

# How to Cut Your Dog's Nails Safely

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Keeping your dog's nails trimmed prevents them from dealing with unnecessary pain.

Cutting or filing your dog's nails regularly should be a routine part of [dog grooming](#), but for many dogs, having their nails clipped can be extremely stressful.

Here's a guide for dog nail trimming, including how to cut dog nails, how to file dog nails, the tools you'll need to trim your dog's nails, and tips for minimizing stress and preventing injury.

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## Tools for Trimming Your Dog's Nails at Home

Thankfully, you won't need an entire toolbox dedicated to your dog's pedicure—just these handy tools will do the trick:

- Dog nail clippers
- Treats
- Styptic powder (or flour or cornstarch)

### Types of Dog Nail Clippers

There are a variety of options you can use to trim your dog's nails. While some people might prefer guillotine-style clippers, the spring-loaded scissor-style or plier-style nail clippers are favored by most veterinary professionals. These are especially helpful for dogs with thick, tough nails.

Some brands even have a guard so you don't accidentally cut the nail too short.

Scissor-style or plier-style nail clippers can be used for both small and large dogs, but you may find it easier to use nail clippers specifically made for cats or small dogs if you have a miniature pooch.

For very small or very young dogs, you can use human nail clippers, but it's generally easier to see

what you are doing with trimmers made specifically for dogs.

## Using Treats

Keep some treats nearby for positive reinforcement to help make nail trims less scary for your dog.

## Styptic Powder

A good styptic powder is smart to have on hand for those instances where you [accidentally cut a nail too short](#). Styptic powder will help stop the bleeding so that you can care for your dog's toe.

It may be helpful to gradually get your dog accustomed to the sight and sound of the nail clippers before you try to cut your dog's nails.

Try bringing the nail clippers out, clicking them, and letting your dog smell them on different occasions (without actually cutting their nails) so they get used to them.

Give your dog tasty treats when the clippers come out.

Here's how to cut dog nails safely:

1. Find a quiet area where your dog is comfortable and free from distractions.
2. If you have a small dog, hold your dog in your lap or place them on a steady surface. If you have a large dog, it's helpful to have another person hold your dog while you cut their nails.
3. Gently but firmly hold one of your dog's paws between your thumb and forefinger.
4. Push down slightly on the paw pad to extend the nail forward. Make sure there is no hair blocking your view of the entire nail.
5. When your dog is holding still, clip straight across the tip of the nail. Do not clip behind the natural curve of the nail.
6. Give lots of high-value treats before, during, and after to associate nail trims with big rewards.

## How to File Your Dog's Nails to Smooth Them After Clipping

Filing your dog's nails is primarily done to remove any sharp tips or fragments left over after clipping your dog's nails.

1. Take a heavy-duty nail file, grasp your dog's paw gently, and spread the toes apart.
2. With your dominant hand, hold the file and gently round off any sharp edges for a smooth finish.

## How Short Should You Cut Your Dog's Nails?

It is important not to clip behind the natural curve of the nail because this is where the "quick" starts.