

How to Brush Your Dog's Teeth



Your dog will probably find the sensation of you poking around in his mouth strange. It might make him nervous at first. However, you can make tooth brushing more pleasant for your dog if you focus on doing two things:

1. Take it slow. Introduce tooth brushing in small steps so that your dog doesn't get overwhelmed and upset.
2. Teach your dog that good things always happen when he gets his teeth brushed.

Before You Start: Accustom Your Dog to Having His Muzzle and Mouth Handled

When to Do It

It's ideal to brush your dog's teeth daily, just like you brush your own. However, if your schedule doesn't allow that, aim to brush your dog's teeth at least several times a week.

Smaller dogs and brachycephalic breeds—dogs with flat or short, broad snouts, like pugs and bulldogs—may need more frequent brushing. Their teeth are often crowded together, which allows more plaque to accumulate and increases their risk of developing periodontal disease.



Start Brushing

After you've collected supplies—your dog's toothbrush, sponge or gauze, his special toothpaste and a few tasty treats—take your dog to a quiet, calm area. You might need to keep your dog on a leash to limit his movement during the brushing session.

1. Put some toothpaste on the brush. Placing one hand over the top of your dog's muzzle, gently lift his lips. With your other hand, brush or rub a few teeth. Your dog can keep his jaws closed at this point. Just focus on cleaning the outer surfaces of his teeth and gums. After only two or three seconds of brushing, stop and release your dog's muzzle.



2. Repeat Step 1 two or three times a day for one to two weeks. Each day, slowly increase the time you spend brushing. Start with three seconds. Then, the next day, try five. The next day, try eight, and so on. Eventually you'll be able to brush the outer surfaces of all your dog's teeth during a single brushing session.
3. When your dog seems comfortable about you brushing all his teeth while his jaws are closed, you can start to open his mouth. Gently place one hand over the top of your dog's muzzle and open his mouth. With your other hand, reach in your dog's mouth with the brush. Brush a few teeth for a couple of seconds. Then release your dog's muzzle, praise him and feed him a treat.
4. At this point, you can start alternating between brushing the outer and inner surfaces of your dog's teeth during brushing sessions. It's best to keep brushing sessions short (aim for about five minutes), but brush daily if possible. Remember to continue to reward your dog with tasty treats or his favorite game after you brush his teeth. If you do, he'll come to love brushing sessions because good things always happen afterwards.
5. For other dental products go to VOHC.org for products that have been approved by veterinary dentists.

