



## Grooming Your Cat

Among the important parts of caring for your new pet is grooming them to keep their coats, teeth, and nails healthy. In this handout we're going to go over a few recommendations, tips, and tricks for grooming your feline.

### Trimming their nails:



Trimming a cat's nails is as much for your sake as it is for theirs because they can get very sharp, very quickly. A cat jumping in your lap for cuddles feels a lot less comfortable if their nails are like needles. Trimming them regularly (every two weeks or so) will reduce the chance of them hurting you by accident!

**Quick note: We would recommend that you establish a relationship with your new pet before attempting to trim their nails so that the process is less stressful for them and doesn't create a negative association with you.**

Not every cat is the most cooperative client when it comes to getting a manicure, so here are a few tips to make the process go a little more smoothly.

#### 1) "The Purrito"

This is a tool we use in the shelter and clinic, too! It's a minimally stressful way to hold a cat while still maintaining control over its limbs. Basically, wrap them in a towel so that all their legs are contained in the towel, and pull out one at a time to trim the nails on each paw. Make sure you wrap their jaw (gently) closed as well to reduce the risk of biting.

#### 2) Have a helper!

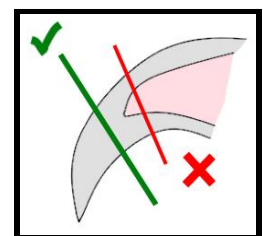
Having someone to distract your cat with wet food or treats while you trim their nails is very helpful. If you have to do it alone, it's certainly possible, but it will make it a more positive experience for your kitty if they're being placated with snacks.

#### 3) Use the right tools.

Make sure you're using a nail trimmer that is designed for use on cats' nails. A human nail clipper will splinter the nail and might make the whole process a lot longer than it needs to be. We recommend a guillotine type nail trimmer on cats.

#### 4) Don't cut the quick!

The quick is the base of the nail and contains nerves and blood vessels, which means trimming into it will be painful for your kitty and make the experience less pleasant for everyone. The diagram on the right shows where the quick is relative to where you should be cutting your cat's nails.





### Brushing your cat:

Even though cats are excellent at grooming themselves, brushing your cat regularly will help reduce shedding and hairballs, stimulate blood circulation, and provide an opportunity for some bonding.

How you brush your cat depends a bit on your cat's coat. If your cat is a short-haired cat, brushing should be done along the grain of the fur, so you brush in the same

direction the fur grows. With long-haired cats, you'll want to first go against the grain to remove loose hair from the undercoat.

If your cat is starting to get fussy, take a break. You want to keep brushing a positive experience for your cat, which means respecting your cat's wishes if they're getting uncomfortable or overstimulated!

### A few other tips:

- If you find any mats or tangles, you can sprinkle talcum powder or cornstarch to remove moisture. Work them through with your fingers, or if that doesn't work, a metal comb. Hold the hair at the base so that as you work through the knots, you don't tug at the skin. If that doesn't work, talk to a groomer or a vet. Removing mats with scissors or a trimmer can easily cut your cat's skin and is best done by professionals.
- Check for skin issues, bald patches, scabs, and swelling, and talk to your veterinarian if you notice anything unusual.

### Dental care:

Just like people, cats need regular teeth brushing (at least 2-3 times per week, though daily would be ideal) to keep their teeth and gums healthy and avoid costly dental care later. There are toothbrushes and toothpastes designed for cats to be safe on their gums and teeth – the bristles are softer and the toothpaste has cat-safe ingredients. *Do not use human toothpaste* -- it contains fluoride at a level that is highly toxic to cats!

To make brushing your cat's teeth as easy on both of you as possible, take some time to get them used to it by massaging their gums with your finger and introducing them to the flavor of their toothpaste over the course of a few days.

### Important Note on Declawing

There was a time where the wisdom around preventing cats from scratching us or our furniture was to remove their claws. Just like many medical practices of yore, **we have since learned that declawing is an inhumane, painful, and entirely unnecessary process.**

Declawing is not just removing their nails; in order to prevent the nail from growing back, a piece of the cat's bones need to be removed. Declawing can cause severe pain, trauma, and ongoing issues including increased biting, house soiling, and anxiety.

Scratching is a natural and healthy feline behavior so keeping a cat's nails trimmed, using deterrents on furniture while also offering appropriate places for your cat to scratch, and products like nail caps can all help reduce scratching while also keeping our cats' paws intact.