



©Daria Kulkova | Getty Images

My Cat Hates Being Groomed

BY RITA REIMERS

While it's true that most cats groom themselves to purr-fection, there are times when they may need a little extra care. With 18 cats in my household, some of whom are seniors who no longer take care of their own grooming, it's left to me to make sure those nails are trimmed, eyes are shiny, coat is brushed and kitty is ready to greet the day!

If your cat hates to be groomed, listen up, because I have some tips for you. Let's talk about the four parts of grooming and how to go about it without becoming your cat's enemy No. 1!

1 Brushing

Most cats need brushing at one time or another, because there are areas of their body they simply cannot reach, like their upper back. Also, those sweet senior cats often stop grooming on their own and may need to be brushed more often, especially if they are long-haired.

The key is to find a brush they like. My cats all line up for "brushies," as I call it, and they follow me around as I go from cat to cat to make sure everyone gets a turn. Two favorites:

- ★ **A rubber brush** with long "fingers" that not only gets down deep to lift out the loose hair, but also gives cats a nice massage, too.
- ★ **A glove brush**, which is literally a glove you put on your hand, then you simply pet your cat.

Use a low approach with your cat with the rubber brush or glove. Overhead approaches can feel intimi-



Frisco Grooming Gloves
\$15.51; chewy.com

dating to cats, as this is how they often become prey to other animals out in nature.

If your cat is prone to mats, try a de-matting spray that is nontoxic and made especially for cats. Some cats are put off by anything being sprayed →



Necoichi Purrcision
Cat Nail Clippers
\$ 22;
necoichi.com



Petkin Kitty
Eye Wipes
\$ 7.99; petkin.com

directly on them, so spray it in your hand and then rub it on the mats to help detangle them.

2 Nail trimming

The dreaded nail trimming! Yes, I hate it, too, but if the scratching post isn't keeping those nails nice and trim, it's a necessary evil.

If nails are not trimmed regularly, the nail can actually grow long enough to curl into your cat's paw pads, which can cause your cat lots of pain and potentially an infection. Long sharp nails can get caught in carpets, blankets or even drapes. If you aren't at home when this happens to help your cat get free, he may actually rip out a claw trying to get loose.

To get your cat used to having his nails trimmed, start by conditioning him to accept you touching his feet. As you're petting your cat, gently squeeze his feet to expose the nail, and let go

to let it go back in. Get him used to that motion until he doesn't look twice when you touch his tootsies.

Once that happens, trim one claw as you gently squeeze. Just nip off the tip, making sure not to cut too far to avoid bleeding. You can even distract him with a yummy treat while you're clipping (try lickable treats). If you can only get one or two nails at a time, that's OK. Sometimes it takes a few tries to get them all done.

3 Eye wiping

Some cats and cat breeds are prone to runny eyes. Persians, with their compact faces, are famous for this problem. A few of my cats have respiratory issues from being removed from their mothers too young, and I often need to wipe their eyes.

Just like with their feet, the first step is to get your cat used to letting you touch his face and eye area. Start with

an approach from up under his chin, never overhead, as this can cause your cat to feel threatened.

Gently pet his face and rub those scent glands along his cheeks. Slowly move your fingers up toward his eyes. Once your cat is OK with you touching his face, put a soft, warm, wet cloth around your fingers and gently wipe that eye gunk away. If he gets upset, stop and try again later.

4 Bathing

Generally, cats keep themselves clean and rarely need a human to intervene. But older cats who've stopped grooming themselves, overweight cats who can't reach to clean properly, cats who need a flea bath or cats who have gotten into dangerous substances (like trash or oil) will need a bath. Sphynx and other hairless breeds need baths because of their naturally oily skin — the buildup needs to be

cleaned away occasionally.

Some cats are not afraid of water, some are. Start by running the water when your cat is in the bathroom, but don't try to make him go near it. Most cats will be curious and jump up to play or drink as the water runs. Once he is comfortable with running water, place a towel in the bottom of the sink and fill the basin a few inches with warm water. Let him jump up himself, then gently place him into the water and give him a treat. It may take a few

continued on page xxxx



Rita Reimers and Linda Hall are co-founders of The Cat Behavior Alliance, offering a unique Duo-Approach to cat behavior correction. Visit them at CatBehaviorAlliance.com for more information. You can also find Rita and Linda on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok @CatBehaviorAlliance.



*Zymox Enzymatic Dog & Cat Shampoo
\$ 17.11; zymox.com*

Ads not confirmed

tries to get him to feel comfortable in the water. Once he's ready to let you wash him, use a shampoo made specifically for cats so his skin doesn't get dried out.

If it's just impossible to get him into the water, use cleansing clothes made especially for cats to gently wipe his coat clean. You can also try using dry shampoo made specifically for cats.

Getting your cat used to being handled to accept grooming before he needs it is the best way to ensure you will be able to do it yourself. Your cat trusts you, so having your help with his hair and nail health will be much less stressful for him. It may even deepen the bond between you.

When to seek a professional groomer

If your cat is especially dirty and matted, or if he just freaks out and will not let you bathe him or trim his claws, you may need the help of a professional. Here are some professionals that can help you:

- Your feline veterinarian can trim your cat's claws, and some might even do some basic hair trimming for you.
- Only one in every 100 groomers is experienced with cats, so ask if the groomer has cat grooming experience before hiring. There are certifications specifically for cat groomers, such as Certified Feline Master Groomer or Certified Master Cat Groomer. Look for someone with these types of credentials.
- A mobile groomer who comes to your home with experience in cat grooming may also be a great solution to keep your cat as calm as possible during bathing.

