



The Newbies Guide to Dog Grooming Competitions

This document was written by groomers for groomers .

A survey was conducted in January 2017 to collect information from pet groomers and stylists who have previously competed in competitions. A large number of groomers have given their responses to lend knowledge and relieve stress to future competing groomers.

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What are the benefits of competing?

Competitions aren't just about trying to win ribbons or prizes. There are many benefits to attending and participating at grooming competitions.

Growing your network

Networking can be scary but knowing and associating with different people within a growing industry is rewarding. Grooming Competitions provide an atmosphere to interact with people in your industry, and help your career grow with potential opportunities. It also reminds you of the importance of people skills for business growth and that face-to-face interaction creating a lasting impression.

Confidence building

Regular networking and pushing yourself to connect with people you don't know will help build your confidence. Personal and professional growth are greatly attributed by actively talking to people and making connections.

Making Friends

Developing and maintaining a strong network of connections will help you along your career path and will allow you to assist others on their career path. Every person you meet has the ability to connect you to their network, allowing your professional network to grow. A strong professional network can introduce you to potential employers, clients, suppliers and mentors and the growth of opportunities will increase. If you are on the market looking for a new job, spread the word and stay in contact with those in your network on a regular basis.

It is possible that someone in your network is able to introduce you to people who may be beneficial to you just starting in your industry. You don't know when or how opportunities will arise, but it's important to be ready to seize the opportunity when they come!

Networking is great for sharing ideas and knowledge. The people in your network will come from a wide variety of backgrounds offering a broad range of perspectives and wisdom. Asking for feedback or discussing your point of view will help you expand your knowledge and allow you to see things from different perspectives.

Supporting your industry

The Pet Industry is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Australia alone has seen a elevated rise of animal associated businesses with dog grooming being one of the highest developing trades.

The organisation of grooming competitions is no easy task. From hiring a suitable venue, appointing judges, seeking appropriate insurance and public liability, risk assessments, waste management, sponsorship and documentation, a lot of hard work in planning, organisation and implementation to make the event happen and run smoothly often go unnoticed. Therefore, the support of attendance is adamant to the ongoing success of grooming competitions.

When attending and competing at dog grooming competitions, you are supporting our field by raising awareness to others through social media and business advertising. This is important as you are not only reflecting your skill set or passion, but you are showing your pride and commitment to your work by travelling, gaining experience and spending time to become the best you can be. With these qualities the grooming industry will flourish as pet owners want caring and hardworking groomers to cater for their pets.

Showcasing your skills

“Believe in yourself. You are braver than you think, more talented than you know, and capable of more than you imagine.” — Roy T. Bennett, The Light in the Heart

Grooming under pressure is no easy task. With many unknown groomers and general public in attendance for viewing, the competition scene can be quite daunting.

Having the opportunity to groom live before an audience and judge is an amazing way to showcase your skills. Before and After images alone set the bar to what you are capable of.

The way you position yourself, handle your tools, display your technique, treat your dog and treat others within your industry all reflect your skill set as a professional pet stylist.

Increasing your client base

Preparing comp dogs, having strict time management skills, spending money on products, travel and resources along with learning about breed standards and grooming techniques displays high professional grooming standards to pet owners.

Being dedicated from the start to finish of a competition proves your passion and commitment in doing high quality grooms. That will in time help increase your client base. Hanging ribbons,

competition photos, trophies and attendance certificates in your salon shows your current and future clients that you are driven to succeed.

Expanding your knowledge & skills

Having the honour of receiving a critique and feedback from experienced judges is priceless.

No matter how long you have been grooming for, there is and always will be areas to improve. Being able to take constructive criticisms to expand your knowledge and skill set will benefit your business and improve your grooming talent.

****Hint:** Judges use a critique sheet when assessing grooms. Ask for your sheet after your competition section has ended. Keeping this sheet will allow you to reflect and improve your future grooms

To have fun!

The most important factor of attending dog grooming competitions is that they are fun!

Attending your first comp can be nerve racking but exciting. You will have the chance to meet people who share the same passion and love for dogs as much as you do!

Others will have the 'butterfly stomach' feeling as you, so it is completely normal to feel a little out of sorts. The beauty of competition grooming is allowing yourself to adore and admire other works as others admire yours.

Choosing a competition dog

When selecting a dog to take to a competition it's paramount that you are comfortable and enjoy working with them.

Having good temperament, coat, conformation and structure, along with being a great travel companion will make your all competition experiences positive ones to remember.

Competition policies require the competition dog to be fully vaccinated, age appropriate for competition (recommendation is between the ages of 1 and 10 years), appear healthy, free of disease, open wounds, injuries and parasites. The dog must not show obvious signs of pregnancy or nursing, aggression or viciousness. The dog must be leashed when not crated or not being groomed and must never be left unattended.

Preparing a dog for competition

Weeks Leading up the Competition

Whether your competition dog is your pet or a client's, a strict weekly routine is advised. Preparation should entail a weekly bath, dry and brush out. Each breed will vary. If you are preparing a terrier or gundog breed, read up on coat care or discuss with a mentor or shower/breeder. Over washing the jacket on particular breeds can impair the natural oils.

Everyone has different methods of washing their dogs. It's important that you find what works best for you and your comp dog's coat and skin. Research and test different products leading up to the competition to see what brands and products you like.

Practise 'Show Drying'. When drying your dog's coat it's important to take your time and take note of the angles in which you position the dryer nozzle. You can straighten and add volume by getting the right angle along with different effects with how the coat can sit.

Depending on the breed, if you have access to a stand dryer, go back over your work and fluff dry. Fluff drying is a procedure where a warm continual passage of air hits sections of the coat whilst the groomer uses a slicker or pin brush to smooth out the coat. Fluff drying is perfect for dogs with coats such as silky terriers, poodles, maltese and bichons (and the list goes on).

Six weeks or more coat growth is recommended. Longer coat and complete style changes increase the difficulty of the groom. This may work in your favour as a well presented distinct change in the dog's appearance will have an impression on the judges.

****Hints:**

- The cleaner the coat - the quicker it will grow!
- The better maintained coat, the better groom you will do on the day! So make sure there are no knots!
- Practise makes perfect with show drying so take your time and take progress photos of finished outcome to look over changes.

Stacking your dog on the table

Stacking your dog will take patience and practise. Upon judging the dog must stand for evaluation.

As with any stacking, the first rule is to allow your dog to stand on its own weight and not to interfere with its balance. Pushing or pulling the dog only causes them to lean one way or another to counter your pressure.

Once your dog is relaxed and standing on its own terms, you now have the opportunity to identify which legs may need to be repositioned to achieve the perfect stack. Stacking the dog correctly will ensure that your groom will be evaluated correctly.



Eve/Morning of the Competition

It is suggested that you bathe and dry your comp dog the day prior and the morning of the competition.

Bathing the dog the day prior will allow you to do a thorough clean.

A morning preparation session is advised as humidity can affect a dog's coat over night. Use a diluted portion of your shampoos with a thorough rinse and 'show' dry.

Thoroughly brush and comb through your dog's coat. It needs to be knot free! Clip or file nails and ears should be clean. Sanitary areas and pads may be trimmed.

****Hint:** Spend time on your prep work before you get to the competition.

Thoroughly comb through the coat and pay particular attention to the tail, ears, behind ears, arm pits, tummy and in between the hind quarters. Rushing your prep work can impact your prejudge evaluation.

Product & Brand Suggestions

There is a vast selection of grooming products available. It is suggested to have a budget for competitions. Take into account travel, accommodation, entrance expenses etc prior to splurging on too many products. It is exciting to try new products but keep in mind experimenting can add up quickly!

**Results from the survey show that these were the most common brands and products used.
Please note these are not in any favoured order**

Shampoo & Conditioners

Nature's Specialties	Petway	Pet Show Hairdresser
Plush Puppy	Proroom	Melanie Newman Salon Essentials
Ashley Craig	Pure Paws	Chris Christensen
Isle of Dogs	Smiley Dog	Shear Magic

Detanglers & coat conditioning sprays:

Secret Weapon & HypKNOTic	Sheablast Conditioning Spray Nature's Specialties	Petway Anti Static Detangler
Proroom Easy Spray	Melanie Newman Relax Dog Spray Conditioner	Plush Puppy OMG

Styling aids and volumizers:

Chris Christensen Thick & Thicker Texturizing Bodifier	Nature's Specialties Hair Raiser Spray	Plush Puppy Volumising Spray
Ashley Craig WOW X Styling Foam	Pure Paws Texturising and thickening spray	PSH Hair Body Volumiser

Brushes:

Plush Puppy Soft Slicker/Ultimate Pin Brush	Lawrence Tender Care Slicker	Andis Firm Slicker/Pin Brush
Les Pooch Gold Brush	Shear Magic Slicker/Pin Brush	Show Tech Slicker

Combs:

Andis Greyhound Comb	Ashley Craig Beauty Comb	Oster Finishing Comb
Shear Magic Aluminium Greyhound Comb	Show Tech Anti-Static Greyhound Comb	Utsumi Stainless Comb

Scissors:

P&W	Kenchii	Oster
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Cordless Clippers:

Oster Pro 3000i	Heiniger Saphir	ANDIS Pulse ZR
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Comb attachments & Blade Brands:

Andis	Oster	Wahl
Shear Magic	Animal House	Heiniger

Preparing yourself

It's important that you read and comprehend all terms and conditions listed prior to entering any competition. Keep in mind that not all dog grooming competitions have the same rules or timeframes.

Being unaware of certain criteria can make your competition experience very stressful.

Prepare yourself by doing a drive by to the competition venue noting traffic conditions, parking and your whereabouts prior to competition day.

There is a strict schedule that events uphold. Contestants who run late, will not be permitted to compete. It is advised that competitors arrive at least 30 minutes prior prejudging commences. However giving yourself more time allows you to meet more people, set your work station up correctly, have a bathroom break for yourself and your comp dog and not feel rushed.

Gather appropriate grooming attire, gear and dog supplies the evening before the competition and ensure you get a good night's sleep.

What happens at Grooming Competitions?

Plan for good time management

Check the contest schedule prior arrival and note the time for prejudging as you must be present.

When arriving at the venue make yourself known to the steward or a judge. They will mark your name off and assign you a grooming location. It is important to keep all your items and dog with you in the space you are given. If you have difficulty setting up don't be afraid to ask for help. Double check that your clippers power on.

Once you have set up your grooming station, offer your comp dog a toilet break. If you require a bathroom break place your dog in your crate/trolley and ask for assistance. Leaving a dog unattended is not permitted.

Place your dog on the table and thoroughly comb through their coat.

Prejudging

The Judge(s) will make their way around the comp ring and examine each dog on the quality of the preparation work. Place a comb on the table for the judge. Stack your dog for the judge.

The Judge will confirm the following:

- Dog is entered in the correct class
- Allotted time
- Correct division
- Sufficient coat growth
- Preparation (they will comb through the coat) and suitability of dog for contesting.
- If your dog missing coat in a area or has scars, warts, healing injuries, etc. Tell the Judge.

Competition

Use your time appropriately. You can only do your best so give it everything you can.

Competition Break

A mandatory break will take place during the competition. The time and length of the break will be announced at the beginning of each class. All contestants and dogs must proceed as a group to the designated break area. Offer your contestant dog water.

Toilet break opportunity available for both contestants and dogs. Assistants may be present to move dogs for groomer's inspection or hold them while the groomer uses bathroom. Judges are available to hold or move dogs if no assistant is available.

Any discussion with regard to dogs or grooming is prohibited and could be construed as coaching, which could possibly result in disqualification of offending contestants. Please instruct assistants not to speak about grooming.

A member of the judging team will announce the time to return to the competition arena and the group will proceed together.

No grooming or styling of any kind is permitted while on the break.

An announcement will be made when grooming can resume and the group will resume grooming at the same time.

Resume Competition

After the break, go back to your grooming station and place your dog on the table. You are only permitted to brush/comb at this time. Listen for announcement for a start, once being told to start you are permitted to use clippers, scissors etc.

Competition End

Clear your table of hair, tools and equipment. Place your tablecloth under your dog and a comb on the table and then stack and present your dog to the judge.

Final Judging

The Judge will evaluate the following: Balance, symmetry, uniformity and style of the trim. For purebred dogs, adherence to breed profile and standard.

For Salon Freestyle Styling, the ability of the groomer to create the best possible profile for the dog chosen, according to his/her body type, structure and coat. For scissored dogs, the plush overall appearance without scissor marks, unevenness or unintended protruding coat.

For Hand stripped and/or carded dogs, proper technique to achieve smooth and natural appearance. Clipper work should be smooth and free of irritation.

The difficulty with regard to the amount of coat removed, whether a pattern is created or followed, difficulty of the coat type, texture, quality and quantity, the difficulty with regard to correcting conformation faults and accentuating profile attributes.

Placement

It is important to respect the judge's choice at this time. It is not an easy task to give placements as everyone has put so much work in. Congratulate all those who have placed and those who are around you.

If you are awarded a place, thank the judge and kindly accept your ribbons and prizes. This section of the competition can be overwhelming but even if you don't place, do not be upset with yourself. You can't fail even if you do or don't place. You have given yourself the opportunity to grow, so be proud of your work and commitment.

Critiques

Gather the courage and ask for a critique from a judge. Whether you do or don't place there is always room for improvement. Having another pair of eyes and hands go over your work is invaluable. The judges found at competitions are approachable and have years of experience. Take on board what they have to say and respect their time.

Sportsmanship

Professional manner, attitude and good sportsmanship must be practiced at all times.

Attend the competition with integrity, courtesy and commitment to your passion with some competitive spirit. Be respectful and considerate to fellow Competitors, Colleagues, Judges, Show Managers/Stewards and Representatives.

Even though it is a competitive scene there is no need for bad sportsmanship. If you do feel victimized, talk with event coordinators, stewards, judges or mentors on the day so they can assist you.

Groomer's Checklist

The use of cordless clippers is encouraged to help in risk management responsibilities.

However, if you only have corded clippers, they must be be tagged and tested as it is a legal requirement. Bring along a powerboard or extension lead (also tagged and tested).

Grooming Needs:

Appropriate Grooming Attire	Grooming Arm/Frame	Grooming noose
Grooming Table	Clippers	Clipper charging unit
Grooming Caddy	Location site map	Hand sanitizer
Blades & Snap on combs	Scissors and case/pouch	Combs
Pin Brush	Slicker Brush	Hairspray
Scissoring Sprays / Volumizers	Nail Clippers/Grinder	Styptic Powder
**Tablecloth	Small first aid kit	Small Dust Pan & Broom
Plastic bag for fur waste	Camera	Head Torch
Babywipes	Fold up chair/stool	Wrist Watch
Scissor/Blade Oils	Small screwdriver	Blade cleaning toothbrush
Snacks	Water	Panadol/Required medication

**Tablecloth is used for presenting your dog.

Dog Needs:

Collar & Lead/Slip Lead	Treats	Doggie waste bags
Lined Crate/Trolley	Bottled Water & water bowl	I.D. contact info tag

** Ensure that the comp dog is up to date with vaccinations and parasite control

Resources

Use as many resources as you can In the weeks leading up to the competition Reading Books, watching video tutorials, studying breed profile charts and attending dog shows, seminars and workshops can help you prepare and improve your current grooming abilities.

Results from the survey show that these were the most common resources used.

Please note these are not in any favoured order

Books:

Dog Grooming Simplified: Straight to the Point	by Jodi Murphy
Notes from the Grooming Table - Second Addition	by Melissa Verplank
The Art of Asian Freestyle Dog Grooming	by Riza Wisnom
The Complete Dog Book	by American Kennel Club
The All Breed Dog Grooming Guide	by Sam Kohl
Poodle Clipping and Grooming	by Shirlee Kalstone
The Complete Guide to Asian Style Grooming	by Riza Wisnom

Videos:

Learn2GroomDogs	http://www.learn2groomdogs.com
Groomer to Groomer broadcast	http://www.groomertogroomer.com/
Instructional DVD series	By Jodi Murphy
Instructional DVD series	By Super Styling Sessions

Groomers Supporting Groomers

We all start somewhere and it's important to know that you are not alone.

Our industry is filled with wonderful people who are happy to lend you a hand.

Message them on facebook or flick them an email. As competitive as the grooming industry is, we are all here sharing the same love and passion for the health, beauty and well being of canines. Chat about what happens at competitions, products, styles etc.

These are just some of the many groomers that are happy to help and will make you feel welcome:

Monique Finch	moniquefinch12@hotmail.com
Jane Bourke	bourkejm@dodo.com.au
Bethany Aberdour	baberdour@hotmail.com
May Wong	mdogsalon@gmail.com
Melanie Newman	04 02 3500 65
Gwen Bard	gwen@walkieswithfun.com.au
Jacqui Auld	jacquiauld@optusnet.com.au

Anonymous Advice

Even though you are nervous, you need to remember you are just grooming a dog like you do everyday. Ask questions, smile, and generally you will always feel you did a terrible job your first time due to nerves, it's ok, we have all been there, the next one will be easier. Get critiques and ask judges to explain if you don't understand.

Do it for fun and to be better than you were the day before.

Don't rush yourself, if you finish early go back over your groom.

Choose a dog you love to groom first, then choose a style to suit him and go in that class.

Go watch one first practice in your own salon, don't stress yourself out too much. It's not about winning, it's about learning. Competing is such a big learning stone. Just enjoy it!

Enjoy the experience, you will make lifetime friends.

Just do it. You will get so much out of it.

Give it a try, each comp after the first does get easier with your nerves. Plus you improve your grooming ten fold.

Treat it as how you would groom everyday in your salon. You are there to learn, not win.

Open mind, be friendly. Ask for help. Deep breaths. Team work.

Go out and have fun.

Look at comps as a fun thing to do. Know that the judge's assessment will help improve your skill for your next Comp. Enjoy yourself.

Practise consistently, get help from mentors and network with industrial peers to gain their insight. If possible, get a buddy to help with logistics on comp day to take some stress off you.

Go out of your comfort zone and try something new. Knowledge is wealth.

Comb like you've never combed before!

Look at it as a fun learning experience . Move through the whole dog as quickly as possible . You can go back and refine with what time you have left.