

A Pet Parent's Guide to Cat Nails

In this guide, you'll learn all about cat nail care—and what to do in an emergency.

Cat Nail Care Essentials

Cat nail trimming is made much easier with the right tools and resources. The following can help you care for your furry friend's paws:

- A relaxing, quiet spot with good lighting to clip their nails
- Cat nail clippers or a cat nail grinder
- Styptic powder
- High-value cat treats to reward your pet during and after they're done with their nail trim
- A towel



How Short Should I Clip My Cat's Nails?

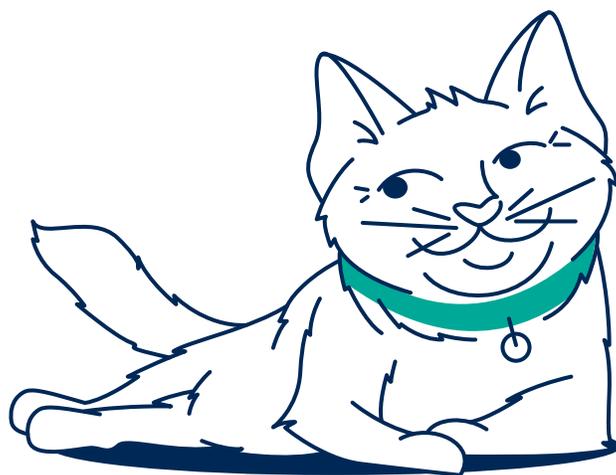
Before you start clipping, you'll want to know how short to trim your pet's nails.

This varies, but generally, you'll want to cut your cat's nails as short as possible without hitting the corium, or the quick, the area inside of a cat's nail that's filled with blood vessels and nerves.

If your cat has nearly clear nails, you'll be able to see the pink-colored vessels toward the base of the nail nearest the toe.

Cutting the quick hurts, so when trimming, cut only about 2 millimeters (0.07 inches) from the end of the quick.

If you're unsure of where the quick is, or if your cat has dark nails and you can't quite see the vessels, book an appointment for a nail trim at your veterinarian's office.



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How To Trim Your Cat's Nails

Once you've secured all the right tools to trim your pet's nails, you're ready to get started.

1 Hold Your Cat

Calmly pick up your cat and place them, paws up, rested in the crook of your arm.

Position them so they're facing the same direction as you, so you can hold their paws (one at a time) in your hand from behind while holding the clippers in the other.

2 Expose the Nail

With one paw in your hand, gently squeeze between the top of the paw and the toe pads on the bottom to expose the claws.

3 Cut the Nail

Angle your clippers or grinder so that the cuts are at a 45-degree angle. This will allow the nail to rest comfortably on the ground when your cat walks.

4 Repeat With the Remaining Nails

Continue clipping until your cat becomes stressed or until you've cut all their nails (whichever comes first).

If your cat appears uncomfortable or upset, take a break and try again later.



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What To Do If Your Cat's Nail Is Bleeding, Broken, or Cracked

If you accidentally cut your cat's quick or their nail is broken or bleeding, don't panic!

Here's what to do:

Stay calm and reassure your cat—your demeanor will help keep them steady.

- 1 Apply styptic powder, a styptic gel swab, or a styptic pencil. These products act as astringents/cauterants to promote clotting and stop bleeding fast.
- 2 If you don't have styptic powder on hand, press cornstarch or flour onto the tip of the nail as a backup. You can also gently drag the nail across a bar of unscented, preferably antibacterial soap to stop the bleeding.
- 3 Apply gentle but firm pressure with a clean cloth or gauze for a few minutes.
- 4 Keep your pet still long enough for the blood to clot.
- 5 Discourage licking so the clot can form. Use a recovery collar or briefly cover the paw with a clean sock secured loosely with tape. Bacteria in the mouth also will cause the nailbed to get infected, so a protective collar is essential.
- 6 Once bleeding stops, keep the nail tip clean and protected for a few hours, limiting running and play.



When To Call Your Vet

Most instances of cat nail bleeding can be managed at home, but some situations require professional care.

If any of the following happen, call your vet:

- The bleeding doesn't stop within 20 minutes.
- Your cat is limping, licking excessively, or guarding their paw.
- The nail is badly broken or torn, with the quick or nail bed exposed. This can be very painful, and your vet may recommend pain medication.
- You notice any signs of infection, such as redness, swelling, or discharge. This may require an antibiotic prescribed by your vet.