exceptionally well on persians.

Under no circumstances should you try to pull the mat up and cut it with the scissors. You will get the skin in the process. If you don't see yourself winning against the tangle, it may be best to consider professional grooming services or even consult your vet before clipping the mat out.





# Chapter 12

## Keeping your grooming tools in top shape

Scissors will prove to be the most versatile and useful tools in your pet grooming kit. They are also very sharp, so like with any other sharp object, they can pose a danger if not used with care. So, here are a few tips to keep you and your furry friend safe:

### Tip 1

Never use blunt scissors because dull blades pull on the fur causing pain. Also, you tend to exert excess pressure when the blades are dull and you have to cut in the same area several times to get the desired results. All of this increases the risk of causing skin wounds.

Fortunately, with ciseaux scissors, you won't have a dull grooming moment. The high quality stainless steel blades are hand sharpened and designed to retain their sharpness. Plus, you get a lifetime warranty on the shears.



## Tip 2

Do not point the scissors at the animal, unless you have a pair with round tips.

## Tip 3

When using scissors close to the skin, ensure that you do not pull the hair up or otherwise tug on them as this will lift the skin up as well, which is bound to come in the way of your scissoring action.

## Tip 4

Be exceptionally careful when using scissors in delicate areas such as around the genitals, behind the ears and on the tummy. It can be alarmingly easy to miss the tiny nipples on male animals and cut right through.

## Tip 5

Expect the animal to pull a few fast moves when you are using the scissor. Even slight flinching may lead to trouble if you are not cautious and mindful.

## Scissor maintenance

You can get the highest quality scissors, but without proper maintenance and cleaning, you will be reducing the functional life of the tool to half of what it should be. Pet grooming scissors are exposed to a lot of debris like dust, mud, dried shampoo and more. The grime can quickly start building up in between the blades and at the pivot point, spoiling the alignment of the blades. So, this is what you can do to keep your pet grooming scissors in top shape:

## Wipe with oil

After every grooming session, wipe the scissors with a disinfectant, both the blades and the finger holes. Also, pour a drop or two of light oil on some cotton wool and use it to wipe the metallic parts.



## Lubricate the scissors

After a few grooming session, before stowing the shears, open them completely and place a drop of oil on the pivot screw. Move the blades, so that the oil seeps into the joint and wipe off the excess.

## Right storage

Store the scissors in their own case. This limits the risk of blade damage and of getting nicked when you get them out for the next grooming session. Also, this restricts the exposure of the blades to moisture and other environmental factors that can cause degradation.

## Be gentle

Always set the scissors down gently after use. Dropping or bumping them will lead to blade misalignment.








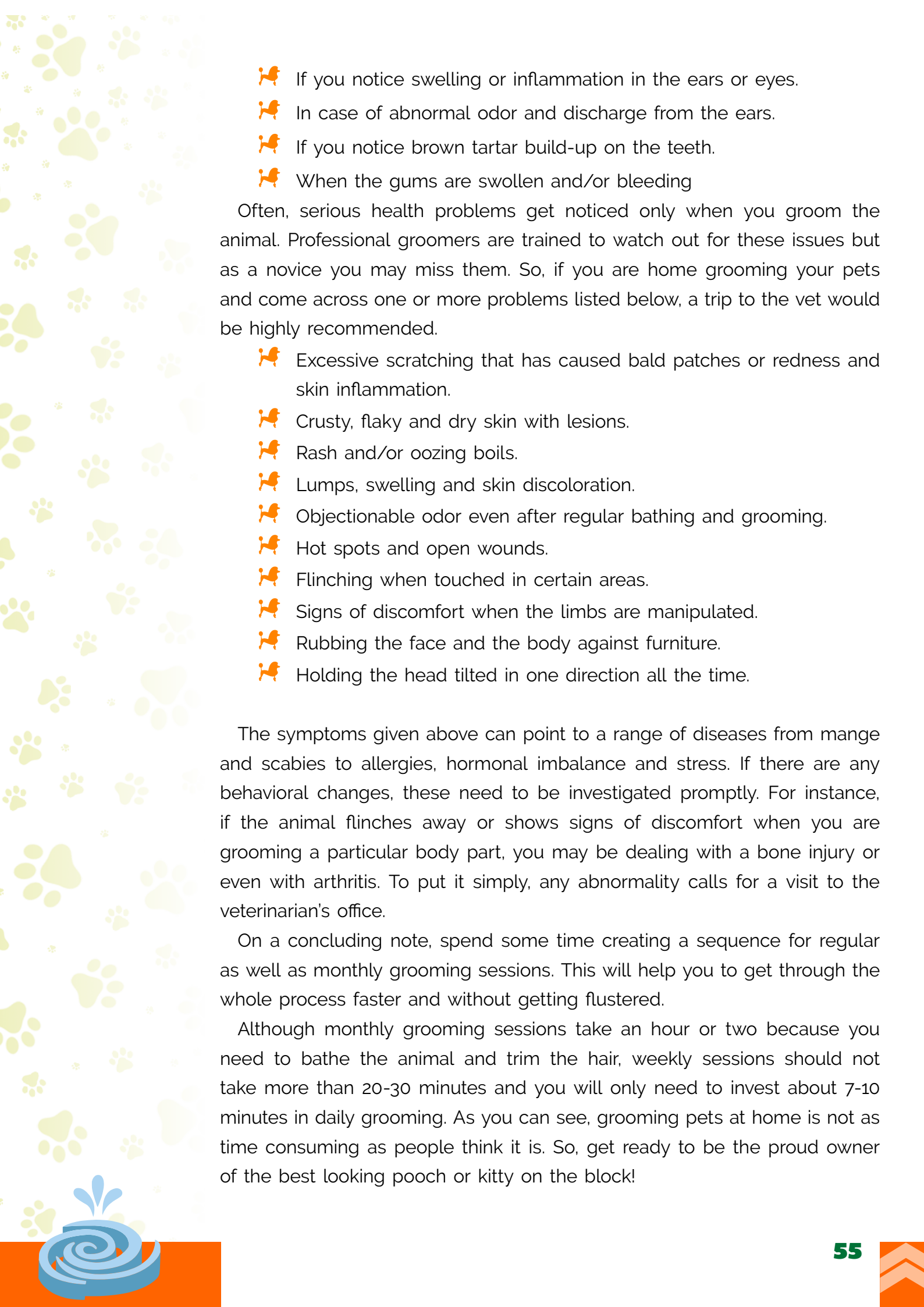




## In conclusion

Can you groom your pet at home? After reading this guide, hopefully you will be able to answer that question with a confident, "yes". If not, as discussed at the very beginning of this guide, it is always possible to sit through a few professional grooming sessions to build your confidence. An alternate approach is to take a few grooming lessons.











In fact, a lot of professional pet salons offer free home grooming lessons, so you can keep your pet in top shape in between the salon trips. With a bit of effort and some patience, you will be able to improve and polish your pet grooming skills. Yet, the fact is that in some situations, it is truly in the best interest of the animal to seek professional services, and as a pet owner you need to recognize these scenarios. Here is a list that will help:

-  If the animal has severe hair matting in delicate areas of the body, such as behind the ears, around the belly, on the neck and around the genitals.
-  When more than half the body is covered in tight mats.
-  When the nails are so overgrown that they have curled and turned inwards. Frequently, overgrown nails pierce the paw pads, causing injuries. In particularly bad cases, the nail may even be lodged inside the pad.



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-  If you notice swelling or inflammation in the ears or eyes.
  -  In case of abnormal odor and discharge from the ears.
  -  If you notice brown tartar build-up on the teeth.
  -  When the gums are swollen and/or bleeding

Often, serious health problems get noticed only when you groom the animal. Professional groomers are trained to watch out for these issues but as a novice you may miss them. So, if you are home grooming your pets and come across one or more problems listed below, a trip to the vet would be highly recommended.

-  Excessive scratching that has caused bald patches or redness and skin inflammation.
-  Crusty, flaky and dry skin with lesions.
-  Rash and/or oozing boils.
-  Lumps, swelling and skin discoloration.
-  Objectionable odor even after regular bathing and grooming.
-  Hot spots and open wounds.
-  Flinching when touched in certain areas.
-  Signs of discomfort when the limbs are manipulated.
-  Rubbing the face and the body against furniture.
-  Holding the head tilted in one direction all the time.

The symptoms given above can point to a range of diseases from mange and scabies to allergies, hormonal imbalance and stress. If there are any behavioral changes, these need to be investigated promptly. For instance, if the animal flinches away or shows signs of discomfort when you are grooming a particular body part, you may be dealing with a bone injury or even with arthritis. To put it simply, any abnormality calls for a visit to the veterinarian's office.

On a concluding note, spend some time creating a sequence for regular as well as monthly grooming sessions. This will help you to get through the whole process faster and without getting flustered.

Although monthly grooming sessions take an hour or two because you need to bathe the animal and trim the hair, weekly sessions should not take more than 20-30 minutes and you will only need to invest about 7-10 minutes in daily grooming. As you can see, grooming pets at home is not as time consuming as people think it is. So, get ready to be the proud owner of the best looking pooch or kitty on the block!

