

Your Guide to Easy Cat Grooming

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

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Cats have a knack for keeping owners on their toes, and grooming is no exception.

"In my 13 years of grooming, I have seen the cat climb the paneling near the tub to get away from the water, and the kitty that likes the water and looks at me upside down in the tub. I've seen the sweet little one who kneads us, the table, the tub, the comb and anything he can get his hands on," says Danielle Genovesi, owner of Honey's Haven in West Hartford, Conn.

Grooming can prove challenging, so use the right tools, begin when your cat is young and introduce regular routines to make the task less daunting.

Comb Regularly

Regular combing and brushing stimulates a cat's skin and keeps the coat clean and healthy. Comb or brush shorthaired cats at least once a week, and longhaired cats every other day, or more often if needed. A comb reaches the cat's skin better than a brush, especially with longhaired breeds. Wide- and fine-tooth combs used together provide the best results.

"Take a wide-tooth comb through [the fur] first and then follow with a finer tooth. That way you can make sure to get all the [shedding] undercoat out," says Michelle Schrader, owner of Doggie Do's and Kitty's Too, in Akron, Ohio.

When combing or brushing your cat, examine its body for problems such as skin irritations, fleas or ticks and mats, which can hide deep in the coat.

"Combing your cat from head to toe usually only takes about five minutes if done regularly," says Linda Tumminello, head groomer of The Cat Connection Inc. in Dallas. Carefully comb mats out. If they won't comb out, contact a professional groomer.

"Never use scissors on a cat to get the mat out," Schrader says. "I have a number of customers who have tried themselves and have cut the cats and they've needed to get stitches. Bring it in to have somebody cut it out. You don't want to take a chance on cutting the cat."