

# AN OWNER'S GUIDE



## How to Find the Right Groomer for Your Dog

By Sue Williamson



If you have a dog that needs to be groomed, even if it is just for a bath or for his or her claws to be trimmed, you need to make sure that you get the right groomer for your dog.

As a first step, you may want to think about the best type of professional grooming environment for your dog. There are generally four options:

- Multi-groomer salon. These have multiple groomers, each grooming a dog at the same time. You may find he rarely gets groomed by the same groomer.
- Single-Groomer Salon. Most single groomer salons tend to have only one dog in their salon at a time (or a family of dogs) but do check.
- Mobile Van Groomer. These groomers travel to you and groom in a specially converted grooming van.
- Mobile home groomer. These groomers come to you and groom in your home.

**All four options have a place, but you need to decide which best suits your dog. Writing a list of pros and cons may help you to decide which is the best.**

Once you have decided which type of grooming environment you want, the next step is to find one that is suitable for you and your dog. Is your priority the way your dog looks, or are you more concerned about your dog's mental and emotional welfare?

If you want that "perfect" finish, there are many groomers out there and I suggest you look for those who have a professional qualification, such as City & Guilds, or OCN.

However, if you are not so concerned about him looking "perfect" but are more concerned about his mental and emotional welfare, this becomes a little more difficult.

Most people approach friends and family for recommendations of a groomer, or social media. However, even based on recommendations, it may be that the groomer is not the right one for your dog.





## Questions you may want to ask a groomer to assess suitability for your dog, especially if you want a groomer who focusses on mental and emotional health:

- 1** Can you stay? This is not always something the owner wants to do, but some dogs are better with the owner present, especially if the dog suffers from separation anxiety
- 2** Do you use restraints? Although some dogs need restraints to keep them safe, stop them leaping off the table or falling off the table, many dogs find restraints too restrictive and can add to their anxiety
- 3** Do you use any special techniques to keep dogs calm during grooming? This may include Tellington TTouch Training, 'canine permission-based' or force-free methods, desensitisation and counter-conditioning.
- 4** Can you bring your dog in for some familiarisation sessions before you book in for a full groom? Having your dog groomed at the first visit can be very stressful. Try and find a groomer that is happy to build a relationship with your dog first.
- 5** Has the groomer got a dog behaviour background?
- 6** Will other dogs be in the salon?
- 7** How many groomers work there? (This will impact on equipment noise levels).
- 8** Will the same person groom my dog every time?
- 9** Do they crate dogs before/after grooms?



**Once you have found that “ideal” groomer for your dog (please note I say “for your dog”, not “for you” there are lots of things you can do to help to make the grooming salon less stressful. Some of this will be in collaboration with the groomer, some will be on your own.**

- It is essential that you give your groomer a true summary of his or her behaviour whilst you are grooming him and any feedback from his previous groomer.
- If you have trained commands and techniques to aid with grooming, pass that information on, as well as any areas he finds difficult to be touched or groomed. The more information your groomer has the better they will be able to adapt the groom to suit him for a more relaxing experience.
- Once you have found a groomer that suits both yourself and your dog, stay with that groomer so that you can continue to build a good relationship.
- Ensure that you can touch and brush every part of your dog’s body. If you cannot touch part of his body without him reacting, then your groomer is much less likely to be able to.
- Stroke his face on a regular basis with a spoon or baby scissors to build confidence of metal around the face.
- Take something familiar to the salon from home with your scent or his scent on.
- Take his favourite treats and, if he has a snuffle mat, licki-mat or Kong, take that as well. Familiarity can really help.
- With the agreement of your groomer, take him into the salon for 5 minutes regularly to say hello, so he has positive experiences.
- Find out whether it works better to walk him before his groom, or whether he is better without a walk first (in case a walk is likely to ‘light additional candles’!).
- Book appointments to suit when he is most at ease, some dogs will prefer a slot where there are fewer people coming in and out, or fewer dogs about. If he usually sleeps all afternoon, ask for a morning appointment.
- Think about his triggers and avoid those activities when he is due to be groomed.
- Book regular appointments so that you can stay on top of brushing without mats forming, making coat maintenance easier for you both.
- Be realistic in terms of coat length. If you cannot manage to maintain the coat, keep it shorter.
- Whilst some dogs are better with their owner present, be aware that some dogs are worse, so work with the groomer to decide which is better for him.

Recommended reading: Taking the Grrr out of Grooming Your Dog – Sue Williamson (Available on Amazon)  
[www.happypawswithsue.co.uk](http://www.happypawswithsue.co.uk)

