

How to Trim Your Cat's Claws

Regularly trimming your cat's claws is an easy and cat-friendly way to "sharply" reduce the sting from scratching activities. With a little preparation and diligence, claw-trimming can be a simple and pleasant routine.

Preparation

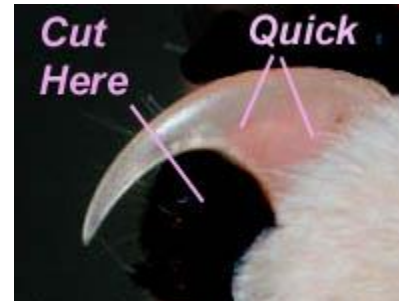
Get your cat used to your handling and gently squeezing her paws. Don't proceed faster than she'll let you; the idea is for her to become comfortable with this. Note: cats are often more agreeable to new things if they get a treat.

In the interim, your vet or a trusted groomer can trim your cat's claws quickly and cheaply, and will usually be glad to show you how.

Step-by-Step Instructions

Start with a relaxed cat, sharp clippers, and a good light source, for best results. Some folks prefer specially-made cat clippers (available in pet supply stores), others use regular human nail clippers. Either device works well.

1. Ease into a position that's comfortable for you and your cat. For some, this means kneeling behind kitty, for others this means supporting her in your lap. Calmly talk to her and pet her. You may want to have a treat reward in plain view.
2. If kneeling down behind your cat, secure her gently between your knees, and take a front paw in your left hand. If kitty's in your lap, have her facing to your right, and support her securely in your left arm with her front paw in your left hand. It may be easier at first to wrap her in a towel with only the paw extended. If you're left-handed, use the opposite hand (and face kitty to your left if she's in your lap).
3. With your thumb on top of her paw, and two or more fingers underneath, press gently but firmly on the pad area to extend a claw. It isn't necessary to squeeze hard.
4. Examine the claw closely under light to find the pink area in the center called the "quick." This is a blood vessel, and will bleed if nicked.
5. Holding the clippers in your other hand, make sure there's no chance that the clippers will catch any of the pad. Then snip off the tip of the claw, being careful not to cut into the quick (see picture).
6. Give kitty a treat and a few kind words for being such a good cat. The more relaxed you and she both are, the easier the process will be.
7. Repeat steps 3 through 6 until you have finished the first paw.
8. If your cat is comfortable and compliant, continue until the nails on both front feet have been clipped. If things are going smoothly, optionally clip the back paws. Don't forget the "dewclaw" on the paw's side.



Tips

1. Keep some styptic powder or styptic pads handy in case you accidentally cut into the quick. If this should occur, apply the powder to the nail to stop the bleeding, and call it a day.
2. It may be easier if you have a second person holding the cat. Above all, it's important that you and your cat both be relaxed.
3. If at any time your cat becomes anxious, stop immediately. You can do one claw every day, if necessary.

To view the complete collection of Shelter Sheets, visit www.cats.about.com/library/nosearch/blss.htm.

© 2001 by Franny Syufy, licensed to About.com, Inc. Used by permission of About.com, Inc., <http://www.About.com>. All rights reserved.

Illustration: Max's House (www.maxshouse.com).