

Calming a Puppy For Dog Grooming

There are ways to calm a rambunctious puppy before a trip to the groomer's.

By Kathy Salzberg, NCMG

Q. I have a 7-month-old Standard Schnauzer who hates grooming. Although he is a puppy, he is a large for his age and extremely rambunctious. The dog groomer has great difficulty doing his job. Is there a way to calm this puppy, so I can have him properly groomed?

A. Your big baby boy is entering adolescence and just like a common situation with human teenagers, if some rules have not been enforced by now, you're in for a challenge. You are correct in thinking that this dog needs professional grooming to look like the strikingly handsome canine that he is. This robust dog has a harsh, wiry outer coat and a downy undercoat that forms mats if not regularly brushed. In the grooming salon, Schnauzers are either hand-stripped or clipped to look sharp.

If you are not planning to show or breed this dog, my first suggestion would be to have him neutered as soon as possible to cut down on those raging hormones and the aggression they produce. Next, enroll him in a basic dog obedience course. If he is trying to intimidate the groomer through biting and growling, now is the time to teach him that this behavior is not acceptable. If you have allowed "play biting" at home, he'll think it's okay to do it at the dog groomer's too, but a Standard Schnauzer is a strong dog, capable of doing serious damage even if he doesn't mean to.

These dogs were used as guardians, police dogs and cart-pullers in their German homeland but they were also loving caretakers of children so they are highly intelligent and versatile. There is still time to train him to be an excellent pet and companion.

At home, work on desensitizing him to having every part of his body handled. Lovingly massage him all over, from head to tail. Start these sessions after a meal or a vigorous play session when he is happy and not bursting with energy. Next, introduce the slicker brush, using it briefly on one area at a time. Having a grooming table at home will help considerably so he won't get so spooked when he visits the dog groomer or the vet. You need to be the one to decide when the session is over

Some groomers and holistic vets recommend Rescue Remedy, a concoction of five Bach flower essences that is used to calm down high-strung dogs. It is also used by people to combat anxiety, fear, trauma, hysteria, and stress. Administered a few drops at a time directly onto the mucous membranes of the mouth or diluted about four drops to an ounce in water, give your unruly boy his dose an hour before he goes to the groomer's. Good luck with your "teenaged terror!"