

Nail Trimming 101

Make manicures enjoyable and easy for both you and your cat.

Does your kitty disappear when the clippers come out? Do you have to wrap them in a towel to complete the manicure? According to our behavior experts, calm, enjoyable nail-trimming sessions are not only possible — that's how they should always be! Check out the following tips for getting your cat to relax while you trim, turning nail-clipping sessions into enjoyable together time.

Where to trim your cat's nails

Ideally you should introduce your cat to nail clipping when they are a kitten. Choose a chair in a quiet room where you can comfortably sit your cat on your lap. Get them when they are relaxed and even sleepy, like in a groggy, after-meal state. Make sure that they aren't able to spy any birds, wild animals, or action outside nearby windows, and that no other pets are around.



Get your cat used to paw touching

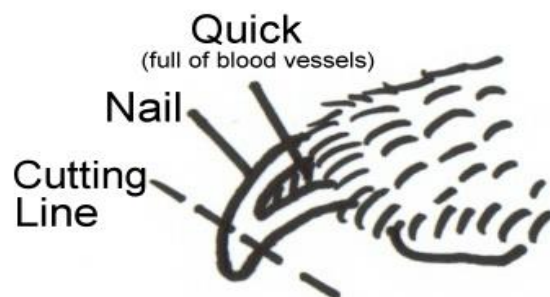
Gently take one of your cat's paws between your fingers and massage for no longer than the count of three. If your cat pulls their paw away, don't squeeze or pinch, just follow that gesture, keeping in gentle contact. When they are still again, give the pad a little press so that the nail extends out, then release the paw and immediately give them a treat. Do this every other day on a different toe until you've gotten through all of them.

Get acquainted with the clipper

Your cat should be at ease with the clippers before you attempt to trim their nails. Start by setting out the clippers for them to sniff and give them a treat. With your cat nearby, put a piece of uncooked spaghetti into the clippers. Next, while massaging one of your cat's toes, gently press the toe pad. When the nail extends, clip the spaghetti with the clippers while still holding your cat's paw gently. Now release the toe and quickly give them a treat.

Never cut to the quick

The pink part of a cat's nail, called the quick, is where the nerves and blood vessels are. Do NOT cut this sensitive area. Snip only the white part of the claw. It's better to be cautious and cut less of the nail rather than risk cutting this area. If you do accidentally cut the quick, any bleeding can be stopped with a styptic powder/stick or a pinch of cornstarch. It's a good idea to keep it nearby while you trim.





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Time to clip

With your cat in your lap facing away from you, take one of their toes in your hand, then massage and gently press the pad until the nail extends. Check to see how much of a trim the nails need and notice where the quick begins. Now trim only the sharp tip of one nail, release your cat's toe, and quickly give them a treat. If your cat didn't notice, clip another nail, but don't trim more than two claws in one sitting until your cat is comfortable. Be sure to reward them with a special treat afterward. Please note, you may want to do just one paw at a time for the first couple of sessions.

Clipping schedule

A nail-trimming every ten days to two weeks is a nice routine to settle into. If your cat refuses to let you clip their claws, ask your vet or a groomer for help.

What Not to Do

- If your cat resists, don't raise your voice or punish them.
- Never attempt a clipping when your cat is agitated or if you're upset. And don't rush - you may cut the quick.
- Don't try to trim all of your cat's claws at one time.
- WHS does not recommend nor support the declawing of cats. This surgery involves amputating the end of a cat's toes and is highly discouraged by the ASPCA. Instead, trim regularly, provide your cat with appropriate scratching posts, and ask your veterinarian about soft plastic covers for your cat's claws.

Keeping a cat's nails trimmed is important to their overall wellbeing and prevents accidental scratches. Don't hesitate to contact the Wisconsin Humane Society behavior department at asktheexpert@wihumane.org or 414-431-6173 if you need further guidance on how to get your kitty used to the clippers.