

# Grooming Your Dog for a Therapy Visit



OTD therapy dogs should always look their best for a therapy dog visit. A well-groomed dog needs to have clean eyes, ears, teeth and fur. Nails need to be trimmed. Set aside some time in advance of the day of your visit to avoid rushing. Dogs can become tired in a grooming session and will need time to rest and relax.

## Daily Grooming and Bedding

- Daily brushing is optimal to keep your dog's coat free of matting, tangles and dirt. Frequent brushing during the shedding season is necessary.
- If shedding is excessive, visits should be cancelled until your dog's coat is acceptable.
- Clipping pad hair keeps floors clean, linens clean, and prevents a dog from slipping on smooth floors.
- Make sure the bedding in the car is washed every visit.

## Bathing

- Any dog visiting a facility where the residents' auto immune system has been compromised **MUST** be bathed before every visit. This includes, but is not limited to, CHEO, Roger's House, Ronald McDonald House, and any hospital ward meeting the criteria. Otherwise, dogs should be bathed when the coat is dirty, grimy or has lost its shiny look and feel or has an odour. Dogs must be clean for every visit.
- Use a hair dryer to dry your dog. Don't air dry your dog or depend on towel drying alone as this results in an odour.
- Bathe two days in advance of a therapy dog visit in order to allow dander to settle.
- Use an unscented bath product to bathe your dog.

## Teeth Brushing

- Oral hygiene is important to avoid your dog having a smelly breath.
- Use canine toothbrushes and canine toothpaste daily with your dog.
- Dogs should not use or swallow human dentifrice products.
- If foul mouth odor persists, check with your vet. Scaling or a diet change may help. (You can get a scaler from the pet store to get tartar off the teeth.)

## Nails

- Nails must be kept short and smooth during therapy dog visits to avoid scratching fragile skin, especially among seniors.
- Nails should be trimmed two days in advance of a visit, and normally every 7-10 days. Always file to have a smooth edge.
- Short nails help dogs to have good grip and avoid slipping on smooth floors in facilities.

- Ask your groomer, your breeder, or knowledgeable OTD member to advise you on technique.
- Invest in excellent clippers from a reputable groomer or pet store. A nail grinder is also a good tool.
- Nail files for artificial nails are excellent buffers for sharp or jagged edges.
- Buy sharp scissors with a blunt tip for pad hair clipping and inside ears.

## Ears

- Keep ears clean using cotton products, not synthetics that can irritate.
- Floppy-eared dogs, especially swimmers, may be prone to ear infections.
- You may need veterinarian advice on proper products to use in these cases.
- Keep the hair trimmed inside the ear to help air flow.

## Eyes

- Gently wipe around your dog's eyes and remove any tears or scaling.

## Visiting Day

- Give your dog a thorough grooming with a brush, then a damp cloth.
- Be sure to wipe inside of the dog's legs, the belly, the penile shaft (if male) and the underside of the tail and anus. Start from the front of the dog and work your way to the back.
- Do not allow genital licking after this final cleaning, nor during the visit.
- Brush your dog's teeth and clean the ears.
- Check that your dog's feet are clean and the nails are smooth. Buff with a nail file, if necessary.

## Important Tip

Don't hesitate to cancel your dog's therapy visit if you suspect your dog may be unwell, has diarrhea or is not feeling top-notch.

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OTD Toolbox Infosheet #4:

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