

HELP! My pet hates nail trims!

Advice for pooch-loving people for whom nail trims can be a real nail-biter.

By relieving your pup's nail trim stress, you're more likely to have a calm, cooperative canine on your hands rather than one that flails and fights to get away. Transition the attitude of nail care from stressful to restful by following these tactful trimming tips:

1. Pair with pawsitives. Provide ample and super-flavorful treats throughout the entire nail trim. Treats are optimally given continuously with the licking of a tasty soft treat or delivered in fast repetition. (Hint: Cut the treats into pea-sized pieces).

2. Don't force the issue. Holding your dog down against his will for a nail trim can increase fear and resistance. Instead, build your canine's confidence gradually by earning trust and associating paw and nail handling with good things the dog enjoys.

3. Make it manageable. Divide the nail trim into smaller segments. Start with a spot on the dog that's well within your dog's comfort zone. Make sure that your pooch's body language is happy, relaxed and loose, and that he's readily accepting treats before continuing.

4. Don't start with clippers. Handle your dog's paws and nails with your fingers. Then move to other items, like the closed end of a ballpoint pen or a spoon, to mimic the sensation of something touching the nail.

5. Reintroduce trimmers as a friend, not a foe. Hold nail trimmers in hand and allow the dog to approach, instead of bringing the trimmers to your dog. Encourage approach by placing a soft, spreadable treat like dog-safe peanut butter on the handle. Or place clippers on the ground with a Hansel-and-Gretel-like trail of treats leading up to and around them.

6. Take it one nail at a time. Rather than doing it all at once, trim one to three nails a day. You'd be surprised at how much easier the task becomes for you and your dog.

