



How often do dogs need baths? How can I get mats out of their fur or decrease shedding?

Bathing is important, not only because it keeps your dog looking and smelling nice, but also for maintaining healthy skin and coat.

Read on for advice on how to bathe, brush, or groom based on your dog's individual needs.

Keeping Your Dog Clean: A Guide to Bathing, Brushing, and Grooming

Some dogs love rolling in mud, swimming in a lake, or digging in the backyard. Some prefer a more placid lifestyle. Either way, they can still benefit from a bath every once in a while.

Here are some of the benefits that come from regular bathing and grooming...

- Baths can keep your pup clean (and your home as well, since bathing prevents muddy paw prints in the house).
- Bathing supports healthy skin, coat, and paws, and can help with allergies and skin infections.
- Regular bathing and brushing can limit shedding and odors.

The bathing needs of your dog are unique based on their breed, lifestyle, fur length, coat type, and more.

Here are some things to consider...

How Often Does Your Dog Need a Bath?

For most dogs, an average bathing schedule is every 1 to 2 months.

If your pup loves to play outside and get messy, he may need a bath more often. However, bathing more than once per week isn't recommended. Unless it's really needed, doing so can dry your pup's skin and cause itching and dander.

Another option for cleanliness is "spot cleaning". For example, if your dog's paws are dirty, you should only clean his paws rather than giving a full bath.

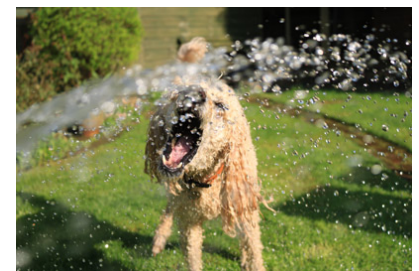
Should You Bathe at Home or Hire a Groomer?

If your dog is a breed that needs full grooming care (bathing along with brushing or haircuts), then you may want to use a professional dog groomer. This often includes breeds with long or curly hair.

It's easy to see all options near you. Simply call your local pet store for recommendations, or use frommfamily.com to search retailers in your area and look for the grooming icon. You can also search the internet and find grooming shops, mobile groomers, and some veterinary facilities that offer grooming services. Look for reviews, testimonials, or "before and after" pictures.

Be sure the groomer requires your dog to be up to date on vaccines. That means all other dogs who could be in close quarters with your pup will also be up to date.

If your pup just needs a standard bath, you can do this at home, or seek the services of a groomer or veterinarian if you prefer to have someone else give the bath.



Which Type of Shampoo is Best?

- Choose a shampoo made for dogs. You can contact your local, trusted pet retailer for recommendations based on your dog's needs.
- Human shampoo—even baby shampoo—can strip oils from the skin and cause dryness and itching.
- For most dogs, a standard gentle dog shampoo (aloe-based or oatmeal-based) is a great option.
- Avoid added perfumes which can cause skin irritation.
- If your pup has allergies or another skin problem, check with your veterinarian for their recommendation.
- Avoid flea and tick shampoos unless recommended by your veterinarian. Many products contain harsh chemicals. Your veterinarian will have safer, more effective parasite control options.

Step-By-Step Tips for Dog Bathing

- Start slow. Introduce your pup to the bathing area while offering treats and praise. Repeat this for several days before the first bath, if possible.
- Use a non-slip surface in the tub, such as a bathmat or tub stickers.
- Gather all supplies at the beginning. Never leave your dog unattended in the bath.
- Brush your dog first. Matted hair holds water, which may irritate your dog's skin. Consider using a conditioning spray to assist the process.
- Use lukewarm water. Test the water on your wrist.
- Wet your dog's fur using a detachable sprayer.
- Apply the shampoo working it into a lather.
- Avoid the eyes and ears. Water in the ears can lead to infections, and shampoo in the eyes can burn. Instead, use a wet cloth to wipe your pup's face clean.
- Rinse away all shampoo. Shampoo left behind can cause irritation.



Throughout the whole process, be kind and gentle. Talk in a calm, soothing voice, and offer treats or praise. Make bath time a positive experience, and future baths are likely to be better for both you and your pup.

Drying Your Pup

Start by gently towel drying. Then, keep your pup in a warm, draft-free area until totally dry.

You could also purchase a dryer designed for dogs. This option is safer and quieter than using a human hair dryer.

Many dogs don't like the noise of human hair dryers, and if not used with caution—only on the lowest heat setting and held at least a foot away from your dog's body—could result in burning your pup.

Brushing Your Dog's Hair

Short-haired dogs might not need this step. If your dog has long hair or a thick undercoat, they may need to be brushed.

Groomers can take care of this option for you, but if bathing and brushing at home, try these tips...

- Choose an appropriate dog brush. Some are designed for detangling, while others are designed to remove a shedding undercoat.
- Try a detangling dog conditioner at bath time.
- Don't pull too hard. If a tangle or mat isn't coming out via brushing, it may need to be cut or trimmed out.
- When removing mats, don't use scissors. They risk accidentally cutting your pup's skin. Instead, use pet-safe clippers.
- If a mat is too close to the skin, seek help from a veterinarian or groomer.

What if My Dog Doesn't Like Baths?

Some pups love water, while others never take to it. If your pup falls into the latter category, don't worry. It's normal for many dogs.

Even if bath time is never a fun experience, you can make it better with praise, a gentle tone of voice, affection, petting, and treats.

That way, your dog will still feel supported and loved throughout the whole process.

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