

GROOMING

Grooming the Shih Tzu

The Shih Tzu is a long coated breed that requires daily brushing if kept in full coat, as most Shih Tzu are clipped down then grooming is less frequent.

It doesn't matter whether your Shih Tzu is going to be a show dog or a family pet, it is best to introduce your Shih Tzu to grooming and bathing sessions while it is still a puppy. Be very gentle and start by placing the puppy on its back in your lap and brushing the chest and leg hair. When the puppy is accustomed to being brushed you can have the dog stand on a table or a rubber mat on top of the washing machine, which is easier on your back.

Grooming equipment

- Stainless steel pin brush
- Mason & Pearson bristle or nylon and bristle brush
- Small slicker brush
- Stainless steel comb (medium/fine with rounded teeth)
- Plastic tail comb
- Spray bottle for conditioner or water
- Packet of orthodontic elastic bands for topknots



- Hair dryer, preferably professional type with stand
- Rubber mat to prevent slipping in bath
- Tearless baby shampoo
- Hair conditioner

General grooming

To prevent unmanageable matting from forming, you should give your Shih Tzu a light brushing daily and a thorough brushing once a week, when in full coat.

When you begin grooming start with the underside, chest and inner legs. Place the dog on its back; lightly spray the exposed coat with a little conditioner mixed with water and brush lightly with your pin brush. The slicker brush can be used on the leg hair. Next turn the dog onto its side and brush the hair in layers downwards from the skin to the tips, lightly spraying as you go.

When both sides have been groomed, stand the dog up and part the hair from the base of the skull to the tail and brush the hair downwards. Then spray and brush out the tail.

Special attention should be made to the face and eyes. The face whiskers and topknot should be combed daily; the eyes can be gently wiped clean with a cotton wool ball soaked in warm water.

Once the puppy has enough hair, the topknot and whiskers should be banded up using the dental bands, to keep the hair out of its eyes, mouth and food dish. Make sure the hair isn't pulled too tight which can prevent the dog closing its eyes properly.

Ears should be examined regularly to ensure that they are clean and sweet smelling. Contact your veterinarian if there is any sign of redness, discharge, crusting, unpleasant odour or excessive head shaking. As part of your normal routine, you should also trim off any excess hair from between the toes.

If during your grooming you come upon any severe matting, try gently easing the mat apart with your fingers. Once loosened up, it can be brushed out. Cutting matts out should be avoided if possible as you will ruin the look of the coat with chunks missing here and there.

At the conclusion of your grooming session, reward the dog with a treat of some kind and some enthusiastic praise.

Bathing

The frequency of bathing your Shih Tzu depends on the coat texture of the individual dog and the environment. Some seem to keep themselves remarkably clean while others become smelly and unkempt-looking in a very short period of time. A bath every 10-14 days should be enough.

Make sure you have everything you will need on hand: shampoo, conditioner, towels, hair dryer, brushes and combs. Thoroughly groom the dog to ensure no mats or tangles are present before proceeding. Bathing a matted dog sets the matts in the coat! It is a good idea to plug the ears with cottonwool to keep them dry.

Stand the dog on rubber bath mat in laundry trough (or bath); thoroughly saturate the coat with warm water. Apply shampoo and gently massage it through the coat, rinse and apply cream rinse or conditioner, rinse again then blot dry with a towel. If you rub briskly with a towel you will cause the hair to matt or break off.

Allow the dog to shake, then blot dry again. Now blow dry with a hair dryer whilst brushing with a pin brush. The dog should be totally dry at the end of blow-drying.

Nails should be trimmed as required, cut the nail to where they hook over being careful not to cut into the quick which is the red streak that can be seen in translucent nails. Should you accidentally cut the nail to short and it bleeds, apply some styptic powder to stop the bleeding. Also ensure that dewclaws are regularly cut.

Show topknots

Show topknots are an art form that comes with practice. We suggest if you require detailed information, please see the show topknot article on the American Shih Tzu Club website.