

# How to Clip your Dog's Nails

Your vet bill can be expensive! There is no need to add the cost of clipping your dog's nails to that bill. With a little courage and this do-it-yourself guide, you can keep your dog's nails trim. After listing the tools required, this guide will cover the following areas: (1) buying clippers, (2) clipping the nails, and (3) keeping the nails trim.

## Tools Required

You will need:

- Dog nail clippers
- Styptic powder
- An assistant
- A nail file
- Dog treats

## Buying Clippers

Quality dog nail clippers will make your job easier. Be sure your clippers have the following features:

**Safety guard** – This metal piece *helps* prevent you from cutting too deep. Some guards are adjustable or swivel out of the way to sharpen the blades.

**Flat blades** – It is best to buy clippers with replaceable blades. If you can't sharpen or replace the blades, you'll have to buy new clippers when these become dull. Avoid buying the clippers that surround your dog's nail since these are difficult to sharpen.

## Clipping the Nails

Be prepared to clip and know what to do in case bleeding occurs by following these steps:

**Preparing to clip.** A little preparation will make this a more pleasant experience for your dog and make him more willing to cooperate next time. Follow these steps:

1. Be sure you have clippers, styptic powder, and a nail file within reach. Interrupting the session will likely make your dog antsy.
2. Your assistant should begin by petting the dog and speaking calmly to him and be prepared to hold the dog still so that you can cut accurately.

**Note:** The "quick" is the area of flesh inside the nail that supplies blood to the nail and often grows close to the tip of the nail.

3. Look at each nail and locate the quick before cutting. On a dog with white nails, the pink flesh may show through the nail. On a dog with black nails or very opaque nails look underneath each nail to locate the quick. If you are unsure where the quick is, just clip a small portion off the tip of each nail.

**Warning: Cutting too deep can cause bleeding. Avoid cutting into the quick of the nail.**

**Clipping.** With your assistant by your side, follow these steps:

1. Lightly press on the pad of the paw to cause the nail to protrude. See Figure 1.



Figure 1. Holding the paw.

2. Clip the tip of each nail below the quick. If you are using the safety guard, you should know that it does not guarantee to keep you from cutting the quick.
3. Check each nail and use a nail file to smooth the rough spots if necessary.
4. Praise your dog and give him a treat!

**Cauterizing a bleed.** If the quick is cut, follow these steps:

1. Put some styptic powder on the quick. Bleeding from the quick can be heavy and doesn't stop easily. Don't let the amount of blood scare you, the dog will be fine.
2. Keep the dog calm and still until the bleeding stops.

## Keeping the Nails Trim

Don't let those trimmed nails get long again. Instead, follow these steps:

**Clipping tips.** To keep a dog's nails the proper length, remember these tips:

- The proper length of a dog's nails will not touch the ground when he is standing.
- Clip or file the nails every 4 weeks; a dog's nails do not need to be cut as often as a human's.
- File the nails every 1 to 2 weeks to avoid having to clip them and to keep the quick retracted.
- Walking a dog often, especially on pavement, or allowing a dog a spot to dig in the yard will help keep his nails trim.
- When petting your puppy get him used to you touching his paws. This will train him to cooperate and make your job easier when he becomes full grown.
- Make it a pleasant experience with praise and treats.