

Secrets of Professional Cat Groomers

Trade secrets from the pros can help keep kitty looking clean, polished – and relaxed.

By Kristin Grant

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When cats leave the groomers, they flaunt flawless fur, perfectly trimmed claws and sparkling eyes. To the average cat owner, this polished look may seem impossible to achieve without the help of professionals. Lucky for us, a handful of grooming experts have shared some of their best trade secrets, so kitty can get that glamorous look right at home.

Here are some tried-and-true tricks to help keep kitty looking like a show cat: Rub a small amount of corn starch through kitty's coat to make the fur fluffier and less oily. Remove the dark stains from the fur around the inner corners of kitty's eyes by gently swabbing on a dab of tear-stain remover, readily available at pet stores. Place several fluffy towels in the dryer on high heat while bathing kitty, and use them to pat down her fur for a quick and easy way to dry your feline friend without the disconcerting noise of a blow-dryer. Gently swipe a nonscented fabric softener sheet across staticky fur to quickly and effortlessly "tame the mane." Use a sprayer or showerhead attachment to rinse kitty during grooming rather than submerging your feline friend in standing water. Wash the tail end of the cat first when bathing, and work up to the head. Cats typically react more adversely to initial water on the face as opposed to on the back, and that first reaction can set the tone for the rest of the washing. Use a large metal comb for the first step in brushing a shorthaired cat's fur, or a plastic brush with beaded-tip bristles for longhaired breeds. Then move to more precise tools such as de-matters and tangle-splitters only for stubborn knots. Use a tuna-flavored toothpaste to make brushing kitty's teeth a less stressful experience. Wrap a towel around kitty's body before swabbing eyes and ears with clean, slightly damp cotton balls.

Grooming cats can at times be a difficult task. The poking, wiping, combing and swabbing can lead to a not-so-pleasant experience if kitty does not feel like cooperating. For this reason, some of the best tips groomers have involve ways to make grooming a less stressful event. Using these techniques can turn a potential melee into a relaxing activity. The result? A lovely cat and a satisfied owner.

Kristin Grant is a freelance writer who has learned first-hand by grooming her three cats, Max, Jasmine and Daphne, that any shortcuts to help expedite the grooming process should be employed — immediately.