

## The Importance of Grooming Our Pets

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I've been professionally grooming for over 30 years, and one thing I've learned is that grooming is so much more than keeping our pets clean — it's a way to build a strong bond with them. Grooming allows you to thoroughly examine your dog's body and notice any new cuts, bumps, or growths that might need a veterinarian's attention.

As a trainer, I've also seen how grooming helps build trust with new dogs. Unlike training, groomers don't get much time to get to know a dog before starting. We simply pick them up, place them in the tub, and begin. That's why it's so important to make the grooming process a calm and reassuring experience — one that says, "This is a time to relax, not stress."

### Bathing Basics

Start by wetting your dog from the base of the skull down. Be sure to get under the paws, tail, belly, armpits, and chest. Use lukewarm water — dogs have a higher body temperature than humans, so hot water can be uncomfortable.

I recommend using a natural-based shampoo, such as Tropiclean or Hydra. Work it into their coat thoroughly, including the pads of their paws. For shorter coats, a rubber mitt helps loosen dead hair. If your dog is shedding excessively, use a conditioner before and after shampooing to help loosen the undercoat.

Make grooming a positive experience! Play some music, talk to your pup, and keep it light and fun.

### Conditioner & Head Care

Always use a good-quality conditioner and avoid people shampoo — it can dry out a dog's skin and coat. For the head, hold down the ear flaps and spray downward, being careful not to get water in the ears or nose. Use tearless shampoo for the face — that's very important!

### Drying Time

Start drying at the head and work your way down. Pick up each paw and dry between the toes until the coat is fluffy and no longer flat. If your dog is nervous about the dryer, try a Happy Hoodie — it muffles the sound and reduces stress. Keep treats handy to reward calm behavior.

For double-coated breeds, make sure the undercoat is completely dry to prevent matting or infection.

### Ears & Nails

After drying, use an ear cleaner like Zap. If your dog has chronic ear issues, follow your veterinarian's recommendations.

Next, check the nails. I like using a Diamond Dremel to gently file them down — nails are softest right after a bath. Keep styptic powder on hand in case of a quick trim accident.

### Finishing Touches

There you go — a nice, clean, fresh-smelling pup! I usually bathe my dogs every other week, but some clients come weekly. The key is using a high-quality conditioner to keep coats healthy.

If your dog ever gets sprayed by a skunk, use Skunk Off and let it sit for at least 30 minutes. While there are other DIY solutions, they can strip away the natural oils that protect your dog's skin and coat.

A little time, care, and patience make all the difference — and your dog will not only look great but feel loved, relaxed, and happy. ❤️🐕