

Your Guide to Easy Grooming

From combing to brushing, bathing to clipping--know the basics for cleaning up your cat.

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Thorough CheckCheck your cat's eyes, ears, teeth and nails regularly. Many cats are prone to eye tearing, so wipe the cat's eyes with a warm, moist washcloth or cat-safe eye wipes.

Check your cat's ears twice a month for dirt or wax buildup. Gently wipe the visible part of the ear with a cotton ball and cat-specific ear cleaner or a wet washcloth. Do not go into the ear canal, as this can cause damage. If dirt or matter accumulates inside the canal, it must be flushed out professionally.

On average, clip your cat's nails monthly. "If you have not trimmed your cat's nails before, practice on a toothpick," Tumminello says. "A cat's nails and toothpicks have about the same feel to them when being cut." Be careful not to trim into the quick or pink area of the nail, as it will hurt the cat and cause bleeding.

Don't Forget the TeethAll cats should have their teeth examined by a veterinarian at an annual checkup. You can brush your cats' teeth between veterinary visits. "Cats do build up a lot of tartar and plaque on their teeth, because they don't really chew on things. [Home dental care] helps keep the plaque from settling," says Dara Samson, owner of Wags to Whiskers Pet Grooming in Long Beach, Calif.

More Than GroomingGrooming should be a natural extension of the love and care owners already have for their cats, and a little love can go a long way. "Handling, touching, petting and loving your cat daily will help when it comes to building trust, which is a big hurdle to cross when grooming your cat," Samson says.

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