



Guide Dogs for the Blind

Grooming

Grooming is important not only for the puppy's health and hygiene, but also to teach it to accept handling. Grooming should be started within a day or two after the puppy arrives. The necessary supplies are detailed in "Equipment".

Brush Daily

- Groom for short periods, working up to 10-15 minutes a day
- Use the floor or a sturdy table. Use a non-slip surface for a table and do not leave puppy unattended, keep a hand through its collar to prevent falling
- Brush while the puppy is sitting or lying on its side
- Include all parts of the body: ears, neck, chest, belly, legs and tail
- Brush with the lay of the hair
- Talk to the puppy quietly, use gentle strokes and calm handling
- While brushing the puppy, watch for external parasites, areas of the coat that have been chewed or licked, hot spots, other sores or cuts, hair loss, mats or ear tip irritation. Ears should be pale pink and free of odor or discharge
- Check un-spayed females for abnormal vaginal discharge (a little mucous is normal) or signs of heat (a drop of bright blood will be the first sign, followed by a darker discharge and swelling).

Regular Paw Care is Important

- Check pads and in between toes daily for cuts, abrasions or irritations. When checking pads and between toes, gently but firmly touch each toe and nail with one hand, while steadying the paw with the other hand. This will help the puppy to accept having its toenails trimmed.
- Trim toenails as needed, usually weekly. See document: "Nail Trimming" for information on how to teach the puppy to accept nail trimming. Long nails may cause the toes to spread, putting unnecessary stress on the feet and pasterns (wrist joints).

Ear Cleaning

To avoid unnecessary veterinary treatment and discomfort to our puppies, we ask that puppy raisers clean their puppy's ears once weekly with the ear cleansing/drying solution (Epi Otic) provided in your puppy packet.

Video reference: <https://youtu.be/1WVI26VwGYI>

Technique

- Apply ear cleaning solution to a cotton ball or pad until it is *slightly moist* (not soaked and dripping) with solution
- A dog's ear canal is "L" shaped, which means that you will not touch your dog's eardrum with your finger. Insert the moistened cotton ball into the ear canal and rotate it as you clean.
- Dogs will generally shake their head after you remove your finger. This will help the accumulated debris at the bottom of the canal rise to the top.
- Use a clean dry cotton ball and wipe any excess cleaning solution residue and debris from the ear canal and pinna.
- Repeat for second ear using a fresh cotton ball or cotton pad.

When is it time to seek veterinary attention?

- The puppy constantly shakes his/her head or scratches at the ears.

- Odor is noticeable – A change to a foul odor is generally an indication of an ear infection. A strong sour smell usually signifies a bacterial infection: an excessively sweet smell usually signifies a yeast infection.
- Ear feels waxy, or you see black/brown discharge or an inflamed / red ear.

Never self-diagnose: The ear is a very sensitive organ. What may appear to be similar symptoms to previous ear issue may *not* require similar treatments this time.

Cleaning Eyes

- Wipe the face, dabbing at the corners of the eyes, with a water moistened cotton ball.
- Some discharge is normal, but watch for excessive discharge.
- Do not touch the eye itself.

Oral Care

Dogs can accumulate plaque on their teeth. Plaque is made of proteins (from saliva) and bacteria. If the plaque is not removed every day, the bacteria will multiply rapidly and invade the gums around the teeth. Gingivitis, or inflammation of the gums, will result. Fortunately, gingivitis is reversible and periodontal disease is preventable. When plaque is removed by tooth brushing, the gums and bone around the teeth will stay healthy. If plaque is not removed, calculus or "tartar" will form when minerals from saliva cause the plaque to harden. Once calculus is present, a professional cleaning is needed to remove it. Calculus can be prevented from forming by removing plaque every day with tooth brushing.

If you have never cleaned the puppy's teeth, start by spending a few minutes each day gently handling the puppy's mouth. Lift their lips and touch the outside of the puppy's teeth and gums to get them used to this new experience. After several days of doing this, introduce the puppy to the oral cleansing gel following the instructions below. Never use human toothpaste - it can be harmful and can upset the puppy's stomach.

Video reference: <https://youtu.be/f0Q8rEjKgaQ>

Teeth Cleaning Instructions:

- Put a small amount of oral cleansing gel on the soft-bristled toothbrush (use the one given in the puppy's packet) or on a piece of gauze wrapped around your finger.
- Holding the brush head at a 45-degree angle to the gum line, gently brush in circular strokes from the gum line to the tip of each tooth.
- Only clean the outside surfaces of the puppy's teeth and gums.
- Day by day, slowly work towards the back of the mouth, until the puppy is comfortable and will allow you to lift their lips and hold their head steady for several minutes.
- Please be careful to not let the puppy bite your finger or toothbrush while brushing their teeth.
- We recommend that you clean the puppy's teeth at least once weekly (and as frequently as once daily) to acclimate the puppy to being handled this way and to be more accepting later in life.

Bathing

- Bathing too frequently can harm the puppy's coat and skin. Pups should be bathed when the coat becomes smelly or greasy – every two to six weeks depending on the individual puppy. A damp towel can remove dirt and debris between baths.
- Introduce bathing slowly to avoid frightening the puppy.
- Put a towel or rubber mat in the bottom of the tub to prevent slipping and negative associations with the tub.
- The temperature of the water should be warm not hot.
- Cotton balls can be used to keep water out of ears, remember to remove promptly.
- Use a pH balanced shampoo made for dogs. A wet wash cloth may be used to wash the face to avoid shampoo from getting in the puppy's eyes.
- Rinse thoroughly to avoid skin irritation from residual shampoo.
- Water can be "squeezed" out of the puppy's coat. While it is still in the tub, let the puppy shake off most of the water and then towel dry

- A blow dryer may be used if introduced carefully:
 - Turn the dryer on and off a few times away from the puppy before bringing it closer
 - When it is turned on near the puppy, keep the airflow directed away from it until it appears comfortable with the noise
 - Start the airflow at a distance and gradually work it up its body
 - NEVER aim a blow dryer at the puppy's face. It is very uncomfortable and may cause anxiety about blow dryers
 - Hold the hair dryer no closer to the dog than 12-18 inches