



## Grooming Desensitization Protocol

Service dogs need to be clean and well-groomed when in public and it is our responsibility to ensure our puppies are used to grooming practices at a young age through adulthood. This is especially important if you are Puppy Raising a Standard Poodle. Practicing grooming with your puppy will help them form a positive association with the handling and tools that go along with a groom and will set them up for success with their future client.

### Preparation

You will need:

- A pouch of treats/kibble
- A rubber brush
- A metal brush or Furminator
- A Dremel, electric toothbrush or a clipper with a guard – something that vibrates loudly

### Process

1. Choose one of the items above for each session, and only do one session per day.
2. Touch and Go: Start by touching your dog's body lightly with the item you chose. If it is a vibrating item, turn it off for this step. Once the item touches the puppy's body, click and treat.
  - a. Your dog is allowed to sniff the item, but should not show fear. If the dog shows fear or attempts to escape, contact the Puppy Development Staff in order to make a more detailed plan.
  - b. Repeat the "Touch and Go" step 10 times, then take a short break.
3. If your puppy responded comfortably to the Touch and Go step, you can begin adding duration to the touches. Begin putting the item on the dog's body for 3-5 seconds before clicking and treating. If you are using a vibrating item, keep it off during this step. Continue adding more seconds to the touch and begin moving the item up and down the puppy's body as you add duration.
4. Once your puppy is comfortable being stroked gently with the items, you can begin brushing them. Continue treating the puppy during the brushing to maintain a positive association.
5. For the vibrating items, repeat steps 2 and 3 with the item turned on. Your puppy will likely be uncomfortable initially, but with careful and slow exposure, you should be able to move the item all around the puppy's body with no issue.
6. Do not move to Step 4 if you are using clippers – if your puppy needs a full groom with a shave, please contact the Puppy Development Staff.