

FIRST GROOM READY

PREPARING YOUR PUPPY FOR THEIR FIRST VISIT TO THE GROOMER

Your puppy's first professional groom is a big milestone. It doesn't need to be stressful. A little preparation now sets your puppy up to feel safe, calm and cooperative, not just for this visit, but for every groom, vet check and handling moment for the rest of their life.

Preparing your puppy for grooming isn't something to leave until the last minute. The habits you build in the weeks beforehand make the actual appointment easier for your puppy, your groomer, and you.

This guide walks you through exactly how to get ready, step by step.

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BEFORE THE GROOM



Start Handling Early, Every Day

When your puppy is comfortable being touched, held and examined at home, they'll cope with far better at the groomer.

- Touch their paws, ears, tail and muzzle daily for a few seconds, pairing it with a treat or praise.
- Get them used to being lifted and held still briefly, the way a groomer would position them on a table.
- Open their mouth gently and touch their teeth — many grooms include a light face tidy.
- Keep sessions short (30–60 seconds) and always end on a positive note.

INTRODUCE GROOMING SOUNDS AND TOOLS

Tools

- Let your puppy sniff a brush, comb and nail clippers with no pressure to use them yet.
- Brush them gently for a few strokes daily, rewarding calm behaviour.
- Pair it with food, letting your puppy lick or eat some snacks while you gently brush them.

Sounds

- Play a recording of clipper or dryer noise at low volume while they eat or play.
- Gradually increase the volume over several sessions if they stay relaxed.

TRAINER TIP

Little and often wins. Five short, upbeat sessions a week will do far more than one long one. If your puppy checks out, end the session and try again later — don't push through stress. Reward calm, not tolerance of discomfort.

GETTING GROOM-READY



Practice a 'grooming station at home

The grooming table is a new, wobbly, elevated surface with a stranger handling your puppy. Practising the routine at home in miniature makes the real thing far less alien.

- Have your puppy stand or sit on a non-slip surface (table or raised mat) for a few seconds, rewarding stillness.
- Practise a calm "stand" and "stay" cue — this is exactly what's asked of them on the grooming table.
- Build up duration gradually over days, never forcing them to stay if they're distressed.

BOOK A "PUPPY INTRO" VISIT IF OFFERED

Many groomers offer a short introductory visit with no clippers involved — just a sniff around the salon, a treat, some fuss, and a trip home. Ask if this is available; it takes the "unknown" out of the first real appointment and lets your puppy build a positive association with the salon itself.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT GROOMER

- ☐ Ask if they have experience with puppies and nervous dogs.
- ☐ Ask how they handle a puppy who becomes distressed mid-groom.
- ☐ Ask whether sessions can be split over two shorter visits if needed.

GOLDEN RULE

Don't wait for problems to appear before you start preparing. A confident, cooperative groom is built in the weeks beforehand, not on the day itself.

ON THE DAY OF THE GROOM

Your pre-appointment checklist



- ☐ Give a short walk beforehand .
- ☐ Avoid a big meal right before the appointment.
- ☐ Let your puppy toilet before you go in.
- ☐ Bring a favourite treat or toy if your groomer allows it.
- ☐ Bring vaccination details if this is a new groomer.
- ☐ Stay calm and relaxed yourself.
- ☐ Keep the goodbye and hello low-key and unhurried.

What to expect

Arrival → Settle → Handling & Bath → Dry & Trim → Finishing Touches → Collection

A little wriggling or unease at the first groom is completely normal. It usually improves fast with a patient groomer and the handling practice from this guide — most puppies settle within a visit or two.

After the groom



- Let your puppy rest — a groom is tiring, even when it goes well.
- Praise and reward calm behaviour once you're home.
- Note anything your puppy found difficult so you can practise it before the next visit.

WHEN TO ASK FOR HELP



Speak to your vet first if you're ever concerned about your puppy's health, skin, or a sudden change in behaviour around handling.

PUPPY TRAINING

You don't need to wait for a problem to develop before seeking professional support. Many puppy owners choose training simply because they want guidance from the start, feel confident they're getting things right, and want to give their puppy the best possible foundation.

Professional support can be particularly helpful if you'd like guidance with:

- Building comfort and cooperation with handling, brushing and nail care
- Helping a fearful or overly wriggly puppy cope with grooming
- Settling, independence and general confidence-building
- Preventing or navigating fear, reactivity or avoidance around new experiences

MORE FREE RESOURCES



Visit www.planetpup.ie for more free puppy guides, including our First Week Home Guide and Puppy Socialisation Checklist, plus information about our reward-based puppy training in Cork.