

How to Brush Your Dog's Teeth

Part 1 Getting ready to brush

1. **Get a dog toothbrush or finger brush**, both are available at any pet store. Do NOT use a human toothbrush.
2. **Pick out a dog toothpaste**, also available at any pet store. Do NOT use human toothpaste, it has fluoride and other ingredients that can be toxic.
3. **Start when your dog is young**, as early as 8 weeks of age. This will get them accustomed to brushing.
4. **Choose a good time for brushing**. When your dog is calm and relaxed is the best time to brush, especially after exercising.

Part 2 Brushing the Teeth

1. **Get your dog comfortable with your hand in its mouth**. Take it slow and frequently touch around your dog's mouth and muzzle. It may take time for your dog to get used to this.
2. **Let your dog lick some toothpaste off your finger**. Put a pea sized amount of toothpaste on your finger and let the dog lick it off, do this a few times.
3. **Show the toothbrush to your dog**. Show it to them and let them inspect the brush before putting it their mouth. You can even let the dog lick some toothpaste off the brush and give them lots of praise.
4. **Brush a few teeth**. With or without toothpaste, gently brush one or a few of the easiest to reach teeth.
 - a. Gently lift the upper lip, place the toothbrush onto the teeth and gently brush back and forth. If your dog is reluctant or aggressive do not push it, try again at another time.
 - b. Some dogs will be receptive to brushing, others may benefit from a friend or family member assisting that can pet and help calm the dog using a soothing voice.
 - c. After brushing a few teeth, reward your dog with a treat and end the brushing session.
5. **Brush the outsides of the dog's teeth**. Place a small amount of toothpaste on the toothbrush and slowly and gently start to brush in the same area you brushed before. Then gradually move along the entire outside surface of all the upper and lower teeth.
 - a. Increase the number of teeth your brush each time until your dog is comfortable having all of them brushed.
 - b. Limit brushing sessions to just a few minutes each.
 - c. Throughout the process praise your dog with a calming voice and treat your dog after brushing.
6. **Brush the inside surfaces**. Once you are able to brush the outsides of the teeth in one session, you are ready to try brushing along the inside surfaces.
 - a. Put one hand over the top of the muzzle, lifting the upper lips, and open your dog's mouth. If they are reluctant to open, applying gentle inward pressure can help to get the mouth open.
 - b. Once the mouth is open, brush a small area of the inside teeth surfaces. Go slowly, brushing small areas to start. Move on to larger areas as the dog becomes more accustomed to brushing.
7. **Make it a routine**. The more often you brush your dog's teeth the more accustomed to brushing your dog will get.
 - a. **Brushing your dog's teeth every day is ideal.**
 - b. If your dog has loose teeth, seems sensitive around its mouth, or is bleeding orally, consult a veterinarian before you continue brushing.
 - c. Start slowly and try to work up to daily brushing. If you are unable to brush every day, try to brush as often as possible.