

# Getting Started with Grooming Ears

Kate Barton

This article is designed with the novice in mind, as ears can be very intimidating when it comes to grooming – every cut counts, meaning everyone will see the end results of your trimming. I hope to aid you in some good results that you will be proud to say you did the grooming yourself! The ideas in this article are from watching, asking questions, applying, experimenting, etc. This is not “expert advice”!

A lot of what you will do will be by trial and error, so don't expect to start out perfect the first time, and don't be surprised if you make a big goof your 1000<sup>th</sup> time! Each dog's ears are slightly different, and/or you may be going for a different “look”.

**Tools Needed:** You will need some good thinning/blending shears. The more teeth, the less “choppy” it will look. I prefer the type with a straight edge on one side, and 45 “teeth” on the other side. These give a much smoother look than my shears which are straight on one side and only have 30 teeth, or the pair I have which has teeth on both sides.

You may also want a “Magnet” stripper knife, which pulls the dead or fuzzy hair off the ears. Done properly, the dog doesn't object to it at all, even though you're ripping the hair off their ears! (Could also use a stripping “stone”.)



Figure 1

**Step 1:** Comb the hair down on the dog's ear, toward the long/back part of the flap. (See Fig. 1).

**Step 2:** Pull the combed ear away from the dog and take your thinning shears and trim tightly around that bottom flap (Fig. 2).



Figure 2

**Step 3:** Now trim the end in a rounded or squared off design (Fig. 3)



Figure 3

**Step 4:** Re-comb the hair as you did in step 1, and repeat steps 2 & 3 as needed, until it has a trim, smooth appearance.

---

*The AKC standard mentions the ears in a couple of different places, and says they should be “relatively small, well set on, lying close to the side of the head **and thickly feathered...**” Also, “When the dog is in full coat the ears ... are thickly feathered **without being bushy, stringy or silky.**” (Bold-faced print author's emphasis.)*

---



**Figure 4**

**Step 5:** Now it's time to get rid of the excess hair under the ear flap. While holding the ear up, trim the extra hair off on the inside flap and under where the flap covers, using your thinning shears (Fig. 4)



**Figure 5**



**Figure 6**

**Step 6:** It is time to trim off or strip off the bushiness, while still leaving adequate hair on the ear. One method of doing this, is to comb the hair upward (opposite of Step 1), then use the thinning shears in an upward orientation to trim some of the hair off (Fig. 5 & 6).

**Be careful not to trim too much off!**

When using the Magnet Stripping knife (fine tooth), be sure to grasp the ear firmly very close to the head before you start pulling the dead/extra hair off. Also make sure you do not "rake" the ear flap – your goal is to simply strip off the hair, not use it as a comb (which would leave lots of scabs and bald spots!)

Your finished product should look something like Figure 7, below.



**Figure 7**



A couple more things about thinning shears ... do not go across the hair – always go with or directly against the lay of the hair. You are wanting this to look natural, not butchered.

Some people use regular shears (2 straight edges) to shape the outside of the ear. I have personally found this method to be very unforgiving – remember the "every cut counts" I mentioned earlier? Using straight shears accentuates this, and often gives an unnatural appearance.

Remember, each ear is different! If the earset is too high or the ears too large, for instance, you may want to take more off the top part of the ear, so the excess feathering doesn't add to that appearance. If too low or too small, leave more on! If the ears have curly hair, you may need to thin more off so that it doesn't always stick out every which-way.

Good luck, and happy trimming!

Photographs © Cheryl Ertelt