

Brushing your dog's teeth - an owner's guide

Brushing your dog's teeth every day can prevent pain and health issues and provide improved quality of life. Regular brushing might seem challenging, but with some simple tips and tricks and a little patience, you can master it.

Starting slowly is the key

The most important thing to remember is not to jump straight into brushing. First, desensitise your dog to having their face and mouth handled.

Start by approaching the face and muzzle with your hand and lifting the lip until your dog is comfortable. For some reactive dogs, this phase can last weeks or even months.

Initially, approach from behind your dog's head rather than straight on to seem less threatening. Reward calm behaviour with treats. Avoid physically restraining your dog.

Once your dog calmly accepts hands near its face, use your finger to slide between the lip and teeth. Introduce pet toothpaste on your finger before attempting to use any brushes.

Once your dog is no longer reacting or pulling away, you can start to use a finger brush followed by an extra-soft-bristled toothbrush.



The right toothbrush

Dog-specific toothbrushes can be awkward to handle, and their bristles are sometimes too firm. A human brush is more ergonomic and will do the job just fine.

Choose a brush with extra-soft bristles, preferably short and with flat bristles (as pictured below). A basic, no-frills brush is all you need.

Brush Size

The right brush size is the one that fits comfortably in your dog's mouth. For smaller dogs, use a babies brush, for medium-sized dogs, a toddler-size, and for larger dogs, an adult toothbrush.

Toothpaste

Only use toothpaste designed specifically for pets. Do not use human toothpaste since it contains fluoride and foaming agents, which can be toxic to pets if they swallow it.

How often?

Once daily is the optimal frequency for brushing your dog's teeth. Unlike humans, dogs don't seem to benefit from twice-daily brushing.

What if my dog has a sore mouth?

If your dog already has periodontal disease or other painful conditions, now is not the time to start a brushing routine. Instead, arrange to have your dog checked by your vet.





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