

board. This can be angled at about 45 degrees, or you can lie it flat on the ground. Now we need to train your dog to use the board. If your dog is clicker-trained or used to targeting this will make things a lot easier. Initially, reward your dog for approaching the board. Then reward your dog for touching the board with its paws. Then reward your dog for scraping with its paws. Eventually the dog will be enthusiastically digging at the board, which will wear down the nails. Please be sure to not leave the dog unsupervised as some dogs actually wear their claws to bleeding point digging at the board.

## training dogs for nail clipping

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*Client information series*

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## starting early

If you have a puppy or young dog, it is a very good idea to get him used to having his nails trimmed as early as possible.

1. Get the pup used to having its feet handled. It helps if the dog is feeling calm to begin with! Give the pup treats while gently holding its paws. Repeat for a few sessions until the puppy is comfortable and sits quietly while you hold its paws.
2. Introduce the nail clippers. At first, just hold the paw and then pretend to clip some nails so the pup doesn't get scared by the sound. Then touch them against a nail without clipping. Repeat this until the dog is comfortable.
3. Trim one nail. When trimming, do not trim too short, or it will be painful for the puppy and undo all your good work.. If the nail is white, then trim a few mm under the pink part. If the nail is black then just trim a small amount off the tip. Give a treat at the same time or immediately afterward.

4. When the dog is comfortable with one nail being trimmed, try trimming more than one nail in a session. This may take a while and it may be better initially to trim just one nail everyday. Reward the dog after each time.

## dogs already afraid of nail trimming

There are 3 options for trimming the nails of dogs who are very fearful of this procedure. The first is to attempt to desensitize them. The second is to train them to file down their own nails. The third option (as a last resort) is to give them a general anaesthetic to trim the nails.

## desensitisation

**Desensitizing** involves very slowly trying to get the dog to accept a nail trim. The main mistake people make with desensitizing is trying to get to the next step too fast. The dog should *never* be frightened by what you are doing or you will undo all your efforts. It follows similar steps to those in the 'starting

early' section, but you will need to work within your dogs limits and for some dogs this process will take several months. For particularly aggressive dogs this method is not recommended.

Firstly, see when your dog reacts— if your dog will not even let you touch its legs, then start by stroking its back. In short, calm sessions everyday, stroke or groom your dog and praise/reward it. Gradually (over a few days/weeks) move down the dogs body until it is comfortable with you stroking its legs. From there, progress to being able to hold the dog's legs and working through the steps listed in the first section. This will require a lot of patience and reward. Never punish your dog during these sessions as it will reinforce its fear. Please speak to your vet for further information about desensitisation.

## training dogs to file their nails

Yes, this can be done! Firstly, get a piece of wood about 50cm square and then apply a layer of non-slip grip stuff for boats..... To create a giant nail filing