



TEACHING YOUR PET TO ACCEPT TOOTH BRUSHING

Select your training time

- ❖ Pets respond to routine, so be consistent with your training time.
- ❖ Pick a time of day when your pet is likely to be hungry, and pick a quiet time (not first thing when you get home from work)

Choose their reward

- ❖ Pick a reward that motivates your pet- a food they LOVE or playtime with their favorite toy.
- ❖ If you are using a food, have tiny bits of the food available.

Set the surroundings and keep it positive

- ❖ A small dog may work best on your lap; a cat probably would be best next to you on a large chair or couch; a large dog should be asked to sit on the floor.
- ❖ Use a calm, gentle tone of voice. Maintain a positive attitude and demeanor. Your pet will sense and respond to any anxiety you have. If they think that this is a fun game that involves rewards, they will be eager to play.
- ❖ Be persistent, but have reasonable expectations about how fast you will progress.

Begin by handling and manipulating their mouth

- ❖ Start with a brief period of affectionate petting and giving treats if they are staying calm.
- ❖ Begin trying to gently touch/manipulate their mouth. As long as they are quiet, responding to requests, and allowing you to manipulate their mouths, then they get immediate rewards. If they resist in any fashion....take your treats away and end the session.
- ❖ Slowly progress from manipulating the lips to running your fingers along the teeth and gums. Once they are comfortable with your hands, try a moist soft cloth or gauze sponge wrapped around your finger.
- ❖ It will likely take several sessions to work up to this point. Give rewards throughout and end the session when they resist. Try again tomorrow!

Add in toothpaste

- ❖ Once they are comfortable with the cloth along their teeth, add a veterinary toothpaste or gel to the cloth.
- ❖ Sometimes a pet will respond best to the toothpaste so you can always start by getting them used to the toothpaste first.
- ❖ Keep up the praise and rewards!

Introduce the toothbrush

- ❖ The next step is to bring the toothbrush out. Touch it to their face, put it under their lips, and gently work it around. Pick a toothbrush that is easy for you to use.
- ❖ If they like the toothpaste, have them start by licking the toothpaste off of the brush. Don't forget the praise!

Start brushing!

- ❖ Use a circular motion and focus on the gum line. Concentrate on the outside surfaces of the teeth under the lips.
- ❖ Eventually you can work up to spending 2-3 minutes brushing the entire mouth, ideally once a day.

When moving through these steps, remember that praise is a virtue. Don't force the issue and keep it positive, you will be surprised at how successful you can be!