

Get the Buzz

Clippers are “an artist’s tool” in grooming.

By Kathy Salzberg, NCMG

Q. When you are clipping the dog with electric clippers, where do you begin, the rear or the front by the neck, going back to the rear?

A. When I am clipping a dog’s coat, I usually start at the front end, behind the neck, and I clip with the grain of the hair—the direction in which the hair grows. If you clip against the grain, you’ll take off more hair and may end up with an uneven haircut or patches of coat much shorter than you intended. When working on a large dog, I may vary this approach, starting at the rump and taking off coat downward over the legs.

In the grooming salon, we clip more than once. Before the bath, we do a “rough” cut while on the “finish” we go over the coat once or twice more with the clippers to make sure we have removed all the hair we needed to and to produce a smooth finished look with no clipper marks. We also touch up the finished product with our scissors, making the feet look neat and tidy and trimming and shaping the ears and tail. Sometimes we use thinning shears to blend in a clipped body with fuller legs or to blend a full head into the clipped neck.

You don’t need to use a lot of pressure when clipping. As my late husband and teacher David used to remind me, “The clipper is an artist’s tool, not a weapon.” If your blades are sharp, you will simply guide the clipper along the pet’s body. Be careful not to shave too closely around the anus, genitals and underbelly and do change your blades as soon as they feel hot to the touch, to prevent “clipper burn,” a painful irritation of a pet’s more sensitive areas. And avoiding using “skip tooth” blades—those with wider teeth—on areas where you might catch a skin fold or on thin areas of the dog’s legs where you could accidentally cut a tendon. Be very careful as well on the edges of the ears.

The best groomers produce a dog with a consistently smooth clipped area while using their scissors to shape and neaten longer areas of the coat, making their four-legged masterpiece complete!

Q. Is there any cordless clipper you would recommend for a fluffy Corgi? My husband is sure nothing cordless would be powerful enough, but I’m not looking to shave the dog bald, just to shorten the “feathers” and basically take off the extra hair that a normal-coated Corgi doesn’t have.

A. So you’re the proud owner of a “fluffie,” one of those Corgis with an extra-long coat? I love them because they allow a groomer to do more than just brush that famous double coat and sculpt the rear into an adorable “bunny butt.”

I must disagree with your hubby as well on the cordless clipper issue. I have had good luck using my Moser cordless, manufactured by Wahl. Its blade adjusts to five positions but when using it to trim a coat like your Corgi’s, I would attach one of its four snap-on combs so you won’t end up with a little baldy. Wahl also makes a model called the Chromado that boasts a 90-minute cordless operation, comes with comb attachments and has a quick-recharge function. If your little darling is brushed out properly, it should not take a great deal of power to skim and trim those feathers because your clipper won’t get snagged on dense undercoat or tangles.