Brushes & Combs for Dogs: How to Choose the Right One

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'Choosing the right brush or comb for your pet is an important first step for even the most basic home grooming.'

Brush types

Although there are many different shapes and sizes, there are basically three different brush types.

Bristle Brushes: Bristle brushes can be used on all coat types and vary according to the spacing between bristles and the length of the bristles. In general, the longer the hair coat, the more widely spaced and longer the bristles should be. Also, the coarser the hair, the stiffer those bristles need to be.

Wire-Pin Brushes: Wire-pin brushes, with or without rubber-tipped ends, are the preferred choice for pets with medium to long hair and those with curly or woolly coats.

Slicker Brushes: Slicker brushes have fine wire bristles and are especially useful for removing mats and tangles.

Combs

Rubber curry combs are effective at massaging the skin and removing dead hair from short-haired breeds. It is also a good idea to have a Grooming Rake or Matbreaker on hand to remove mats.

Refer to the chart below for recommendations on the best brushes for your pet's haircoat.

Brush Types and Brushing Direction for Different Haircoats

Type of Hair Coat	Recommended Brush Type	Brushing Direction
Short, smooth coats (most Retrievers, Hounds, Chihuahuas, etc.)	Soft to medium bristle brush with short, closely spaced bristles	With the coat's grain
Short, wiry coats (Terriers, etc.)	Firm bristle brush with short, closely spaced bristles; and a slicker brush	With the coat's grain

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Medium to long flowing coats (Golden Retrievers, Spaniels, Setters, Lhasa Apso, etc.)	Soft to medium bristle brush with long, medium- to wide-spaced bristles; a wire-pin brush; and a slicker brush for mats and tangles	With the coat's grain
Harsh, outer coats with soft, woolly undercoats (Sheepdogs, Collies, Shepherds, Chows, Pomeranians, etc.)	Firm bristle brush with long, wide-spaced bristles; a wire-pin brush; and a slicker brush for tangles and mats	With the grain -- outer coat; Against the grain--under coat
Thin, delicate coats (Yorkies, Maltese, etc.)	Wire-pin brush; and a soft slicker brush for tangles and mats	With and against the coat's grain

*Table Information excerpted from **Guide to Home Pet Grooming** by Dr. Chris C. Pinney, D.V.M. Used by arrangement with Barron's Educational Series, Inc. Hauppauge, New York.*

When brushing or combing, be gentle and take your time. Be especially careful when removing mats or tangles. Brushing can and should be a pleasant experience for your pet as the gentle stroking feels good on your pet's skin. It does not take too many painful 'rips' through snarls, however, to make brushing a procedure your pet will try to avoid rather than invite. The best way to build trust and make this a pleasurable bonding time for both of you is to brush your pet often, preferably daily. This prevents problem mats and tangles from developing.

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