

Trimming Your Cat's Nails

Trimming your cat's nails is often a vital part of maintaining your cat's health and reducing any destructive scratching.

The best time to introduce a cat to trimming nails is when they are kittens. Unfortunately, this is not always a luxury many cat owners have. The key to successful nail trimmings is forming a positive association with the experience. Follow the steps below for an easy and happy nail trimming experience for the rest of their life whether they be a young kitten or older cat.



Part 1: Make friends with the paws

When forming a positive association with nail trimming and handling, it's best to start the process when your cat is sleepy or in a low energy state. If your cat/kitten is excited and alert, it will make the process more difficult.

- Gently lift one of your cat's paws between your fingers and massage for no longer than 3 seconds.
 - If your cat pulls away, don't squeeze or pinch; follow their movement maintaining gentle contact.
- When your cat is still, give their pad a little press so that the nail extends out.
 - If your cat does not stop their paw from moving within the 3 seconds, continue to the step below.
- Release the paw and give a treat.
- Repeat this with different feet and different toes every other day.



Part 2: Choosing & Getting acquainted with the clippers

There are many clippers commercially available for purchase. You want to avoid human nail clippers. We've found the best clippers are small and easy to hold with a curved blade similar to the photo to the right.

Just the sound of the clippers can be startling to a cat, so you want to work on forming a positive association with the sound in addition to trimming their nails.

- Use a piece of uncooked spaghetti or even a toothpick and place it in the clippers with your cat on your lap or nearby.
 - If your cat sniffs the clippers, set a treat on top of the clippers for your cat to eat.
- While massaging your cat's toes (See Part 1), press the toe pad. When the nail extends, clip the spaghetti/toothpick with the clippers while still holding your cat's paw.
- Release the paw and give a treat.
- Repeat this with different feet and toes every other day.

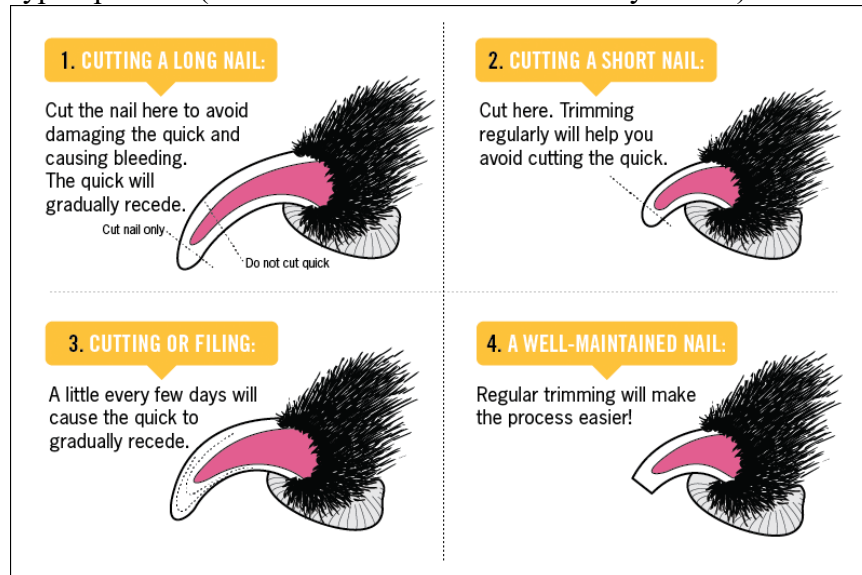


Part 3: Making the cut

Once your cat is comfortable with the handling and the clippers, it's time to make the cut. Knowing where to cut is important. If your cat's nails are clear or white, you will see a pink area within the nail. This pink area is called the "quick". It is highly sensitive and will bleed if it is



cut. When you cut the nails, you want to ensure you are only cutting the white part of the nail before you get to the quick. Don't worry, if you do accidentally cut the quick, you can stop any bleeding with styptic powder (found online or at most veterinary clinics).



If a cat's nails have not been trimmed in a long time, the quick grows. The more you trim your cat's nails, the more the quick will recede, allowing you to cut shorter with each trim.

- When starting the trimming process, only cut the sharp end of the nail (Don't worry too much about getting the nail as short as possible). Release the paw, and give a treat.
 - If your cat didn't notice, clip another nail and give a treat.
 - Repeat
- For your first sessions, you may only do 1 paw at a time before your cat gets uncomfortable.
 - Try not to trim more than 2 nails if your cat is starting to show discomfort.
 - Always reward your cat with a special treat afterward.

Other Notes:

Ideally, you would trim your cat's nails every 10-14 days.

If your cat resists, do not punish or yell at them. It's important not to rush the process. Know that some cats take longer to form the positive association. Even when your cat is comfortable, take your time trimming all the paws. Don't do all of the paws in one go.

Declawing:

Mountain Humane strongly discourages cat owners from having their cats declawed. Without the ability to claw, your cat may develop behavior problems that you have not previously experienced, such as biting or not using the litterbox. The declawing procedure is also painful with a long recovery time.

If you are having concerns with your cat's behavior, reach out to Mountain Humane's behavior team at behavior@mountainhumane.org or (208) 788-4351 x114.