

## How to Trim Dog Nails

As a rule of thumb, a dog's nails should be trimmed when they touch the ground. For leisurely living dogs that might mean weekly pedicures, while urban pooches who stalk rough city sidewalks might never need their nails cut at all (except their dewclaws, if they've got 'em).

### Tools

There are two basic styles of nail clippers for dogs: a scissors type and a guillotine type. They work equally well, so choose the design you're most comfortable with. Be sure to buy the correct size for your dog, too—for example, you don't want to use huge clippers on a tiny toy dog.



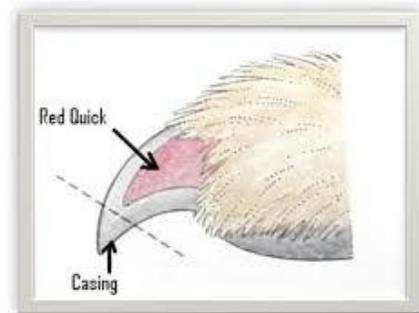
If your dog finds both kinds of clippers intolerable, the alternative is to use a nail grinder, an electric tool that sands nails down. These offer great control, but take more time than clippers, and some people (and dogs) find the sounds and vibrations they produce unpleasant.

### Slow Hands

It's a good idea to get your dog used to having her feet touched before you attempt a nail trim—ideally, this should start when she's a pup. It might take a few weeks of regular paw massaging before she's comfortable enough to allow you to work with her nails. If it's your first go at this, just clip one or two nails a day and immediately follow up with treats or a session of her favorite game.

### Just a Trim, Please

Take your dog's toe and hold it firmly, but gently. Lavishing her with calm praise and tasty little nibbles—and holding your trimmer so that you're cutting the nail from top to bottom, not side to side—insert a very small length of nail through the trimmer's opening. Avoid nipping the quick, which is the pink area within each nail that contains nerves and blood vessels. Don't trim at a blunt angle—try to maintain the existing curvature of the nail.



1. light tissue is the curved bottom part of the nail
2. mottled light and dark tissue is the top part of the nail
3. gray to pink oval starting to appear at the top of the cut surface -- STOP CUTTING

Cut a little bit of nail with each pass until you can see the beginning of a circle—still nail-colored—appear on the cut surface. The circle indicates that you are nearing the quick, so it's time to stop that nail and move on to the next.

### Accidents Can Happen

If you do hit the quick, your dog will probably yelp and might even struggle. This is a good time to end the session—but not before applying styptic powder to the bleeding nail tip. Apply a little bit of pressure as you press the powder into the wound to make sure it sticks. If bleeding continues for more than a few minutes, please alert your veterinarian, who can check your dog for clotting disorders.



**Scaredy Pups**

Some dogs show fearful or aggressive behavior when faced with nail trimming. Watch carefully for signs of distress such as panting, drooling, trembling, whining, freezing, cowering, tail-tucking, growling, snarling or snapping. Even with the most patient and gradual of introductions, there are dogs who seem unable to get over their terror. If your dog falls into this category, do not force him to submit. See if his veterinarian or a professional groomer has better luck getting the job done—if not, it's a good idea to make an appointment with a Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist (CAAB), a veterinary behaviorist (Dip ACVB) or a Certified Professional Dog Trainer (CPDT) to work on the underlying issues at hand.