
Mixed Breeds and Drop-Coat Styles

TYPES OF CUTS

On occasion, a pet owner will tell you to decide what cut to use for a particular dog. If a dog resembles a particular breed, you can use that breed’s typical cut or a variation of it. You can also design your own cut to fit a particular dog.

For example, consider the dog in **Figure 1**. You would do the corners of the eyes to remove the hair near the eyes to prevent infections and irritation. You would cut the nails and clean the ears, as you would on any dog. You would neaten the face by rounding it a little with scissors. You would brush



FIGURE 1—You can create a custom-designed look for this mixed breed.

and comb the body, bathe and dry the dog, and brush the body again. Finally, you would use thinning shears to trim any hairs that are unruly or out of place. This is your custom-designed look.

When someone calls for an appointment and says the dog is a mixed-breed dog, ask what type of mix the dog is or which breed the dog resembles most (Figure 2). If the dog is half Husky and half Labrador Retriever, ask which half is prominent. Does the dog have the heavy double coat of the Husky, or the medium double coat of the Labrador Retriever? The answers to these questions will affect your booking procedures, as a Husky needs longer grooming time than a Labrador Retriever does.

FIGURE 2—Mixed breeds can resemble a particular breed, or they can look like nothing you’ve ever seen before.



If the dog is a Poodle–Yorkshire Terrier mix, ask if the dog looks more like a Poodle, in which case you can groom it using one of the Poodle cuts. Give the owner a choice of feet, face, and body cuts, and create a cut right for the dog. If it has the coat of a Yorkshire Terrier, you can groom it as you would groom a Yorkshire Terrier. A Schnoodle can be groomed as either a Poodle or a Schnauzer, depending on the owner’s preference.

The bottom line is that dogs are groomed according to their coat requirements and owner preference. If a dog has a heavy double undercoat, groom it by removing as much undercoat as possible, washing and brush-drying it, and scissoring natural feet. If the coat is long and flowing, brush, comb, wash, dry, rebrush, and recomb it. Trim any unruly hairs. If the dog resembles a Poodle, the owner has a choice. Some owners may prefer neither cut; they may want a natural look that you can achieve by brushing, combing, and trimming the dog to retain its natural look and lines.

Mixed-breed dogs can have many different faces. **Figure 3A** shows a cotton-coated dog that resembles a Poodle mix. The hair is unruly and sticking up. It's curly and wavy. You may want to groom the head as a Bichon Frise or teddy bear Poodle face.

To help you select an appropriate cut, look at the hair type and shape of the head, and figure out the best cut for the dog. Once that's decided, cut the rest of the body in a style to match.

For the dog in **Figure 3A**, you may want to cut the head as you would cut it for a Bichon Frise—round and full (**Figure 3B**). Fluff the hair up on the head and scissor it into a round shape. Comb and trim the hair on the ears. When the head is done, look at the body. For example, the dog's



FIGURE 3—A mixed-breed dog that resembles a Poodle (A) will often look good with the round, full head cut (B), as is typically seen on the Bichon Frise.

hair isn't the length of a Bichon Frise coat, and the owner has requested the hair to be short but not shaved. In this case, you can use a #4F blade all over the body. The dog will have a neat appearance, and the hair will be the length the owner wanted. The cut will give the dog a specific character and class.

The Terrier mix in **Figure 4A** needs to be groomed. Its hair is unruly, wiry, and sticking up everywhere. The owner loves the top of the dog's head and specifies that you're not to cut it. You'll do the standard pregroom procedures of cutting the nails, grooming the pads of the feet, and brushing and combing the dog. You'll use thinning shears to trim any unruly hairs that are sticking up. The feet will be neatened and scissored to achieve a cylinder effect.

The hair on the body isn't very long, but it's unruly. You'll use a #4F blade to trim the dog all over. You'll scissor the ears for a neat appearance and use thinning shears on the top of the head and the face to remove any unruly hairs that stick out. The hair should stand up neatly, satisfying the owner's preferences. You'll bathe and dry the dog thoroughly, and repeat the pregroom procedures in the finish work to neatened any unruly areas (**Figure 4B**).

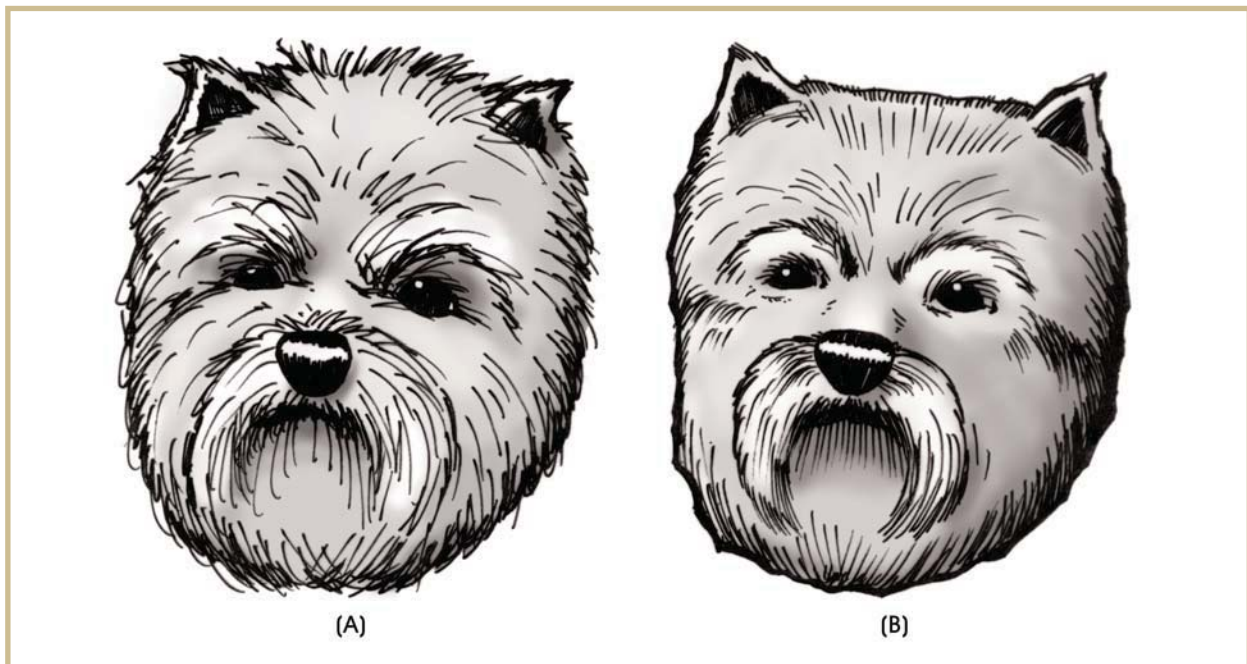


FIGURE 4—A typical Terrier mix with wiry, unruly hair (A) should be trimmed with the hair on the head left standing up neatly (B).

Imagine that you need to groom the dog in **Figure 5A**. You aren't sure of the breed, and neither is the owner. Its coat is thick—so thick that it emits an odor. You may choose to cut this dog like a Cocker Spaniel because of its coat style. First, you would complete the pregroom procedures: nails, pads of feet, stomach, and rectal area. You would use a #10 blade on the face and down one-third of the ears. You would then clip the top of the head and back as you would on a Cocker Spaniel. You would define a skirt and leave it on the dog. Next, you would wash and dry the dog thoroughly, and repeat the precut to achieve the perfect cut. The owner might be surprised to find that the dog is really a Cocker Spaniel mix (**Figure 5B**)! You can use anything from a #7F blade to a longer snap-on comb for this type of dog.

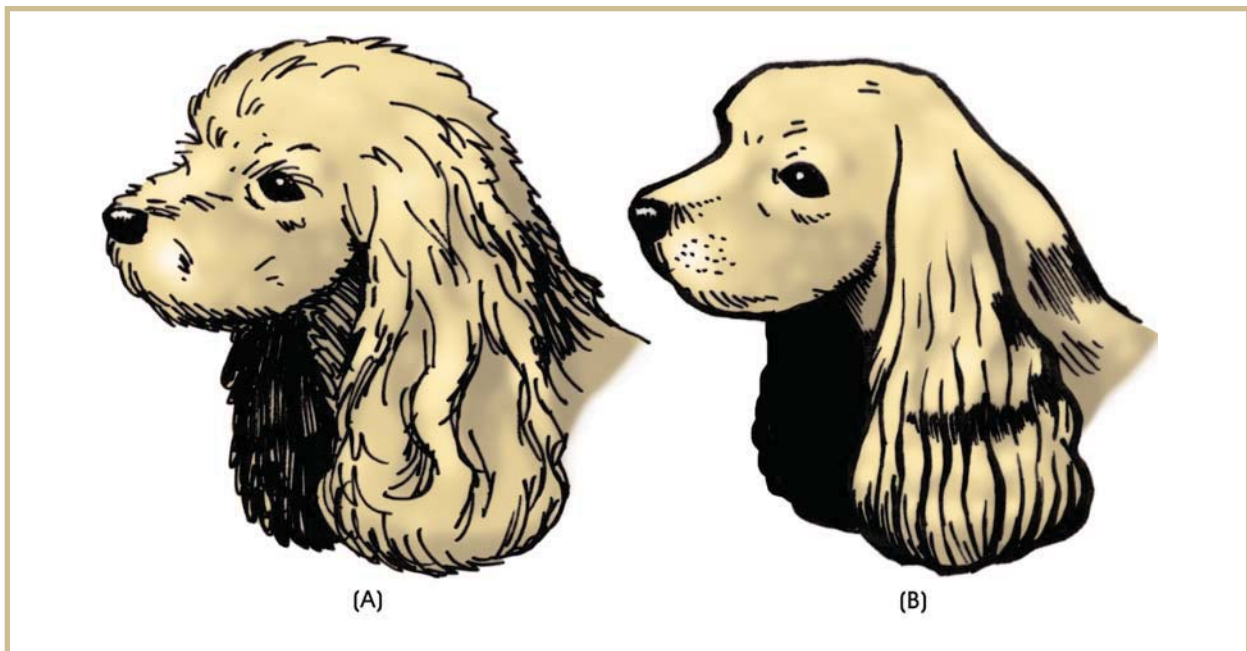


FIGURE 5—If you don't know the breed mixture of a particular dog (A), make your own decision as to what type of cut will best suit it. In this case, the dog was cut like a Cocker Spaniel (B).

Another popular look is the *puppy cut*, which means leaving the hair the same length all over. This cut is good for long-coated dogs whose coats are kept shorter. It's also good for straight, thin coats that hang. The final length can be left up to the owner. Remember that many owners will ask for a puppy cut. In such cases, they're hoping to achieve the look that dog had when it was a puppy: fuzzy all over with a cute, rounded head—just like when they first brought the puppy home.

You can also do a clip-on cut, using a special cover over your blade. The result is a short, fluffy look. The final length depends on the length of the clip-on. You'll examine this cut in more detail later in the study unit.

Terminology

The terminology is consistent with that you've learned in other study units. By looking at mixed-breed dogs, you may see a *flag tail* (standing erect with feathering all around the tail), a docked tail, a Poodle tail, or a long, flowing tail. The body parts are the same. The ears come in all shapes and sizes, just as with purebreds.

The coats are low maintenance, medium undercoat, heavy double coated, longhaired, wiry, or fluffy. Guide combs or clip-on combs are used over a #30 metal blade. This equipment leaves the hair longer than the metal blades. They can leave the hair from $\frac{1}{16}$ of an inch to $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length. This is used to create a short, but not shaved, cut—a short and fluffy look. The clip-ons can help you to trim dogs that are heavily coated in certain areas, such as the chest area.

Procedures

Mixed breeds are groomed in the same manner and with the same procedures as purebreds. The clips, cuts, and overall looks of the pure breeds are set according to standards; with mixed breeds, you can make your own standard based on the owner's preferences.

The following procedures are a review from other study units. They don't pertain to every mixed-breed dog. You'll need to choose the proper procedures for each dog you groom. Be sure to secure the dog on the table with the loop and adjust the grooming arm to the dog's height.

1. Cut the nails, keeping styptic powder handy in case you accidentally cut a quick.
2. Scoop out excess hair in the pads of the feet with a #30 blade.

3. Trim the stomach and rectal areas with a #10 blade. Use gentle pressure on the stomach; be especially careful around the private areas.
4. Clean the ears. If there's excess hair inside the ears, pluck it out. Use medicated ear powder. If there's matting behind the ears, shave it out with a #10 or #15 blade.
5. If the feet resemble those of a Golden Retriever, scissor them to look nice and neat in the natural foot style. Brush against the grain and scissor the excess hair.
6. Do the corners of the eyes with a #10 or #15 blade. Gently scoop out excess hair at the corner of the eyes with your clippers. If the dog has a thin coat, you may want to use your thinning shears to trim the excess hair in front of the eyes to prevent it from sticking up and hindering the dog's vision.
7. Trim any unruly hair with thinning shears.
8. Thoroughly brush and comb the dog to remove any matting or shedding. Using a Furminator will help with shedding.
9. Bathe the dog in an appropriate shampoo.

Clip-ons or Guide Combs

Two looks are popular, not only for mixed breeds, but also for many high-maintenance, long-coated dogs: (1) the short but fluffy look and (2) the puppy cut. Both of these cuts are created with clip-ons or guide combs. Many owners lack the time and patience for the maintenance required between groomings of the long drop-coated dogs. The Maltese, Shih Tzu, Lhasa Apso, and Yorkshire Terrier lend themselves well to this cut, so you'll create looks not only for mixed breeds, but also for pure breeds.

The puppy cut, sometimes called the *kennel clip*, is the same length all over. It's called a puppy cut because a puppy's hair is shorter and grows more evenly than an adult dog's hair. This cut can be adapted to a longhaired dog if the owner likes the straight look but doesn't want all of that hair. The hair is

left on the dog at a length specified by the owner. With a light touch, use the clip-on that leaves the longest length. By not pressing down with the clippers when you have a clip-on attached to the blade, you'll leave the hair a longer length. The face, beard, mustache, and ears are trimmed in proportion to the length of hair on the body. The shorter length is more manageable, and it helps the dog retain a puppy-like appearance. This cut is good for longhaired dogs with coats that are straight and not very thick.

The short, fluffy look is achieved by using the clip-on over your blade and pressing down with average pressure. The length of hair retained depends on the size of the clip-on. This procedure works well with thick or curly coats; it adds to the fluffiness. Not all coats look good in this clip, however; thin, straight coats will look bald, thin, and choppy with this clip.

Now you'll learn the procedure involved with using clip-on or guide combs. The clip-on comb is used the same as the blade on your clipper, but it's placed over the blade. The entire dog can be cut with the clip-on. Use it before the bath, in the pre-cut, and in the finish to neaten the cut.

This procedure won't work if the dog is matted. If there's even little pin mats in the dog's hair, you'll achieve an uneven, choppy cut with the clip-on. Mats can actually become caught in the clip-on, lifting it off the blade and sending it flying across the room. In this case, you would suddenly be clipping with the exposed blade, shaving instead of trimming. You must *always* brush, comb, and demat your dog before using a clip-on comb. *Never* try to use the clip-on on a matted dog in place of shaving it, as it doesn't work. The guide comb should never be allowed to slip on the blade, which will happen when you hit a mat.

The clip-on is usually attached over the top of a #30 blade. You can clip with the grain or against the grain of the hair with this tool. If it becomes caught, it's probably because of a mat. Stop immediately and demat the area. The guide combs should glide through the coat effortlessly.

The guide combs or clip-ons are used just like a regular blade. Every manufacturer has a different size. One manufacturer's #1 guide comb may leave one-eighth of an inch, while another manufacturer's #1 guide comb may leave one-sixteenth of an inch. It's important to note the length of the guide comb and not the number. The bigger the guide comb or clip-on, the longer the length retained on the dog. The smaller the guide comb or clip-on, the shorter the length left on the dog. There are a variety of sizes, and the more you have, the more versatility you can lend to this cut. They're not expensive items, and they can give you variety.

The clip-ons or guide combs help to give a specific, uniform length to your cut. They're easier to use than scissors when shorter lengths are desired, and they're more uniform in the length of hair they leave. Typically when using a clip-on comb, you'll need to go back over the coat and scissor any unruly hairs that may have been missed. The clip-on combs are used to help set a desired length for the coat. On the dog's legs and head, they won't leave a finished product. You'll have to go back over the dog, combing the hair and removing the straggly ends with your scissors on curly-coated breeds, and using your thinning shears on the straight-haired dogs.

When clipping a straight-haired breed dog like a Shih Tzu or Yorkshire Terrier, you may find that the clip-on combs have a hard time picking up the coat to cut it. To cut this flat, straight coat, clip the hair against the lay of the coat. Use a long clip-on comb and clip directly against the lay of the coat. Follow the coat growth. You'll lift the coat up and clip it. Be sure to use a very long clip-on comb. If you use a #1 comb against the lay of a Yorkshire Terrier, the remaining coat will lay smooth and tight against the body. It gives a much shorter length than if used with the lay of the coat, so be cautious. After you've mastered this technique, however, the resulting finish on these long-coated dogs will be amazing (Figure 6).

FIGURE 6—A drop-coated breed that’s clipped short is a much easier style for owners to maintain, and it’s a very cute puppy-type look.



Take some time now to review what you’ve learned by completing *Self-Check 1* now.



Self-Check 1

At the end of each section of *Mixed Breeds and Drop-Coat Styles*, you'll be asked to pause and check your understanding of what you've just read by completing a "Self-Check" exercise. Answering these questions will help you review what you've studied so far. Please complete *Self-Check 1* now.

1. *True or False?* If a dog comes in and it looks like a Poodle, you must cut the dog like a Poodle.
2. *True or False?* Purebred dogs take precedence over mixed breeds.
3. *True or False?* Mixed breeds can't be cut.
4. *True or False?* Mixed breeds can have specific names.
5. Is there only one size of guide comb?

6. What is a guide comb used for?

7. What purebred dogs lend themselves well to a clip-on cut that reduces the need for in-between maintenance?

Check your answers with those on page 19.
