FREEDOM SERVICE DOGS
OF AMERICA

Nail Trimming

It is very important that puppies maintain short, healthy nails. Overgrown nails are very uncomfortable for dogs and can eventually lead to physical injuries or deformities if not addressed. Nail trimming should be done on a weekly basis by the raiser and not a groomer to ensure positive reinforcement principles are followed. Even if your puppy's nails are being worn down naturally, regular body handling is important to build comfort with all aspects of grooming and examinations. Raisers should trim small slivers of the nail off at a time to avoid "quicking" the puppy, or accidentally causing the nail to bleed. It may not be necessary to trim all nails during a session as they can grow and wear down at different rates, but don't forget about the dew claw!

Avoid grabbing your puppy's paw and attempting to restrain them for nail trims. Instead you should apply a technique called "shaping", where we are working within the puppy's comfort level to accomplish a task. While your puppy is relaxing in a "down" position, calmly reach out and stroke their shoulder. Follow this up with a piece of kibble and gentle verbal praise. If your puppy seems comfortable with this part of their body being handled the next step would be to once again stroke their shoulder but this time extend your hand down the puppy's leg, following up with gentle praise and a piece of kibble. Using this method should allow you to gradually work your way to the puppy's paw in a non-intrusive manner, ensuring a positive experience and building comfort for both the raiser and puppy.

Unsure which nail clippers you should buy? Check out the Millers Forge brand on Amazon. We recommend the smaller, red-handled version for younger puppies and the larger, orange-handled version for adult dogs.

Raisers should never force their puppies to participate in a nail trim. If your puppy is exhibiting fear or you are not comfortable with nail trimming please reach out to the PDT for helpful tips and training plans

How to: Clip your dog's nails

You will need: Pet nail clippers • Clotting powder • Treats

For white nails: Locate the quick, the pink area within the nail where the nerves and blood vessels are.
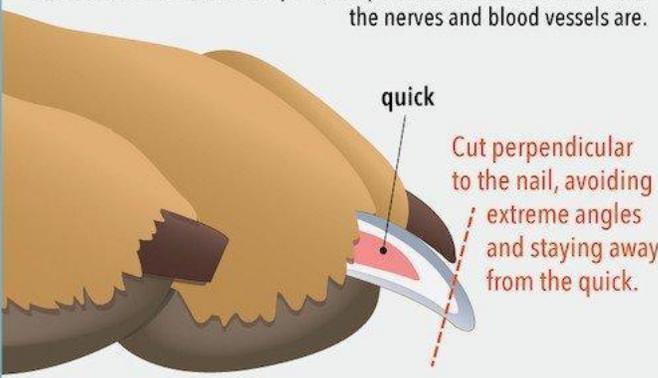
quick

Cut perpendicular to the nail, avoiding extreme angles and staying away from the quick.

For black nails: Cut small slices until you see a small round smooth area.

Handling injuries

If bleeding occurs, apply a generous amount of syptic powder as quickly as possible. Use your finger or a cotton ball to keep the powder in place for 5 to 10 minutes.

If you don't have styptic powder, you can use cornstarch, flour, or even a bar of soap.

If bleeding lasts more than 20 minutes, you will need to take your dog to the veterinarian.