

Trimming Your Cat's Claws

Clipping your cat's claws can be quite the chore for you and a scary experience for your cat. But it is key to avoiding ingrown claws, reducing damage to your furniture, and decreasing your risk of accidental injury during interaction. Luckily, with a little planning and patience (and a lot of food!) you can make this process more low stress for both you and your cat.

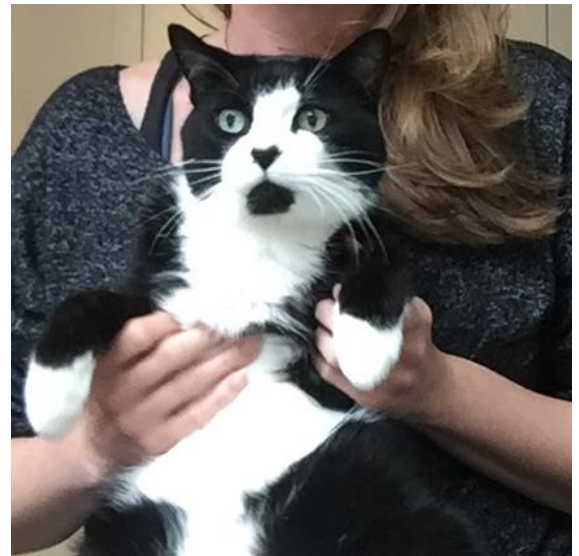
Claw trimming 101

Many cats tolerate claw trimming quite well, especially if they are habituated to it early. Below is the process for a standard claw trim.

1. Find a comfortable area away from distractions
2. Hold your cat however they are most comfortable
 - Less is more when it comes to restraint
 - Sitting your cat on their rear on your lap while facing away from you is a common choice because it is comfortable for both parties and promotes safety
3. Look at your cat's claw and find the quick
 - The quick is a small pink bundle of nerve endings inside the claw
4. Cut the claw 2mm below where the quick ends
 - DO NOT cut the quick. This will be very painful for your cat and make the process more difficult in the future
 - Do not use guillotine trimmers, as they tend to split claws
5. Repeat as needed (approximately every 10-14 days)

Advanced claw trimming

Some cats have had a bad experience during a claw trim in the past (whether this be having their quick cut, being yelled at, or simply being rushed through the procedure), and this can lead to the process being much more difficult in the future. Here is some advice for trimming the claws of a cat who reacts negatively to their paws or claws being touched.



CLAW TRIMMER TYPES



Desensitization and counter-conditioning

1. Start feeding your cat a food they love.
2. Begin handling their paw while they are eating. After a few moments, stop touching their paw and stop feeding. Then start feeding and handling again. They will soon learn they only get the food when their paws are being handled.
3. Next, offer the food and begin gently tapping your cat's claws with the trimmers while they are eating. Stop all handling and feeding after a few taps. Then start feeding and tapping again.
4. Finally, cut one of your cat's claws while they are eating. If they continue eating, proceed to cut more claws. If they show a negative reaction at all, allow them to continue eating, but stop trimming their claws. Return to the process another day. The more you complete these steps, the easier it will get!



If you have tried the above strategies and your cat still becomes aggressive or excessively stressed during claw trimming, then it is time to seek professional help. Contact your veterinarian for help.

Tips:

- Do not declaw your cat. Declawing is the amputation of the last bone on a cat's toes. This can lead to chronic pain and increased behavioural issues such as biting, inappropriate litter box use, and over-grooming. Declawing is illegal in many countries around the world, because it is regarded as inhumane.
- Do not use punishments when a cat is difficult during claw clipping. This is unlikely to have the desired effect, and may only serve to damage your relationship with your cat and make them more averse to the process.
- Do not forget to cut the dew claw! This 'thumb' claw is worn down less quickly than the others, so it may need more frequent cutting.
- Provide a lot of scratching surfaces. This will make the need for claw trimming less frequent.
- Rear claws generally require less frequent trimming.

*Note: Much of this information and many of the images in this manual are taken from *Low Stress Handling, Restraint and Behavior Modification of Dogs and Cats* by Dr. Sophia Yin DVM. Dr. Yin was a pioneer in the field of animal behaviour and stress-free handling methods. She took her own life in 2014. Her tragic death was a wake-up call to the veterinary community and has resulted in greater awareness of stress and depression in the profession. We honour her memory by continuing her legacy of compassionate animal handling. For more information or other resources please visit <https://drsophiayin.com/>

