

Grooming Tips and Preparation At The Barking Birch Pet Lodge

When you bring your pooch to The Barking Birch, they will be bathed and pampered and will leave the grooming session looking spectacular. Even with our talented bathers and groomers, there are ways you can improve the experience—both for you and for your dog.

Grooming Tips:

Good grooming habits and preparations should start when your dog is still a puppy and involve both effort from you, your dog, and our staff. First, let's start with the things every owner should know before bringing their dog for their first groom:

1. Prepare Your Dog

Especially if it's your dog's first time being groomed, it's a good idea to help them get used to some of the sensations, like having their paws touched or looking in their ears.

2. Start Grooming as a Puppy

Grooming can be a bit traumatic at first, especially for puppies. It's a great idea to book your dog for an introductory appointment before beginning regular grooms.

3. Brush Their Fur Regularly (Yes, Even Short-Haired Dogs)

Think of your dog's hair like your own: you should regularly brush it, so it stays healthy, clean, and free of knots and tangles.

4. Check Their Feet and Ears

Gunk and dirt can build up in a dog's ears and around their feet. Keep an eye on them and give them a light clean between grooms, if needed.

5. Make Regular Grooming Appointments

Regular brushing is not enough to keep fur in check. If you want the coat (as well as the nails) to be truly healthy, bring your pet to the groomer regularly.

6. Stay Calm and Relaxed

Dogs pick up on your anxiety – if you are anxious as you drop your pet off, they will be anxious during the groom. Do your best to stay calm and relaxed as you drop them off for a groom.

7. Be Specific in What You Want

Let us know if you just want the nails trimmed and the fur cleaned up. If you want something more specific, try bringing in a picture. We're happy to accommodate!

8. Don't Be Afraid to Wash Between Grooms

With the right shampoo, washing your dog likely will not dry out their skin. If you would like help selecting a good shampoo, just let us know. At-home baths between grooms are a great way to keep your dog looking its best.

9. Avoid Matting Like the Plague

Matted fur isn't just uncomfortable, it can be a serious problem for dogs. Mats pull on their skin and can be difficult to remove. Mats often need to be cut out in small pieces, and in some cases, de-matting a dog may be more dangerous than helpful.

Tips and Ideas Groomers Don't Always Share

Grooming is a touch job. Barking Birch bathers and groomers are patient and hardworking, but there are also some important grooming factors that dog groomers don't often tell their clients. Some of these things include:

1. Tipping

Many in the service industry are used to tipping, even relying on tips for much of their income. Groomers are no different. Please show your appreciation for a job well done and tip your groomer! Remember, you may not see it, but not all dogs are happy about getting groomed!

2. Accidents Happen

We maintain the best possible standards for all our dogs, though when working with animals around soapy water and sharp objects, accidents can happen. On the rare occasion that this does happen, we feel much worse about it than you can imagine. Your pup's safety and comfort are our top priorities.

3. Please Be on Time and We'll Call When Your Pup Is Ready

Our grooming schedules are very tight! Please be prompt with dropping off and picking up your pooch. If you are unable to make a grooming appointment, please call us as soon as you can to reschedule. Also, please bear with us if we are running late – grooms aren't always an exact science, especially if the pup is having a "ruff" day!

4. Grooming Is Stressful

Grooming can be stressful, both on the dog and on the groomer.

Dogs don't always react well when left with strangers in an unfamiliar environment full of new smells and noises.

Preparing for a Puppy's First Groom

How old should a puppy be before their first groom? Short answer: at least 12 weeks. Depending on the dog's breed, we recommend that you wait until your dog is 12 weeks old or older for their first groom. Partially, this is because your dog is big enough to start grooming, but it's also important to have your new dog vaccinated before getting exposed to our other pack members.

Of course, puppies are messy and tend to get into... well, everything. If your puppy needs to be cleaned, you might look into purchasing dog or puppy wet wipes.

For the first few visits, your pup will stick to a few simple tasks to ease them into the grooming process. These typically include:

- Bathing
- Light brushing
- Nail trim
- Ear cleaning
- Light trim around the face

Puppies are often stressed out by new situations. You can help them through their first grooming session by following a few steps:

1. Get Them Used to Being Handled

Your puppy's comfort level with being handled happens over time. Focus on their paws, nails, ears, belly, and tail.

2. Begin a Brushing Routine

Brushing keeps the coat healthy and free from matted fur and tangles— especially for dogs with long hair. Soon enough, you will notice your puppy enjoying these sessions, too.

3. Exercise Them Before Their Appointment

Puppies have energy! Take them for a walk or enjoy some playtime prior to taking your pup to their appointment. Best of all, your pup will have a chance to relieve themselves and get some pent-up energy out beforehand.

4. Keep the Initial Sessions Short

It's not a good idea to have their first grooming session be too long. Start off with a quick nail trim or a bath until they get comfortable being handled and groomed. You might even just stop in to say hello before their first session.

5. Make it Fun

Speak in a soft voice and remain calm. Your demeanor will help your furry loved one feel safe and secure. Give them plenty of praise and treats as they finish up their very first groom!