

THE DOG PARENT LIFE

Happy Coat *Handbook*

A dog parent's guide to bathing, brushing & simple grooming
care, without the stress or huge grooming bills



ACTION GUIDE EDITION

DogParentLife.com

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This guide is for educational purposes only. It is not a substitute for veterinary care, professional grooming, or hands-on training from a qualified expert. Every dog is different. If your dog has skin irritation, open sores, painful mats, sudden hair loss, parasites, ear odor, bleeding, swelling, signs of pain, or extreme fear during grooming, please contact your veterinarian or a professional groomer.

This is an action guide. Every major section includes practical steps, checklists, routines, and simple decision points, so you can actually *do* something with the information instead of only reading about it.



THE MAIN RULE

Your dog does not need you to become a professional groomer. Your dog needs you to become a calm, observant, prepared dog parent who knows what to do at home and when to ask for help.

■ How to Use This Book

- 1 Read the Safety First chapter before trying any grooming routine.
- 2 Find your dog's coat type and start with that chapter.
- 3 Use the Quick Start Grooming Reset if you want a simple first-week plan.
- 4 Print the checklists and action pages at the back of the book.
- 5 Fill in your own groomer, vet, and product notes as you go.
- 6 When something feels risky, stop and ask a professional.

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PART 01

Start Here

The mindset, the first week, and the safety rules that matter most.

**OUR PROMISE TO YOU**

By the end of this guide, you will have a simple grooming routine you can actually follow: brush, bathe, dry, check, maintain, and know when to get help.

**CHAPTER 1**

Welcome to Dog Parent Life

Let's be honest. Taking care of a dog's coat can feel a little overwhelming at first.

You bring home this sweet, funny, lovable dog, and suddenly there is hair on the couch, hair in the car, hair on your clothes, hair floating through the air, and somehow even hair in places your dog has never been.

Then bath day comes around. Your dog suddenly acts like you have personally betrayed them. The bathroom turns into a splash zone. The towel is soaked. You are soaked. Your dog smells like wet dog, shampoo, and poor life choices.

And if your dog has long hair, curls, wrinkles, a thick undercoat, sensitive skin, or a strong opinion about water, things can get even more interesting.

That is exactly why this guide exists.

You do not have to become a professional groomer to become a more confident dog parent. You do not need a fancy salon setup, a wall full of tools, or years of training just to help your dog stay clean, comfortable, and cared for at home.

What you do need is a simple routine, the right basic tools, a little patience, and a better understanding of what your dog's coat actually needs.

This handbook was created for regular dog parents who want to take better care of their dogs without feeling stressed, confused, or judged. The goal is not to replace every professional groomer. The goal is to help you handle the everyday care that happens between appointments.

Maybe you want to save money between groomer visits. Maybe your puppy is new to grooming and you want to start things the right way. Maybe your senior dog needs a gentler routine. Maybe your long-haired dog gets tangles faster than you can say, *where did that mat come from?*

Maybe your short-haired dog still somehow leaves hair everywhere. Maybe your Bulldog, Frenchie, or Pug has folds that need extra care. Maybe your Husky, Shepherd, Golden, or Corgi sheds so much that brushing feels like a part-time job.

You are in the right place.

The goal is not perfection. The goal is care. A perfect haircut means nothing if your dog is scared, uncomfortable, or unsafe. A slightly messy but happy, clean, brushed, comfortable dog is already a huge win.

So take a breath. You are not behind. You are not a bad dog parent because your dog has mats, smells funky, hates baths, sheds like crazy, or looks like they rolled through a bush five minutes after you brushed them.

You are learning. And your dog is lucky to have someone who cares enough to learn.

■ What You Will Be Able to Do

- Choose the right brushing routine for your dog's coat type.
- Run a 10-minute weekly coat and skin check.
- Bathe your dog with less chaos and better prep.
- Dry your dog safely, especially if they have a thick, long, or curly coat, or skin folds.
- Clean paws, face folds, and ears more confidently.
- Handle nail, teeth, and paw care basics, including what to do if a nail trim goes wrong.
- Prevent common matting trouble spots before they become painful.
- Manage shedding more realistically.
- Choose tools wisely without buying every gadget on the internet.
- Save money by handling the right tasks at home and knowing which ones belong with a professional.

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CHAPTER 2

The Stella Lesson

Before Dog Parent Life, we learned one very important dog coat lesson the real-life way. Her name was Stella.

Stella was our Husky. She was beautiful, full of personality, and everything people love about Huskies. She had that gorgeous thick coat, the classic Husky attitude, and a way of making people smile just by being herself.

She also taught us that some dogs do not just shed. They redecorate your entire life with fur.

Before Stella, we had trusted someone who told us Huskies did not shed much. That turned out to be very far from the truth.

We loved her deeply, but the hair was everywhere. On the floor. On the furniture. On our clothes. In the air. You could brush her and end up with a pile of fur so big it looked like another small dog was sitting next to her.

Bath time was its own adventure. Stella was not a fan of water. One time she got skunked, and getting her clean became a full-body workout. She did not want the hose. She did not want the bath. She did not want any part of the plan. (If this ever happens to you, the skunk emergency plan in the Odor Control chapter is the one we wish we had back then.)

Looking back, the funny stories are part of the memories. But the bigger lesson is simple: we wish we had known more about what her coat actually needed before we were living in a cloud of Husky hair.

That is the heart of this handbook. Every dog comes with different care needs. Some dogs need regular brushing to prevent painful mats. Some need help managing heavy shedding. Some need careful drying because moisture gets trapped in thick coats or skin folds. Some dogs are low-maintenance most of the year, then suddenly blow their coat and turn your house into a fur snow globe.

THE STELLA RULE



Love the dog, but learn the coat.

You can absolutely adore your dog and still feel overwhelmed by shedding, tangles, bath day, odor, folds, nails, or mats. That does not make you careless. It makes you a real dog parent learning real dog care.

When you understand your dog's coat, you can make better choices. You can avoid painful problems. You can save money between grooming appointments. You can spot warning signs earlier. You can make bath day less dramatic. You can help your dog feel better in their own skin.

And yes, you can hopefully keep a little less fur out of your coffee.

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CHAPTER 3

The Quick Start Grooming Reset

If you only do one thing after opening this handbook, start here. This seven-day reset gives you a simple plan without trying to fix every grooming issue in one afternoon.

■ Day 1: Look, Do Not Fix

- 1 Pet your dog slowly from head to tail.
- 2 Feel for tangles, bumps, scabs, sticky spots, burrs, or sensitive areas.
- 3 Look behind the ears, under the collar and harness, under the legs, around the tail, and between the paw pads.
- 4 Do not try to remove tight mats today. Just notice what is there.
- 5 Write down anything that needs attention.

■ Day 2: Tool Check

- ☐ Do you have a brush that matches your dog's coat?
- ☐ Do you have a metal comb for long, curly, or dense coats?
- ☐ Do you have dog-safe shampoo?
- ☐ Do you have towels and a non-slip surface?
- ☐ Do you have treats or a lick mat for positive distraction?

■ Day 3: Five-Minute Brush Session

- 1 Choose one calm time of day.
- 2 Brush one area only, such as the back, chest, or sides.
- 3 Praise and reward your dog.
- 4 Stop before your dog gets frustrated.
- 5 Make a note of any snaggy areas.

■ Day 4: Paws, Ears, and Face Check

- 1 Lift each paw gently and look for debris, redness, overgrown nails, or hair between pads.
- 2 Look inside the ears only as far as you can easily see.
- 3 Check for odor, discharge, redness, or head shaking.
- 4 Wipe the face gently if needed.

- 5 Do not dig into ears or trim near eyes.

■ Day 5: Bath Plan

Do not bathe yet unless your dog is ready. Today is for planning. Decide where the bath will happen, what supplies you need, how you will keep your dog from slipping, and how you will dry them afterward.

■ Day 6: Bath or Refresh

If your dog needs a bath and you are prepared, follow the Bath Day Game Plan later in this guide. If not, do a simple wipe-down, brush-out, or paw cleaning.

■ Day 7: Create Your Routine

Use the printable Grooming Schedule at the back of this book to choose your weekly and monthly routine. Keep it simple enough that you can actually do it.



DO NOT RUSH

A gentle seven-day reset is better than one stressful grooming marathon that makes your dog hide every time they see a brush.

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CHAPTER 4

Safety First

Before you pick up a brush, nail grinder, towel, dryer, or pair of scissors, remember this: your dog's comfort and safety matter more than how they look at the end.

■ Stop If You See Panic

A little wiggling or side-eye is normal for many dogs. Panic is different. Stop if your dog is trembling hard, snapping, biting, screaming, thrashing, trying desperately to escape, freezing in fear, or breathing heavily from stress.

■ Never Cut Tight Mats With Scissors

This is one of the most important safety rules in this book. Tight mats can pull skin up into the hair. If you cut into the mat, you may cut skin. If a mat is tight, close to the skin, painful, large, or wet, or your dog reacts when you touch it, call a groomer.

■ Use Dog-Safe Products

Use dog-safe shampoo and conditioner. Dogs have different skin needs than people. If your dog has allergies, itchy skin, hot spots, dandruff, frequent infections, or a medicated routine, ask your vet before changing products.

■ Watch Heat, Slips, and Sharp Tools

- Bath water should be lukewarm, not hot.
- Use non-slip mats in tubs, showers, sinks, and grooming spaces.
- Never leave your dog unattended on a raised surface.
- Keep dryers moving and avoid high heat.
- Check clipper blades for heat if you use clippers.
- Do not use scissors near moving dogs, eyes, private areas, or tight mats.

■ When to Stop and Call a Vet

- Open sores, bleeding, swelling, pus, or severe redness.
- Sudden hair loss or bald patches.
- Strong skin odor, ear odor, or discharge.
- Constant scratching, chewing, or licking.
- Pain when brushed, touched, bathed, or dried.
- Possible mange, fleas, ticks, hot spots, or infected folds.
- A dog who suddenly reacts aggressively to being touched.



COMFORT OVER VANITY

A clean, comfortable dog with an imperfect trim is better than a stressed dog with a perfect photo.

PART 02

Know Your Dog's Coat

Every coat has its own rules. Find yours and start there.

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CHAPTER 5

Coat Type Finder

Before you decide how to brush, bathe, dry, or maintain your dog, identify the coat you are working with. Many mixed-breed dogs fit into more than one category, so choose the closest match and adjust as you learn.

If your dog has...	They may be...	Start with this routine
Smooth, short hair that lies close to the body	Short coated	Brush 1 to 3 times weekly with a rubber curry or bristle brush. Bathe as needed.
Long flowing hair, feathering, or silky hair	Long coated	Brush several times weekly. Use a comb check. Watch ears, armpits, tail, and belly.
Fluffy curls, waves, or hair that grows continuously	Curly or wavy	Brush and comb several times weekly or daily. Professional grooming usually needed.
Thick undercoat plus outer guard hairs	Double coated	Brush 2 to 4 times weekly, more in shedding season. Do not shave without professional guidance.
Rough, bristly, terrier-like texture	Wire coated	Brush and comb furnishings. Ask a groomer about clipping vs. hand stripping.
Wrinkles, face folds, tail pocket, or deep skin folds	Fold-care dog	Clean and dry folds regularly. Watch for odor, redness, moisture, and discomfort.

If your dog fits two types, follow the more maintenance-heavy routine. For example, a wavy, double-coated mix may need both shedding care and comb checks.

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CHAPTER 6

Short Coat Routine

Short coats can be easier than long coats, but they are not maintenance-free. Short-haired dogs can shed heavily (ask any Lab owner's black pants), develop odor, have skin irritation, and still need regular nail, ear, paw, and dental care.

Best for: Labs, Beagles, Boxers, Pit Bulls, Frenchies, Pugs, Boston Terriers, Dachshunds, Great Danes, Dobermans, and many mixed breeds.

■ Tools to Use

- Rubber curry brush for loose hair.
- Soft bristle brush for finishing.
- Grooming glove if your dog dislikes brushes.
- Dog-safe shampoo.
- Microfiber towel.
- Dog-safe wipes for quick cleanups.

■ How to Brush a Short-Coated Dog

- 1 Choose a place where loose hair is easy to clean, like outside, the garage, the bathroom, or on a towel.
- 2 Start at the neck or shoulders and brush in the direction the coat grows.
- 3 Use light to medium pressure. Do not scrape the skin.
- 4 Work down the back, sides, chest, rear, and tail area.
- 5 Use shorter strokes around sensitive areas like the belly, armpits, and legs.
- 6 Wipe away loose hair with a damp towel or finishing brush.
- 7 Praise your dog and end before they get annoyed.

■ Short Coat Weekly Routine

- Brush 1 to 3 times per week.
- Wipe paws after muddy walks.
- Check ears and nails weekly.
- Check skin for flakes, bumps, redness, ticks, or bald patches.
- Bathe when dirty, smelly, or oily, or as advised by your vet.

■ Common Mistakes

- Assuming short-haired dogs do not shed.
- Overbathing because the dog smells, without checking ears, skin, mouth, or folds.
- Using harsh shampoo.
- Forgetting wrinkle care in short-coated breeds with folds.

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CHAPTER 7

Long Coat Routine

Long coats are beautiful, but they can tangle quickly. The goal is to prevent mats before they become painful. Long-coated dogs often need regular brushing, comb checks, and a practical haircut if the full coat is too much to maintain.

Best for: Shih Tzus, Maltese, Yorkies, Havanese, Lhasa Apsos, Collies, Cavaliers, Spaniels, Papillons, long-haired Dachshunds, and many mixed breeds.

Tools to Use

- Slicker brush.
- Pin brush for some silky coats.
- Metal grooming comb.
- Dog-safe detangling spray.
- Dog conditioner if appropriate.
- Towel and dryer setup.

How to Brush a Long-Haired Dog

- 1 Start with a calm dog and a small section. Do not try to brush the whole dog if they are already frustrated.
- 2 Mist lightly with dog-safe detangling spray if the coat is dry or static-prone. Do not soak the coat.
- 3 Use your hand to lift a section of hair so you can brush from close to the skin outward.
- 4 Brush gently in small layers, not only over the top surface.
- 5 If you find a tangle, hold the hair near the base so you do not pull on the skin.
- 6 Use the slicker brush to loosen, then use the metal comb to check your work.
- 7 If the comb catches, go back to gentle brushing. If it will not loosen, stop and ask a groomer.
- 8 Reward your dog often and take breaks.

■ The Mat Map

These are the areas long-haired dog parents should check most often:

1 Behind ears

2 Under collar

3 Armpits

4 Chest

5 Belly

6 Harness area

7 Tail

8 Rear feathering

9 Legs

10 Feet

■ Long Coat Weekly Routine

- Brush problem areas daily or almost daily if the coat is long.
- Do a full comb check 2 to 4 times per week.
- Brush before every bath.
- Dry fully after bathing.
- Schedule professional grooming before the coat gets out of control.
- Consider a shorter maintenance haircut if daily brushing is not realistic.



DOG PARENT TIP

A shorter, comfortable haircut is not giving up. It is often the kindest choice for a dog who mats easily.

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CHAPTER 8

Curly & Wavy Coat Routine

Curly and wavy dogs can look fluffy and brushed on the outside while hiding tangles closer to the skin. It is the grooming equivalent of a tidy room with everything shoved in the closet. This is common with Poodles, Doodles, Bichons, Portuguese Water Dogs, and many curly mixed breeds.

**THE RULE**

Brush for appearance. Comb for truth. If a metal comb cannot glide through the coat from the skin outward, the coat is not fully brushed.

■ How to Line Brush a Curly or Wavy Coat

- 1 Pick one area, such as one leg, one side, or the chest.
- 2 Use your hand to lift the hair above the area you are brushing.
- 3 Brush the exposed lower layer from the skin outward using gentle strokes.
- 4 Move up a small amount and repeat.
- 5 After finishing that area, run the metal comb from the skin outward.
- 6 If the comb catches, return to small-section brushing.
- 7 Never yank through tangles.
- 8 Stop and call a groomer if mats are tight, close to the skin, or painful.

**CURLY COAT BATH RULE**

Do not bathe a curly or wavy dog with mats already in the coat unless a groomer or vet tells you to. Water can tighten mats and make them much harder to remove.

■ Curly & Wavy Weekly Routine

- Brush and comb several times weekly, or daily if the coat is kept long.
- Check armpits, collar area, behind the ears, tail, and legs often.
- Keep professional grooming on a regular schedule.
- Choose a practical haircut if the coat is matting faster than you can maintain it.
- After a bath, dry fully and comb again.

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CHAPTER 9

Double Coat Shedding Routine

Double-coated dogs are the ones who can make your vacuum question its life choices. Huskies, Shepherds, Goldens, Corgis, Aussies, Labs, Malamutes, Samoyeds, and many other breeds have a protective topcoat and a soft, dense undercoat.

When it is maintained well, a double coat helps protect the dog. When it is neglected, loose undercoat can build up, shed everywhere, trap debris, and contribute to discomfort.

■ Tools to Use

- Undercoat rake.
- Slicker brush.
- Metal comb for feathering and trouble spots.
- Deshedding tool, used carefully and not too aggressively.
- High-velocity dryer if available and your dog tolerates it.
- Plenty of towels.

■ The Double-Coat Shedding Session

- 1 Start outside or somewhere easy to clean. You are not being dramatic. The fur will happen.
- 2 Use your hands to feel for dense or packed areas, often around the neck, hips, rear, tail, and thighs.
- 3 Brush in the direction of coat growth with an undercoat rake or slicker, using gentle pressure.
- 4 Work in sections. Do not rake the same spot until the skin is irritated.
- 5 Remove loose fur from the tool often.
- 6 Use a comb on feathering, behind the ears, and the "pants."
- 7 Stop when the coat is improving, not when every last hair is gone. There will always be more hair.
- 8 Reward your dog and clean up before the fur migrates into your kitchen.

■ Bathing a Double-Coated Dog

- 1 Brush before the bath to loosen dead coat.
- 2 Wet the coat thoroughly. Dense coats can resist water at first.
- 3 Use dog-safe shampoo and rinse deeply.
- 4 Condition if appropriate for the coat.
- 5 Rinse again until no residue remains.
- 6 Towel dry well.
- 7 Dry down to the skin. The surface may feel dry while the undercoat is still damp.
- 8 Brush again after drying.

**DOUBLE-COAT WARNING**

Do not shave a double-coated dog just because they shed or look hot. Ask a vet or professional groomer before shaving a double coat.

■ Shedding Season Plan

- Brush daily or almost daily in short sessions.
- Plan one deeper deshedding session each week.
- Use a self-serve dog wash or a groomer blowout if the undercoat is overwhelming.
- Vacuum more often and accept that some hair is part of the package.
- Never keep working with a tool once the skin looks red or irritated.

10**CHAPTER 10**

Wire Coat Basics

Wire-coated dogs have a rougher, bristly texture and a look that says "distinguished professor." Terriers, Schnauzers, Wirehaired Dachshunds, and similar dogs may need a different routine from silky or curly dogs.

■ How to Maintain a Wire Coat at Home

- 1 Brush furnishings like the beard, legs, chest, and belly with a slicker or appropriate brush.
- 2 Comb through longer areas to check for tangles.
- 3 Wipe the beard after meals or drinking if it gets messy.
- 4 Check paws, ears, and nails weekly.
- 5 Ask a professional groomer whether your dog's coat should be clipped or hand-stripped.

**PRO TIP**

If you care about keeping the traditional wiry texture, talk to a groomer before choosing a clipper cut. Clipping can soften the coat over time.

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CHAPTER 11

Wrinkles, Folds & Special Skin Areas

Some dogs need less brushing but more skin fold care. Bulldogs, Frenchies, Pugs, Shar-Pei, Mastiffs, and dogs with face folds, lip folds, neck folds, or tail pockets need those folds kept clean and dry.

How to Clean Skin Folds

- 1 Choose a calm moment, not right after wild play.
- 2 Lift the fold gently without pulling hard.
- 3 Use a dog-safe wipe or a soft damp cloth.
- 4 Wipe away dirt, moisture, food, drool, or buildup.
- 5 Use a dry soft cloth to dry the fold completely.
- 6 Check for redness, odor, swelling, discharge, raw skin, or pain.
- 7 Reward your dog and keep the session short.

How Often to Clean Folds

Some dogs need fold checks daily. Others need them a few times per week. If a fold smells bad, looks red, feels wet, or your dog rubs their face often, call your vet instead of just cleaning more aggressively.

**IMPORTANT**

Clean is only half the job. Dry matters just as much. Moisture trapped in folds can quickly become a problem.

PART 03

Build Your At-Home Grooming Setup

The right tools and a little prep make everything easier.

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CHAPTER 12

Beginner Tool Kit

You do not need to buy everything at once. Start with tools that match your dog. A short-coated dog does not need the same kit as a long-coated Doodle. A Bulldog needs fold care. A Husky needs shedding tools. A Yorkie needs tangle prevention. Buying the right three tools beats buying the wrong twelve.

■ The Basic Kit Most Dog Parents Need

- Dog-safe shampoo, plus conditioner if your dog's coat benefits from it.
- Microfiber towels.
- Non-slip mat.
- Treats or a lick mat.
- Ear wipes or vet-approved ear cleaner.
- Nail clippers or a grinder, plus styptic powder for nail emergencies.
- Dog toothbrush and dog-safe toothpaste.
- A brush and comb that match your dog's coat.
- A small notebook or phone note for grooming observations.

■ Buy This First If You Are Starting From Zero

- 1 The correct brush for your dog's coat.
- 2 A metal comb if your dog has long, curly, wavy, or dense hair.
- 3 Dog-safe shampoo.
- 4 Two absorbent towels.
- 5 A non-slip mat.
- 6 Treats.



SMART SHOPPING

Before you buy a new gadget, ask: does this solve a problem my dog actually has? Most dogs need a good brush, a comb, and consistency far more than they need the latest viral grooming tool.

13

CHAPTER 13

Bath Day Setup

A better bath starts before water touches your dog. Most bath chaos comes from missing supplies, slippery surfaces, nervous energy, and realizing halfway through that the towel is across the house.

■ Before You Start

- ☐ Brush your dog if their coat tangles or sheds heavily.
- ☐ Place a non-slip mat in the tub, shower, sink, or wash area.
- ☐ Put shampoo, conditioner, towels, treats, and a washcloth within reach.
- ☐ Wear clothes that can get wet. (They will.)
- ☐ Run lukewarm water.
- ☐ Decide how you will clean the face safely.
- ☐ Decide how you will dry your dog afterward.

■ Choose the Right Spot

Small dogs can often be bathed in a sink or small tub, as long as it is stable and non-slip and you keep one hand on them. Big dogs usually do better in a walk-in shower, a tub with a non-slip mat, an outdoor wash station, or a self-serve dog wash. You will find complete bath systems for both in the Big Dogs and Small Dogs chapters.



PLAN THE SHAKE

Every dog shakes. Decide where it is going to happen before it happens, and keep a towel ready to drape over their back.

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CHAPTER 14

Brush & Comb Guide

The right tool makes grooming easier. The wrong tool can make it frustrating or even uncomfortable.

Tool	Best for	Be careful
Rubber curry brush	Short coats and loose surface hair	Do not scrub irritated skin.
Slicker brush	Long, curly, wavy, and many double coats	Use gentle pressure. Do not scratch the skin.
Pin brush	Some long, silky coats	May not remove mats or undercoat well.
Metal comb	Checking long, curly, wavy, and dense coats	Do not yank through tangles.
Undercoat rake	Double coats with loose undercoat	Use gently and avoid overworking one spot.
Deshedding tool	Some shedding coats	Do not overuse or scrape the skin.
Bristle brush	Finishing short or smooth coats	Not enough for thick undercoat or mats.

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CHAPTER 15

Clippers, Scissors & Beginner Boundaries

This handbook is not here to turn you into a haircut professional. Sharp tools can injure dogs, especially around eyes, ears, skin folds, private areas, and mats. Many dog parents can safely maintain cleanliness and comfort at home, but detailed clipper and scissor work is best left to groomers.

■ Usually Reasonable at Home

- Brushing and combing.
- Bathing and drying.
- Wiping paws, face, and folds.
- Basic nail maintenance, if you are trained and comfortable.
- Light tidying only if your dog is calm, you can clearly see what you are doing, and you are using safe tools.

■ Better for a Professional

- Removing tight mats.
- Trimming near the eyes.
- Sanitary trims, if you are not trained.
- Full clipper haircuts.
- Shaving double coats.
- Aggressive, panicked, elderly, injured, or medically fragile dogs.
- Anything involving irritated skin, wounds, or unknown lumps.

PART 04

Core How-To Systems

The step-by-step routines you will use again and again.

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CHAPTER 16

The 10-Minute Weekly Coat Check

This is one of the most useful routines in the entire handbook. Do it weekly. It helps you catch problems early and keeps grooming from turning into a giant surprise.

What you need: treats, a brush or comb, a soft cloth or wipe, good lighting, and your phone or notebook for notes.

■ The Routine

- 1 Start at the head. Look at the eyes, ears, mouth area, and face folds if your dog has them.
- 2 Feel behind the ears for tangles or mats.
- 3 Check under the collar and harness areas.
- 4 Run your hands over the neck, shoulders, back, sides, and chest.
- 5 Lift each front leg gently and check the armpits.
- 6 Check the belly and groin area without poking or forcing.
- 7 Check the tail, rear feathering, and the area under the tail.
- 8 Check each paw: nails, pads, and between the toes.
- 9 Look for fleas, ticks, redness, flakes, odor, bumps, scabs, bald spots, damp areas, or pain.
- 10 Brush or wipe small issues you can safely handle. Write down anything that needs a groomer or vet.

**MAKE IT EASY**

Attach this routine to something you already do, like Sunday laundry, your weekend coffee, or the end of a favorite walk.

17

CHAPTER 17

How to Brush Your Dog

Brushing is not just about making the coat look nice. It removes loose hair, helps prevent tangles, lets you check the skin, and teaches your dog that being handled can be safe. It is also the single biggest money-saver in this book, because a brushed dog rarely needs expensive dematting.

■ The Calm Brush Session

- 1 Pick a calm time. Do not start when your dog is wild, overtired, or already stressed.
- 2 Let your dog sniff the brush.
- 3 Touch the brush to the body, praise, and reward.
- 4 Brush a small, easy area first, like the shoulder or back.
- 5 Use short, gentle strokes.
- 6 Stop after a few minutes if your dog is new to brushing.
- 7 End with praise before your dog gets upset.

■ If Your Dog Hates Brushing

- Do not start with the worst tangled area.
- Start with one stroke, then treat.
- Use a softer brush at first if the tool seems scary.
- Brush for 30 seconds, then stop.
- Repeat daily and slowly increase the time.
- Ask a groomer or trainer for help if your dog bites, panics, or cannot be safely handled.

■ Brush by Coat Type

Coat	How to brush
Short	Brush in the direction of hair growth with a rubber curry or bristle brush.
Long	Work in sections and check with a metal comb.
Curly or wavy	Line brush in layers and always comb check.
Double	Use undercoat tools gently in sections and expect ongoing shedding.
Wire	Brush furnishings and ask a groomer about the best coat maintenance plan.

18

CHAPTER 18

How to Bathe Your Dog

Bathing works best when it follows a plan. Here is the Dog Parent Life Bath Day Game Plan.

STEP

1

Brush Before the Bath

Brush first if your dog has a coat that tangles, mats, or sheds heavily. Water tightens tangles, and loose undercoat is far easier to manage if you remove some before the bath.

STEP

2

Gather Supplies

Dog-safe shampoo, conditioner if needed, towels, a non-slip mat, a washcloth for the face, treats or a lick mat, a cup or sprayer, and your brush and comb for afterward.

STEP

3

Wet From the Neck Down

Start with the body. Avoid blasting water at your dog's face. Use lukewarm water and speak calmly.

STEP

4

Shampoo the Body

Apply shampoo according to the product directions and massage gently through the coat. Pay attention to paws, legs, belly, rear, chest, and tail. Do not scrub long hair into knots, keep shampoo out of eyes, and do not pour water into ears.

STEP

5

Clean the Face Separately

Use a damp washcloth or a face-safe dog product. Be gentle around the eyes, nose, mouth, and ears.

STEP

6

Rinse Longer Than You Think

Leftover shampoo can irritate skin. Rinse until the water runs clear and the coat no longer feels slippery or soapy. Then rinse a little more.

STEP

7

Condition If Needed

Long, curly, dry, or tangle-prone coats may benefit from dog-safe conditioner. Follow the label and rinse thoroughly unless the product is designed to be left in.

STEP

8

Towel Dry

Squeeze and blot. Avoid rubbing long hair in circles, which creates tangles.

STEP

9

Dry Fully

Drying matters, especially for thick coats, curly coats, and skin folds. The next chapter covers it in detail.

STEP

10

Brush Again

Once your dog is dry or mostly dry, brush and comb as appropriate for their coat. Then hand out the well-earned treat.

**BATH DAY WIN**

A successful bath is not just a wet dog plus shampoo. It is prep, wash, rinse, dry, brush, and reward.

19

CHAPTER 19

How to Dry Your Dog Safely

Drying is where many dog parents accidentally stop too soon. A damp dog may smell musty, tangle faster, or develop irritation in folds or dense coat areas.

■ Towel Drying

- Use absorbent towels, and extra towels for big or double-coated dogs.

- Blot and squeeze water from the coat.
- Dry paws, belly, armpits, tail area, and folds carefully.
- Avoid rough circular rubbing on long or curly coats.

■ Using a Dryer

- If you use a human hair dryer, keep it on a low or cool setting.
- Keep the air moving. Never hold heat on one spot.
- Keep the dryer at a comfortable distance from the skin.
- Stop if your dog panics, and use treats and short sessions.
- For thick coats, brush as you dry if your dog tolerates it.

■ Dry These Areas Carefully

 Skin folds

 Under the collar

 Armpits

 Belly

 Between toes

 Under the tail

 Behind ears

 Dense undercoat

20

CHAPTER 20

How to Make Bath Day Less Stressful

Some dogs hate water. Some hate the tub. Some hate being held still. Some are perfectly fine until the dryer turns on, at which point they remember they are a wild wolf. Your job is not to win a battle. Your job is to make the routine more predictable and less scary.

■ The Low-Stress Bath Plan

- 1 Exercise lightly before bath time, if appropriate for your dog.
- 2 Set up everything before bringing your dog in.
- 3 Use a non-slip mat so your dog feels stable.
- 4 Use treats, calm praise, or a lick mat.
- 5 Start the water gently and avoid sudden spraying.
- 6 Keep the session as short as possible while still rinsing properly.
- 7 Drape a towel over the back of a nervous dog if it helps them feel grounded.
- 8 End with something your dog loves.

■ **If Your Dog Is Terrified**

Do not force a full bath. Try paw-only rinses, damp cloth wipe-downs, professional help, or short training sessions where your dog learns the bathroom is not a disaster zone. The Dogs Who Hate Water chapter has a step-by-step plan. For extreme fear, talk to your vet, groomer, or trainer.

PART 05

Everyday Care Beyond the Coat

Ears, nails, teeth, paws, faces, and smells.

21

CHAPTER 21

Ears

Ear care is about gentle observation and safe cleaning. Floppy-eared dogs and swimmers often need a little more attention. Whatever the ears look like, do not dig deep.

How to Check Ears

- 1 Lift the ear gently.
- 2 Look only where you can easily see.
- 3 Notice color, odor, wax, discharge, redness, swelling, or pain.
- 4 Watch for head shaking, scratching, or rubbing.
- 5 Write down anything unusual.

How to Wipe Ears Safely

- 1 Use a dog-safe ear wipe or a cotton pad with vet-approved cleaner.
- 2 Wipe the outer ear and visible folds only.
- 3 Never push cotton swabs into the ear canal.
- 4 Use a dry cotton pad to remove extra moisture if needed.
- 5 Call your vet for odor, discharge, pain, swelling, or repeated head shaking.

**VET SIGN**

A strong ear smell is not a normal dirty-dog smell. It can be a sign that your dog needs veterinary care.

22

CHAPTER 22

Nails

Nails affect comfort. Overgrown nails can change how a dog stands and walks. A good rule of thumb: if you hear clicking on hard floors, it is probably time for a trim. Nail care is also one of the grooming tasks dog parents fear most, so go slowly.

■ How to Start Nail Handling

- 1 Touch one paw, treat, release.
- 2 Lift one paw briefly, treat, release.
- 3 Touch one nail with the clipper or grinder turned off, treat, release.
- 4 Trim or grind a tiny amount from one nail, only if your dog stays calm.
- 5 Stop before your dog panics. One nail a day still counts.

■ Finding the Quick

The quick is the living part inside the nail, with blood vessels and nerves. On light-colored nails, you can usually see it as a pink area. On dark nails, you cannot, so take off tiny slivers at a time and look at the cut surface. When you see a chalky ring with a small dark dot appearing in the center, stop. You are close to the quick.

■ Clipper vs. Grinder

- Clippers are quick but can take off too much if you are not careful.
- Grinders shorten gradually but make noise and vibration.
- Some dogs strongly prefer one over the other.
- If you cannot see the quick or feel nervous, ask a groomer or vet tech to show you.

■ If You Cut the Quick

First: breathe. It happens to experienced groomers too. It stings, and it can bleed a surprising amount, but it is usually not serious.

- 1 Stay calm. Your dog takes cues from you.
- 2 Press a pinch of styptic powder firmly against the nail tip. Cornstarch or flour can work in a pinch.
- 3 Hold gentle pressure for a minute or two.
- 4 Keep your dog calm and quiet for a bit so the clot can set.
- 5 Give extra praise and end the session on a kind note.



CALL YOUR VET IF

The bleeding does not stop after 5 to 10 minutes of pressure, the nail is cracked or split, or the toe later looks swollen, red, or painful.

**SAFETY NOTE**

Do not turn nail trimming into a wrestling match. A quick professional nail trim is far better than a traumatic home battle, and it is one of the cheapest grooming services you can buy.

23**CHAPTER 23****Teeth**

Dental care is part of overall dog care. Bad breath, red gums, loose teeth, tartar, pain, or trouble eating should be discussed with your vet.

■ How to Start Tooth Brushing

- 1 Start by gently touching the outside of your dog's mouth.
- 2 Let your dog taste dog-safe toothpaste. Never use human toothpaste.
- 3 Lift the lip briefly and reward.
- 4 Use a finger brush or soft dog toothbrush on a few outside teeth.
- 5 Build slowly over days or weeks.
- 6 Aim for consistency, not perfection.

■ Helpful Dental Tools

Dog toothbrush



Dog-safe toothpaste



Dental wipes



Vet-recommended chews



Professional dental exams

24**CHAPTER 24****Paws**

Paws collect mud, salt, stickers, burrs, allergens, and tiny surprises from the world. They also tell you a lot about your dog's comfort.

■ How to Check Paws

- 1 Lift one paw gently.
- 2 Look between the toes.

- 3 Check pads for cracks, cuts, redness, swelling, or stuck debris.
- 4 Check nails and dewclaws.
- 5 Wipe with a damp cloth after muddy or salty walks.
- 6 Dry between the toes if wet.

**WHEN TO CALL THE VET**

Limping, bleeding, swelling, constant licking, deep cracks, embedded objects, or pain when the paw is touched.

25**CHAPTER 25****Face, Eyes & Tear Stains**

Face care should be gentle. Eyes are sensitive, and trimming near them is risky if you are not trained.

Simple Face Wipe Routine

- 1 Use a soft damp cloth.
- 2 Gently wipe away food, dirt, or tear moisture.
- 3 Use a separate clean area of the cloth for each eye.
- 4 Dry folds or damp spots.
- 5 Do not use harsh products near the eyes.

**CALL YOUR VET FOR**

Thick discharge, swelling, redness, squinting, cloudiness, or pain around the eyes.

26**CHAPTER 26****Odor Control**

If your dog smells, a bath might help. But odor can also come from the ears, mouth, folds, paws, skin, anal glands, or an infection. Do not just keep adding perfume or stronger shampoo. Play detective first.

■ Odor Troubleshooting

What you smell	What to check
Wet dog smell after a bath	Drying and rinsing. Your dog may still be damp underneath.
Musty smell	Damp coat, folds, ears, and paws.
Fishy smell	Ask your vet or groomer about anal gland concerns.
Bad breath	Ask your vet about dental health.
Yeasty or sour smell	Call your vet, especially with redness or itching.
Skunk	Use the emergency plan below.

■ The Skunk Emergency Plan

This is the plan we wish we had for Stella. Skip the tomato juice. It mostly just makes a skunky dog smell like skunky tomato. Instead, many vets recommend this well-known homemade de-skunking mix.

Mix fresh, right before using: 1 quart of 3% hydrogen peroxide, 1/4 cup of baking soda, and 1 to 2 teaspoons of liquid dish soap.

- 1 Keep your dog outside if you can, so the smell does not come inside with them.
- 2 Check their eyes. If they are red, watery, or squinting, gently flush them with clean water and call your vet.
- 3 Put on gloves and mix the solution in an open bucket or bowl.
- 4 Work it into the dry coat, focusing on where they got sprayed. Keep it away from the eyes, nose, mouth, and inside the ears.
- 5 Let it sit for about 5 minutes, then rinse very thoroughly.
- 6 Follow with a regular bath using your dog's usual shampoo.
- 7 Repeat if needed, and use a damp cloth (not the mix) on the face.



SKUNK MIX SAFETY

Never store this mixture or put it in a closed bottle. It releases gas and the container can burst. Pour out any leftovers. Peroxide may lighten dark fur. If your dog has sensitive skin, open wounds, or got sprayed in the face, call your vet first.

PART 06

Safe Maintenance Trimming

What you can do at home, and what to leave to the pros.

27

CHAPTER 27

What Dog Parents Can Safely Maintain

This section is careful on purpose. The safest at-home grooming is maintenance, not major haircutting.

■ Good Home Maintenance Goals

- Keep the coat brushed and clean.
- Prevent mats before they start.
- Keep paws clean.
- Maintain nails if you are comfortable.
- Wipe folds and face.
- Notice when hair is blocking vision or collecting debris.
- Book professional help before the coat becomes painful.

28

CHAPTER 28

Paw Pad Hair

Some dogs grow hair between their paw pads. It can trap dirt, collect snowballs, or make dogs slip on hard floors. Trimming it can be risky, though, because pads are sensitive and dogs move suddenly.

■ Safe Decision Checklist

- ☐ Can your dog hold still calmly?
- ☐ Can you clearly see the paw pad and hair?
- ☐ Do you have the correct tool?
- ☐ Are you only removing hair that sticks out past the pad?
- ☐ Are you avoiding skin, webbing, and sensitive areas?
- ☐ Would you feel better having a groomer show you first?

**WHEN IN DOUBT**

Let a groomer handle paw pad trimming. It takes them a few minutes and is much safer than guessing with a moving dog.

29**CHAPTER 29****Around the Feet**

Tidying around the feet can make a dog look cleaner, but scissors near toes can be dangerous. If you do any light tidying, use extreme caution and only work when your dog is calm.

Beginner-friendly alternative: instead of trimming, brush the foot hair downward, wipe the paws clean, and book a groomer for foot shaping. You get a cleaner look without the risky cutting.

30**CHAPTER 30****Sanitary Area Caution**

The sanitary area is the hair around the private areas and rear, where urine, feces, and debris can collect. Keeping it tidy is useful grooming, but this area is also sensitive and easy to injure.

**BEST PRACTICE**

Most dog parents should let a groomer handle sanitary trimming, especially if the dog is wiggly, matted, irritated, elderly, or sensitive. Many groomers offer it as a quick, inexpensive add-on between full grooms.

31**CHAPTER 31****Face & Eye Area Caution**

Hair near the eyes can bother a dog, but trimming near the eyes is one of the riskiest things for beginners. Dogs move suddenly. Scissors are sharp. Eyes are fragile.

What You Can Do Instead

- Wipe the face gently.
- Comb face hair only if your dog tolerates it and there are no mats.

- Use a groomer for trimming around the eyes.
- Call a vet for eye redness, swelling, discharge, squinting, or pain.

32

CHAPTER 32

Please Do Not Try This at Home

The internet is full of grooming "hacks." Here are the ones that end in vet bills.

- ✗ Do not cut tight mats with scissors.
- ✗ Do not shave a double-coated dog without professional guidance.
- ✗ Do not use human shampoo or human toothpaste.
- ✗ Do not pour water into ears.
- ✗ Do not hold a hot dryer on one spot.
- ✗ Do not trim near the eyes of a moving dog.
- ✗ Do not force a panicked dog through grooming.
- ✗ Do not groom over open sores, swelling, bleeding, or irritated skin.
- ✗ Do not ignore sudden hair loss, strong odor, or pain.
- ✗ Do not assume every online grooming hack is safe.

PART 07

Special Situations

*Big dogs, tiny dogs, nervous dogs, puppies, seniors,
and more.*

33

CHAPTER 33

Big Dogs

Big dogs are not just small dogs with more surface area. They need a better setup, more towels, safe handling, and a plan that protects your back.

■ Big Dog Bath System

- 1 Brush before the bath if your dog sheds or tangles.
- 2 Use a walk-in shower, outdoor dog wash, or self-serve station when possible.
- 3 Use a non-slip surface.
- 4 Do not lift a large dog into a tub if it is unsafe for either of you.
- 5 Use a leash or a helper if needed, but never force a panicking dog.
- 6 Use extra towels and dry in stages.
- 7 Brush again after drying, and break the routine into pieces if needed.



BIG DOG HACK

A self-serve dog wash gives you a raised tub, a sprayer, a dryer, and someone else's floor to get wet, usually for far less than a full groom.

34

CHAPTER 34

Small Dogs

Small dogs can be physically easier to handle, but they can also feel more vulnerable. They get cold faster and can be badly injured if they slip or fall.

■ Small Dog Bath System

- 1 Use a sink or small tub only if it is safe and non-slip.
- 2 Keep one hand on your dog at all times. Never leave them unattended, even for a second.
- 3 Use shallow, lukewarm water.
- 4 Avoid spraying the face.

- 5 Wrap them in a warm towel right after bathing.
- 6 Dry fully so they do not get chilled.
- 7 Use shorter sessions for nervous small dogs.

35

CHAPTER 35

Nervous Dogs

Nervous dogs need trust-building more than they need a full grooming session.

■ The 3-Minute Confidence Routine

- 1 Show the brush, treat.
- 2 Touch the shoulder with the brush, treat.
- 3 One gentle stroke, treat.
- 4 Pause.
- 5 Repeat for no more than three minutes.
- 6 End while your dog is still doing okay.

Do this daily for a week before expecting a full brush-out. Confidence grows through repetition, not force.

36

CHAPTER 36

Puppies

Puppy grooming is about teaching more than cleaning. The goal is to make handling feel normal and even a little boring.

■ Puppy Handling Practice

-  Touch ears, treat
-  Touch paws, treat
-  Lift lip, treat
-  One brush stroke, treat
-  Dryer on across the room, treat
-  Stand in an empty tub, treat

**PUPPY TIP**

Do not wait until your puppy is filthy or matted to introduce grooming. Practice before there is a problem, and your future self will thank you.

37**CHAPTER 37**

Senior Dogs

Senior dogs may need gentler routines, shorter sessions, warmer drying, soft surfaces, and more breaks. They may have arthritis, lumps, sensitive skin, hearing or vision changes, or less patience for standing. They have earned a little extra comfort.

■ Senior Comfort Routine

- Use shorter sessions.
- Let them sit or lie down when possible.
- Use soft towels or padded mats.
- Avoid long standing times.
- Dry thoroughly so they do not get chilled.
- Be gentle around lumps, joints, and thin skin.
- Ask your vet or groomer for modifications if grooming is hard on them.

38**CHAPTER 38**

Dogs Who Hate Water

Some dogs need a slower bath plan. Stella would have been a perfect candidate. You may need to separate water training from actual bathing.

■ Water Desensitizing Plan

- 1 Let your dog enter the bathroom without a bath. Treat and leave.
- 2 Let your dog stand on the bath mat. Treat and leave.
- 3 Turn the water on low, away from the dog. Treat and leave.
- 4 Wet one paw with a damp cloth. Treat and leave.
- 5 Try a shallow rinse on the feet only.

- 6 Build toward a partial bath.
- 7 Use a professional if your dog panics or becomes unsafe.

39

CHAPTER 39

Dogs Who Mat Easily

Some coats mat quickly no matter how cute they look. The answer is routine, a realistic hair length, and early intervention.

■ Mat Prevention System

- 1 Choose a maintainable haircut.
- 2 Brush high-friction areas daily or every other day.
- 3 Use a comb check, not just a brush.
- 4 Remove collars or harnesses at home when it is safe, to reduce friction.
- 5 Dry fully after baths, rain, or swimming.
- 6 Book grooming before mats become tight.
- 7 Never cut tight mats with scissors.

PART 08

Getting the Right Help

Red flags, choosing a groomer, and saving money the smart way.

40

CHAPTER 40

Red Flags

This section is not for diagnosing. It is for noticing. Your job is to observe and get help when something looks wrong.

■ Watch For

- Sudden hair loss or bald spots.
- Red or inflamed skin.
- Constant scratching or chewing.
- Flakes or dandruff that do not improve.
- Greasy coat or strong odor.
- Hot spots or wet, irritated patches.
- Scabs, bumps, swelling, or bleeding.
- Fleas, flea dirt, or ticks.
- Ear odor, discharge, or head shaking.
- Pain when touched or brushed.
- Skin folds that smell, stay wet, or look raw.

41

CHAPTER 41

What to Observe at Home

Before calling your vet or groomer, it helps to gather clear information. These questions make the conversation faster and more useful.

- ☐ Where is the issue located?
- ☐ When did you first notice it?
- ☐ Is your dog scratching, licking, chewing, or acting painful?
- ☐ Does it smell?
- ☐ Is the skin red, wet, swollen, flaky, bald, or bleeding?
- ☐ Did anything change recently, such as food, shampoo, environment, flea prevention, grooming, or weather?
- ☐ Can you take a clear photo to show your vet?

42

CHAPTER 42

When to Call the Vet or Groomer

■ Call a Groomer When

- Your dog has tight mats but the skin does not look irritated.
- Your dog needs a haircut or sanitary trim.
- The coat is too thick or tangled to manage safely.
- You need help choosing a maintenance haircut.
- You want hands-on instruction for brushing or tools.

■ Call a Vet When

- Skin is red, raw, swollen, bleeding, wet, smelly, or painful.
- Your dog has sudden hair loss or bald patches.
- You suspect mange, infection, fleas, ticks, or hot spots.
- There is ear odor, discharge, or repeated head shaking.
- Your dog reacts in pain when touched.
- There is a new lump, wound, or unexplained behavior change.



NO SHAME RULE

Calling a vet or groomer is not failing. It is responsible dog parenting.

43

CHAPTER 43

How to Choose a Groomer

A good groomer is one of the best partners a dog parent can have. A great one will even teach you how to make their job easier between visits. Here is how to find one you can trust.

■ Questions to Ask

- ☐ Do you have experience with my dog's breed or coat type?
- ☐ How do you handle nervous, senior, or wiggly dogs?
- ☐ What drying methods do you use, and is my dog ever left unattended in a dryer?
- ☐ Will you call me before shaving if you find mats?
- ☐ What vaccinations do you require? (A groomer who asks is a good sign.)
- ☐ Can I see where my dog will be groomed?

- ☐ What does the price include, and are there extra fees for dematting or difficult coats?
- ☐ About how long will my dog be there?

■ Green Flags

- Asks questions about your dog's health and history.
- Explains what they will do and why.
- Is honest about mats and does not promise miracles.
- Puts comfort ahead of a perfect look.
- Has a clean, calm space.

■ Red Flags

- Will not let you see the grooming area.
- Dismisses your concerns about fear or health.
- Leaves dogs unattended in heated dryers.
- Rushes, rough-handles, or pressures you.
- Refuses to explain extra charges.

■ Help Your Groomer Help Your Dog

- Share your notes from the My Dog's Grooming Notes page.
- Mention sensitive spots, health issues, and anything that scares your dog.
- Describe length in inches instead of words like "short," which mean different things to different people.
- Bring a photo of a haircut you like, and ask if it fits your dog's coat and your brushing schedule.
- Be open to a shorter cut if the coat is matted. Comfort comes first.

44

CHAPTER 44

Smart Ways to Save on Grooming

The best way to save money on grooming is not to skip it. It is to handle the right tasks at home, so every professional visit is shorter, easier, and less expensive. Mats, in particular, cost money: severely matted coats often mean dematting fees or a full shave-down.

■ Do at Home vs. Pay a Pro

Usually DIY	Usually worth paying for
Brushing and comb checks	Haircuts and full clipper work
Baths and thorough drying	Removing tight mats
Wiping paws, face, and folds	Sanitary and eye-area trims
Ear checks and gentle wipes	Hand stripping wire coats
Tooth brushing	Heavy deshedding blowouts, if overwhelming
Nail trims, if you are comfortable	Nail trims for dogs who fight them

■ Seven Money-Saving Moves

- 1 **Brush between visits.** Preventing mats is the single biggest savings in dog grooming.
- 2 **Choose a maintainable haircut.** A practical length can stretch the time between appointments.
- 3 **Ask about mini services.** Many groomers offer bath-only visits, nail trims, or a quick face, feet, and sanitary tidy between full grooms.
- 4 **Try a self-serve dog wash** for big or heavy-shedding dogs. You do the work, they supply the tub, sprayer, and dryer.
- 5 **Book on a regular schedule.** Coats in good shape take less time, and some groomers offer rebooking discounts or packages. It never hurts to ask.
- 6 **Buy fewer, better tools.** One correct brush and a comb beat a drawer full of gadgets.
- 7 **Catch problems early.** Your 10-minute weekly coat check helps you spot skin, ear, and coat issues before they become bigger, pricier vet visits.

■ How Often Do Dogs Typically See a Groomer?

Every dog is different, but here is a common starting point to discuss with your groomer.

Coat type	Typical professional visits
Curly or wavy (Poodles, Doodles)	Often every 4 to 6 weeks
Long coats kept long	Often every 4 to 8 weeks
Long coats in a short "puppy cut"	Often every 6 to 10 weeks
Double coats	Optional; seasonal deshedding blowouts help many
Wire coats	Every 4 to 8 weeks, or as advised for stripping
Short coats	Rarely needed; nail trims as needed

PART 09

Printables & Action Pages

Print these, stick them on the fridge, and make grooming a habit.

Weekly Grooming Checklist

Use this every week. Pair it with the 10-minute coat check.

Dog's name: _____ Date: _____

Task	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Brush coat	☐	☐	☐	☐
Comb check problem areas	☐	☐	☐	☐
Check ears	☐	☐	☐	☐
Check paws	☐	☐	☐	☐
Check nails	☐	☐	☐	☐
Wipe face or folds	☐	☐	☐	☐
Check for redness, odor, flakes, bumps, fleas, ticks, or mats	☐	☐	☐	☐
Make grooming notes	☐	☐	☐	☐

Notes this month

Bath Day Checklist

Set up everything before your dog comes in.

Dog's name: _____ Date: _____

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Brush before bath | ☐ Rinse thoroughly |
| ☐ Gather shampoo & conditioner | ☐ Condition if needed |
| ☐ Place non-slip mat | ☐ Rinse again |
| ☐ Prepare towels | ☐ Towel dry |
| ☐ Prepare treats or lick mat | ☐ Dry fully |
| ☐ Run lukewarm water | ☐ Brush & comb after drying |
| ☐ Wash body | ☐ Reward your dog! |
| ☐ Clean face gently | |

How did it go? What to try next time

Coat Type Cheat Sheet

Your quick reference for every coat.

Dog's name: _____ Date: _____

Short coat

Brush 1 to 3 times weekly. Bathe as needed. Watch skin and shedding.

☐ This is my dog

Long coat

Brush several times weekly or daily. Comb check. Prevent mats.

☐ This is my dog

Curly or wavy

Line brush and comb check. Professional grooming usually needed.

☐ This is my dog

Double coat

Brush 2 to 4 times weekly, daily in shedding season. Do not shave without guidance.

☐ This is my dog

Wire coat

Brush and comb furnishings. Ask your groomer about clipping vs. stripping.

☐ This is my dog

Wrinkles & folds

Clean and dry folds. Watch for odor, moisture, redness, and pain.

☐ This is my dog

Mixed coat? Follow the more maintenance-heavy routine.

Grooming Schedule

Choose what fits your dog, then make it routine.

Dog's name: _____ Date: _____

Daily or As Needed

☐ Wipe paws after mud, salt, or allergens

☐ Check folds for moisture

☐ Quick brush for dogs who mat easily

☐ Tooth brushing

☐ _____

☐ _____

Weekly

☐ 10-minute coat check

☐ Brush based on coat type

☐ Ear, nail & paw check

☐ Skin and odor check

☐ _____

☐ _____

Monthly

☐ Bath if needed

☐ Check product supply

☐ Review groomer schedule

☐ Note any coat changes

☐ _____

☐ _____

Seasonal

☐ More brushing in shedding season

☐ Review flea & tick prevention with vet

☐ Adjust paw care for heat, snow, or salt

☐ Book grooming before holidays

☐ _____

☐ _____

Supply Checklist

Check off what you have and note what you like.

Dog's name: _____ Date: _____

Item	Brand / notes
☐ Correct brush for coat type	
☐ Metal comb, if needed	
☐ Dog-safe shampoo	
☐ Dog-safe conditioner, if needed	
☐ Microfiber towels	
☐ Non-slip mat	
☐ Dog-safe wipes	
☐ Ear cleaner or wipes	
☐ Nail clippers or grinder	
☐ Styptic powder	
☐ Dog toothbrush & toothpaste	
☐ Treats	
☐ Lick mat	
☐ Bin or basket for supplies	

My Dog's Grooming Notes

Keep this handy for vet and groomer visits.

Dog's name: _____ Date: _____

Dog's name

Coat type

Favorite brush

Bath tolerance

Problem areas

Groomer contact

Vet contact

Products that work well

Products to avoid

Current grooming schedule

Notes from last groomer visit

Questions for vet or groomer

Selected References

This handbook is written in original Dog Parent Life language and is intended for general education. It was informed by veterinary and animal welfare sources, including:

ASPCA. *Dog Grooming Tips.* General bathing, brushing, nail, teeth, ear, paw, and wrinkle-care guidance.

VCA Animal Hospitals. *Grooming and Coat Care for Your Dog.* General skin and coat wellness.

American Kennel Club. *How Should You Groom a Double-Coated Dog?* Double-coat maintenance and shedding.

AAHA. *Dental Care Guidelines for Dogs and Cats.* The importance of veterinary dental care and home dental awareness.



A Final Note from Dog Parent Life

You do not have to do everything perfectly. Start small. Be gentle. Learn your dog's coat. Build routines that fit your life.

And when something feels unsafe, uncomfortable, or beyond your skill level, ask for help. That is not weakness. That is good dog parenting.

Love the dog, but learn the coat.

With love (and a little fur),
The Dog Parent Life Family

KEEP GOING

Visit **DogParentLife.com** for more dog care tips, guides, and free resources.