



BODY HANDLING

Why Is Body Handling Important?

Believe it or not, not all dogs like to be petted or touched by everyone they meet. You can teach your pup to cheerfully accept being stroked, handled, and groomed by practicing the steps below.

The Basics:

- Touch or hold the body part. *Wait a beat.* THEN reach for the treat. This sequence is critical.
- Go slowly. Repeat each step many times. Do a few brief sessions every day.
- Give A Treat For Every Single Repetition.
- Only move on to harder steps when your pup looks positively joyful about the current step. If you push too fast while waving a treat in front of his nose he will become distrustful of the process and you'll find yourself stuck at a later step because your foundation was shaky.
- When your dog is comfortable with you doing an exercise, then have a family member or trusted friend repeat the entire process, going as slowly as needed.
- Never restrain your pup during these exercises. You want him to be a willing participant, which means he gets to vote with his feet when he's had enough. End the session before that, ok?

1. Neck & Collar: You need to be able to grab your dog's collar without scaring her. This basic skill helps you manage your dog on a daily basis and it can save her life in an emergency. Start slowly with gentle touches to the neck and collar. Work your way up to very light collar grabs, then firmer ones. Give a treat each time.

2. Head & Ears: People are going to pet your dog's head, often without ever asking your permission. Plus, ears are irresistible—they dangle or stick up; either way, you need to be able to wipe them and look inside. So start with light touches around head, face and ears. Work your way up to full "exams" using treats after each rep, not during.

3. Mouth: You need to be able to look inside your dog's mouth and brush your dog's teeth. Plus, your vet needs to be able to safely examine your pup's mouth. Start with gentle touches to the lips; work your way up to opening your dog's mouth gently. Pop a treat in every time.

4. Paws: Paws get dirty, wet, and are magnets for burrs or foxtails. Plus, somebody will have to trim your dog's nails someday. Go extra slow with paw handling and it will pay off. Do reps with each paw and each toe in separate sessions. You can feed a meal's worth of kibble and treats just working on paws, but only work as long as your pup will tolerate.

5. Tail: Tails are irresistible things for kids to pull. Plus, vet techs need to lift tails for temperature checks. Start with light touches to your dog's rump and hindquarters, then begin tail touches. Work your way up to prolonged holds and gentle tugs. Treat afterwards.

6. Grooming: If your pup has a coat that needs brushing, get her used to the sight and feel of grooming tools using the same steps above. Use extra special treats for these exercises.

Need More Help?

If your pup is struggling with being touched, petted, picked up, or groomed, please contact us for private help. We can teach you safe techniques so your dog calmly accepts all forms of body handling.