



# Sit, Stay, SAY 'AH'

Guide  
to

Dog Care

## TRAIN YOUR DOG FOR VISITS TO THE VET, GROOMER

By Joan Orr M.Sc.

Clipping, snipping, brushing, poking — dogs have to tolerate some not-so-pleasant procedures during grooming or veterinary care. Try convincing a feisty Fido that two people holding him down while the veterinarian puts drops in his ears is great fun! And attempting such maneuvers on your own without the benefit of practiced technique and two extra pairs of hands can seem more like a wrestling match.

The good news is, with some planning and training know-how, you can prepare

your dog to cooperate with these necessary procedures. Let's consider nail clipping. The principles described in this example apply to any other procedure:

### Have the Proper Equipment and Know How to Use it

Be sure to have a quality pair of clippers, with a nail guard that prevents you from cutting too far. Ask your veterinarian or groomer to show you the proper way to clip the nail, and practice on a match stick to be sure you know how to use the clippers.

### Associate the Procedure with Tasty Treats

There are two general approaches that can work to teach a dog to cooperate with nail trimming. The first is to associate nail trimming with food. Have a helper hold a bone stuffed with yummy filling for the dog to lick while you trim his nails. Eventually, the dog will not require the continuous supply of food and will allow nail clipping with one treat after each paw is done. Applying eye drops, ear drops or a wound dressing may be less successful with this approach.

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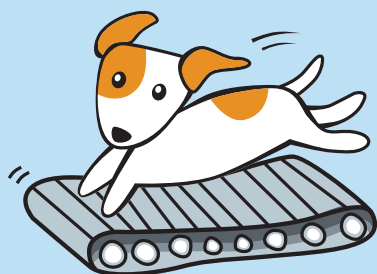
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### PROCEDURES/ CONDITIONS FOR WHICH ALL DOGS SHOULD BE PREPARED:

- Nail clipping
- Grooming
- Ear cleaning
- Teeth brushing
- Bathing
- Fur clipping
- Veterinary examination
- Inoculations
- Wearing a muzzle
- Being in a crate
- Being without their owner



### Train the Dog to Accept Each Step of the Process

Some dogs may have had negative experiences with forcible or painful nail trimming, or may just be hypersensitive towards their feet. Alone, it is difficult to hold the foot, clip the nail and feed the dog. In these cases, the easy approach described above may not work. The next approach is an extremely effective method that involves planning and applies to any situation in which the dog does not want to cooperate, but must.

First, let's list the steps for nail clipping: 1) get the clippers; 2) go to the clipping location with the dog; 3) have the dog lie down; 4) sit beside him; 5) pick up a paw; 6) use your fingers to isolate the nail; 7) pick up the clippers; 8) move the clippers toward the nail; 9) position the clippers around the nail; and 10) clip the nail.

After listing the steps, teach the dog to welcome each step (see below). The goal of the early training sessions is not to trim the nails, but to move through one or more steps in the process, ensuring that the dog is always comfortable. If your dog hides under the bed when you approach the clipper drawer, break that first step into attainable sub-steps.

### Establish a Marker to Mean 'Yes! You Win!'

The method outlined here requires a way to tell the dog 'That's right! You will get a treat!' This allows you to be very precise in giving the dog information, and you do

not need to give treats at the exact moment you are holding his paw with one hand and clipping with the other. One way to do this is to make a 'click' sound with a clicker (available at pet stores) or your tongue, or simply use the word 'Yes!'. Every time you make the marker sound, give the dog a treat within one to three seconds. In our example, step one is 'get the clippers'. Call your dog, and when he comes, click (or mark with your preferred sound) and give him a treat. Put your hand on the clipper drawer, click and treat. Open the drawer, click and treat. By now your dog is probably paying close attention to you and may even be running through his tricks trying to figure out how to get you to click and treat. This is exactly what you want! You will show the dog what he needs to do to keep the treats coming and he will become a willing participant in the nail clipping game.

### Teach the Dog that Clippers are Wonderful!

Take the clippers out of the drawer, click and treat. Hold them out for the dog to investigate. Click and treat when he just looks at the clippers, and then if he sniffs or touches them. Start walking toward the clipping location. When he follows, looks at or touches the clippers, click and treat. Once you get to the clipping location ask the dog to lie down, or lure him down with a treat. Put the clippers near one of his front paws, click and treat if he does anything other than getting up. Once he will lie with you in the clipping area with the clippers nearby, this is a good place to end the first session. This whole episode will have taken about five minutes and used roughly 20 treats. Take a play break and start another training session later.

In the second session, run through the same steps as in the first session, but click and treat less often — perhaps once when you take the clippers out of the drawer, once during the walk to the clipping location and once when the dog is settled with the clippers nearby. Now you can start handling his paws. Touch a paw, and click and treat if the dog accepts the touch; if he pulls away

you will need to back off and click/treat when your hand is four inches from his paw, then two, then one inch away and then for a light momentary touch, and so on. The idea is to keep the process within the dog's comfort zone while simultaneously expanding it. Note that some dogs will zip through all the steps, while others may get worried at some points.

We won't go through every step in detail now that you have got the idea of clicking and treating at each new step, and breaking steps down further if required. Subsequent steps for the nail clipping could be: isolate a nail with your thumb and forefinger, apply slight then gradually more pressure with your thumb and finger on either side of the nail; move the clippers nearer to the nail; touch the clippers to the nail; clip a match stick near the nail so the dog gets used to the sound; put the clippers around the nail, ready to clip; finally clip a small part off one nail. Click and treat for every step the dog accepts (if you are using an actual clicker you can hold it in the hand that is not holding the clippers).



**THIS IS THE SAME PROCESS THAT ZOO TRAINERS USE TO TEACH A RHINOCEROS TO WALK ONTO A WEIGH SCALE.**

**Work in Short Sessions**

Work in five minute sessions, or count out 20 treats and, when they are gone, take a play break. Each session should get you closer to your goal, and in three sessions you will likely be able to clip one nail. Subsequent nails will go faster. Remember to click/treat when the dog cooperates. Soon you will notice the dog actively trying to participate.

**Watch for Body Language Signals**

Pay close attention to your dog's body language and go back to an easier step if he pulls away, tries to leave, or you see him yawning, licking his chops or looking at you with the white of his eye showing a half moon shape. These all indicate anxiety and that you have moved too fast.

**Other Procedures**

We have gone into detail with this example so that you can see how to reach the final goal through a stepwise progression. This is the same process that zoo trainers use to teach a



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**YOU CAN USE THESE TECHNIQUES USED BY THE WORLD'S TOP TRAINERS TO TEACH YOUR DOG OR OTHER PET TO COOPERATE WITH GROOMING, TOOTH BRUSHING, EVEN EYE AND EAR DROP ADMINISTRATION.**

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rhinoceros to walk onto a weigh scale and present its shoulder for an injection, or to teach a killer whale to offer a flipper for a blood draw. You can use these techniques used by the world's top trainers to teach your dog or other pet to cooperate with grooming, tooth brushing, even eye and ear drop administration. When

medication such as eye drops must be given soon and not after a few days of training, you can still do the training as described here. Use extra delicious treats and do several five minute training sessions with five- to 10-minute breaks in between. Within an hour you can do four to six sessions, and may be able to get to the final step in your training plan. If you do the procedure by force or without treats, the pet will become more anxious, may try to bite, scratch or run away to hide. Worse, you will have done serious damage to the trustful relationship that we all want with our pets.

There is no need to wait until your pet needs medical treatment to train for this. Get an empty dropper bottle and condition your dog (or cat) to the various steps leading up to the actual administration of the drops. Similarly teach him to accept the handling that is

required for medical exams and grooming. Run through the steps quickly with extra delicious treats at the veterinarian or groomer to show them how to use your training method. It will put your pet at ease, and the veterinarian/groomer will appreciate their job being made easier! 🐾

*Joan Orr is the president of non-profit Doggone Safe ([www.doggonesafe.com](http://www.doggonesafe.com)), co-creator of the award winning Doggone Crazy! board game, co-producer of the award winning Clicker Puppy training DVD ([www.doggonecrazy.ca](http://www.doggonecrazy.ca)), co-author of the book "Getting Started: Clicker Training your Rabbit" ([www.clickerbunny.com](http://www.clickerbunny.com)) and vice president and co-founder of TAGteach International, promoting positive-reinforcement in teaching and coaching ([www.tagteach.com](http://www.tagteach.com)).*

# ADOPTION 101

## TIPS FOR ADDING A NEW MEMBER TO YOUR FAMILY

By Kristina Cooper, RVT

**M**aking the decision to adopt a dog can be the beginning of an exciting, emotional journey. Before embarking on your search for the perfect pooch, it is important to consider your family's lifestyle, a dog's daily care requirements, breed specifics and where to go to adopt a dog.

Evaluating your family's needs and ability to offer a good home ahead of time is in the best interest of all involved — thinking with your heart and not with your head will result in an unhappy ending for you and the dog. Dogs are often returned or surrendered to shelters because the owners didn't think the decision through and brought a dog home that didn't fit with their lifestyle. It can be not only heart wrenching for an owner to be forced to return a dog to a shelter, but also confusing and stressful for the dog.



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### LIFESTYLE CONSIDERATIONS

Consider these fundamental questions when deciding whether or not to adopt:

- How many hours a day are you away from home?
- How often can you walk/exercise the dog?
- Do you have a fenced yard for the dog to play in?
- Do you travel often? Are pets allowed?
- Can you afford the maintenance and medical costs?
- Do you have children?