

Stay Sharp: Maintain Your Dog's Grooming Equipment

You need the right dog grooming equipment to create a masterpiece.

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Grooming combines the deft touch of a painter with the precision of a musician. You need the right dog grooming equipment to create a masterpiece. And you must properly use and maintain them.

If you groom your dog, you know it pays to keep expensive clippers and scissors sharp, greased, oiled, free of hair and in perfect working condition. Here are some tips to help you brush up.

Electric clippers and blades

Electric clippers cost more than most other grooming equipment and require the most upkeep to work properly. Surprisingly, many do-it-yourselfers throw away the manufacturer's packaging which provides specific maintenance instructions. While clippers used at home don't take the beating that those of a professional groomer do, they do wear with consistent use. Make sure this maintenance is performed on time:

Grease the gear, link and lever lightly every few months.

Oil the bearings – just a drop – occasionally.

Remove brush caps every two or three months and examine carbon brushes. If the clippers don't start, or if they run slower than usual, the brushes might be worn.

Clear hair from ventilation openings. Take off the end cap periodically. Be careful when screwing it back on; the cap may crack if the screws are tightened too much.

Recondition your clippers at least once a year. Clipper blades need maintenance, too. Regular lubrication reduces wear on the metal cutting edge, keeping the blade sharper, longer. Some tips:

Apply a few drops of oil before clipping. Beware of applying too much; you don't want excess oil to drip onto your dog's clean coat. During cutting, you can use a light, spray-on oil that cools and lubricates.

Brush away hair, dirt and other debris from the upper and lower blade teeth. Do not take apart the blades unless you're sure you can precisely restore the spring tension. Instead, slide the small blade from side to side. You also can dip or soak the blades in certain solvents such as kerosene.

Sharpen the blades. Either send them to the manufacturer or find out who sharpens blades for local professional groomers. Replace blades if you're told they're too old or worn to sharpen.