

## GROOMING A WESTIE

Grooming a Westie requires a lot of patience, some special equipment and time. This is not a task you can take on unless you are prepared to make mistakes. Learning how much hair and in what areas it takes many attempts. However, the redeeming fact is that the hair will always grow back, probably within a few weeks. I have been grooming for approximately 20 years and I am still learning. Naturally there is a difference between how and pet grooming.

If you are planning to hand-strip your Westie, do not bathe him first. This makes the hair very slippery and much harder to pull. It is different if you intend to clipper your dog because you must bathe him first or your clipper blades will dull very quickly and they are expensive to replace and/or sharpen.

Hand-stripping is the accepted way to groom; however, if your dog is a pet you can either get it clipped at a salon or do it yourself.

### Required Equipment

table,  
grooming arm,  
grooming noose,  
brush (slicker preferred),  
comb (with two sets of teeth - one set of teeth closer than the other)  
small blunt-ended scissors,  
sharp pointed scissors and  
chalk.  
nail clippers and  
teeth cleaner.

### Nice to have

A Dr Scholl's heel scrubber to grasp the hair instead of using your fingers, thinning shears and a grinder for nails

### Brushing

Before you begin to strip your dog, brush him completely, getting all the way down to the skin. To achieve this on the legs, I brush up first to make sure I get it all and then brush down into place. To get the tummy, I stand the dog on his hind legs, holding him up with my left arm. Then brush the tummy right down to between the back legs. If your dog will lie down on the table, you can try it that way. When you are finished, you repeat the whole process with the comb, making sure there are no mats in the coat.

### Now you are ready to begin stripping!

Dip your thumb and first or second finger in the chalk. Use your left hand to pick up the coat and then use your right hand to strip out only the longest hairs. Only pull the hair in the direction the coat grows. You will discover it is harder than it looks and that you will only get a few hairs at a time. It does get easier as time goes on.

## Neck

Begin at a spot at the top of the head between the ears on a bone called the occiput. Strip in a V shape, starting with the point of the v at the occiput and go down to the top of the shoulders. Strip back towards the tail, making sure you do not twist your wrist when you are stripping.

## Saddle

The next area is called the saddle. Pull a section the width of the back (not on the sides) down to the tail. Strip the front of the tail.

## Bum

Next you do the bum. This area tends to be more sensitive. Strip where the hair is the thickest and use your scissors around the anus. You can trim the back of the tail with your scissors or a pair of clippers if you have them. Trim the edge of the long hairs in an upside down v or triangle. Trim from the hock up to the bum.

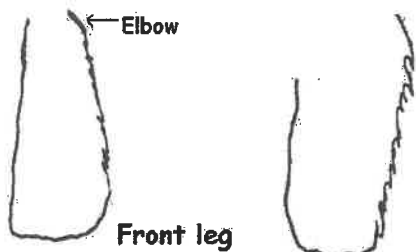
## Shoulders

The shoulders are next. These are done back and down towards the furnishings - the shoulders should be quite short. This section extends down to a hollow on the leg parallel to the elbow. The rest of the leg is pulled down.

## Front

This part of the dog can be scissored (with thinning shears) or stripped but be aware this is another very sensitive area, so the dog will have to get used to it, if you decide to strip it. When you scissor, you must only cut in the direction the hair grows, or you will leave cut lines that look terrible. Next there is the bib that hangs down between the front legs that should be stripped. The part of the neck below the ears can be trimmed with thinning shears.

## Legs



Depending on whether this is show or pet grooming, you can either strip or scissor the legs. You must groom both the front and back legs. The front legs should look like columns and should be stripped down.



The back legs need to be shaped around the knee and therefore are curved from the top where the furnishings end and curve down in an arc to the foot. The back legs are stripped toward the front legs.

## Feet

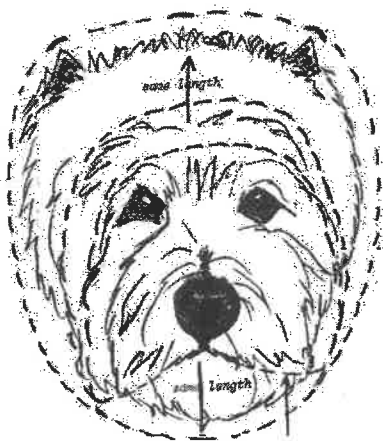
Doing the feet can really make a difference to the way your dog looks. With the dog standing on all four feet, trim all around the base of the foot with the scissors resting on the table. Don't lift the foot up or you can trim it too short. Then do between the pads, lifting the foot up in the air so you can see the whole pad. Many dogs are sensitive about their feet, so you may need patience to teach them to let you do this. With your blunt-ended scissors (so you don't poke them), trim out all the hair growing there. This hair must be kept very short or mud, seeds or even little rocks can get in there and cause trouble. Also, if the hair is left long, it can ball up and create the same problems.

## Nails

You need to keep the nails short mostly for the dog's comfort but also because they may scratch anyone who is petting the dog. Most people will try two different types of clippers and then decide which they prefer, the scissor type (Millers Forge makes one) or the guillotine type. I have for many years used a grinding wheel to do my dogs' nails. There is one sold by dog grooming manufacturers that is very expensive (approximately \$100.00). However I found that a small Dremel Mini Mite Cordless 2-speed grinder is much quieter and can be used on little puppies 8 weeks old on the slow speed and then use the higher speed as they get older. These grinders are around \$50.00. Using these tools, it is very hard to make black nails bleed which is usually most people's greatest fear. There is a powder you can purchase which will stop most bleeding nails in a few minutes. It is called Quick Stop.

## Furnishings

The furnishings extend down the ribs. The hair is pulled downward because that is the way it grows. When you strip furnishings, you start at the bottom and move toward the top. Do this sparingly as you can pull too much. Do a little, then comb, then if you don't like it do some more, then comb and so on. If you are grooming a pet, you can use the thinning shears for this job. Always point your scissors down so that you do not make horizontal cut lines. Trim the furnishings up from just behind the dog's front leg up to just in front on the back leg. You trim these furnishings in a straight but diagonal line.



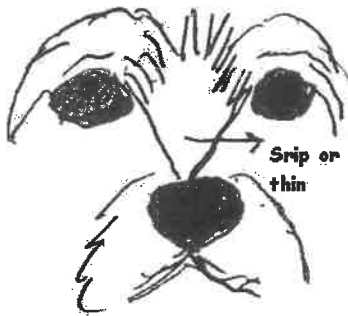
Head

This is the most difficult part of the dog to get correct. The Westie head is what gives the Westie his expression and creates the first impression. It is important to start with the ears. Being very careful (as ears bleed very badly if cut), take your pointed sharp scissors, and putting your left thumb on the top of the ear, trim down the width of your thumb nail. Trim as close as possible to the ear leather, then take off any long hair in front and behind the section you have just trimmed, cleaning off the tip of the ear so it stands out.



The section between the ears is trimmed in an arc to round the top of the head. This hair should not be too much longer than the tip of the ears at the highest point of the arc. From the trimmed part of the ear, the outside circle continues down to the chin - so you trim that next. In front of the ears you trim the hair approximately halfway across the width of the ear at the base.

Along the jowls, lift the hair with your left hand and strip the longest hairs with your right hand going from the outside to the top of the head. This hair can be very thick and sometimes you will need to thin it first and then strip it.



To accomplish a nice, even head, I do a little, then brush it, then do some more until I think it is nice and even. This stripping is done in sections. The first section starts in front of the ear, then do a section in line with the corner of the eye. The next one is in front of the eye up to the inside corner of the eye. The two remaining sections do not need to be stripped as much as the first three as this hair tends to be much thinner. This is the hair below the eye and the section by the muzzle.

When you have done all of this stripping, comb the outside circle and trim very lightly with your sharp scissors to complete that part of the head. If you keep in mind a really nice full chrysanthemum flower, you will get the idea of what you are trying to accomplish. It is very difficult to get both sides of the head even, but practice makes perfect. Under the chin, the hair is trimmed short and will almost give your circle a flat section right there. Between the eyes is stripped upward so that those hairs will hold the hair from the top of the head up off the eyes.

To finish the top of the head, comb the hair up straight and trim it to conform to the circle of the head. You will probably have to do this in sections as well, so you will likely end up with three sections of hair between the back of the head and the hair immediately above the eyes. At this time you should comb the completed head and trim anywhere you think is not round.

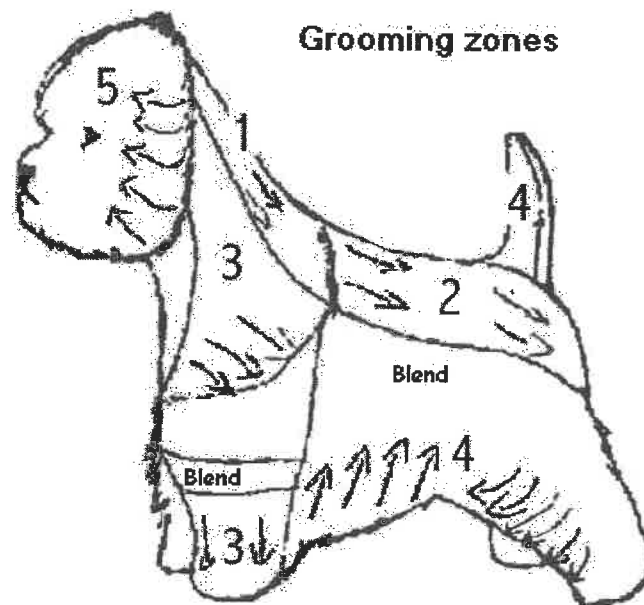
## Teeth

This is a very important part of grooming your dog. You can purchase a "finger brush" which looks like a rubber finger used to count money, but it has little bumps on it to massage the gums and teeth of the dog. You can purchase a beef-flavored toothpaste for your dog. Do not use human toothpaste. If you have not cleaned your pet's teeth before, go at it very gently until the dog is used to it. This is very important and should be done at least once a week. You will find it will improve his or her breath and help to keep the cavities away.

## In closing

Everyone who has ever owned a Westie will recognize that whatever you decide to teach your dog - which includes grooming- takes a great deal of patience. They are extremely smart animals and will try to get the better of you if they don't want you to do it. Therefore, consistent and patient owners are the people who will be successful learning to groom their dog. Do not ever take your dog off the table if it is misbehaving. If you have to, go back to just brushing him make him behave before he gets down. If you take him down when he is misbehaving, you will be reinforcing the idea "If I misbehave, she will quit doing what I don't like." Then the dog will have to relearn who the boss is.

Time is always an important factor in anyone's life and if your time is limited you can groom each of the sections of the dog once per week. I would divide it up this way:



Section 1. includes from the top of the head to the shoulders. A short section.

Section 2 includes the back, tail and bum.

Section 3 includes the shoulders, front, legs, feet, nails and pads.

Section 4 includes the furnishings

Section 5 includes the head and teeth.

Before beginning each week, you would have to start by completely brushing the dog.

I hope this gives people who wish to learn to groom their own Westie an idea of how to get started.

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