

Grooming Toenails

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Photos: Susan Denny Photography — *The Basenji*, January/February 2009

As much fun as it is to teach your dog silly pet tricks, these are tricks that can come in very useful.

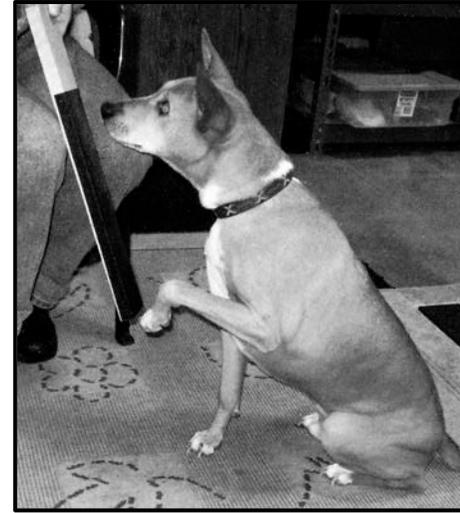
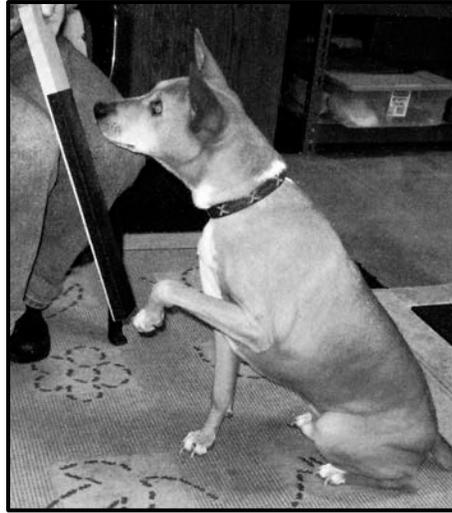
Toenails: Currently, Joey and I are working on doing his toenails. We’ve been discussing Dremeling his nails. I’m in favor, he’s definitely not. And he’s a strong guy! But the nails keep growing and growing. So I decided to stop fighting the Dremel wars, and teach him to do his own nails.

I have a nail board I made for Amelia—it’s just a piece of scrap wood with stock-on slip-proof tape. The tape is sold in hardware stores to put on stairs, and is like very coarse sandpaper with sticky stuff on one side. And the stuff really sticks—it’s made to go on outdoor stairs, so it’s unlikely your basenji will be able to pull it loose.



It’s fairly easy to teach a basenji to use its paws to manipulate the world, so it goes fairly quickly to teach the dog to drag its nails along the board. The dogs very quickly figure out how to arch their toes so only the nail tips are touching the paper.

My nail board isn’t really large enough; Amelia is pretty savvy and clever in using her paws, so I just used a fairly narrow piece of wood I had on hand. Joey can (and does) reach over the top to put his paw on my leg so I have to hold the board up off the ground.



I started out with Joey by clicking and treating any movement of either front foot. He got the idea of using his paws pretty quickly. Just a note, Joey came to live with me when he was eight years old. A couple of months later, he got uveitis, and totally lost his sight. He is not a dog with a long history of clicker training, but he was touching the board, with his paws during the first training session. And he can't even see it.

I've got to brag about the photos. I really didn't think Joey knew the nail board well enough

to do it in a strange place. But he came through like a champ, even in the training building.

Shirley Chong invented the nail board and has posted complete instructions at her website: www.shirleychong.com. Click the doggie with the nail file, under training tips.

By the way, dogs should not be left unsupervised with the board. It's not unheard of for a dog to actually quick itself on the board if they get carried away with digging! So put the board up except when you're ready for nail time.