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# The American Kennel Club

## National Core Professional Dog Grooming Educational Standards

The American Kennel Club - National Core Professional Dog Grooming Educational Standards aims to establish clear expectations that ensure all professional dog groomers have the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in the dog grooming industry. The American Kennel Club -Core National Professional Dog Grooming Educational Standard allows flexibility in the design and method of instruction and recognizes that the standards reflect an evolving process and are subject to revision.

The American Kennel Club National Core Professional Dog Grooming Educational Standards contains six educational domains and eight core standards.

The standards of care, safety, and sanitation developed by the Professional Pet Groomers and Stylists Alliance (*Standards • Professional Pet Groomers and Stylists Alliance, 2017*) were considered and are valued and reflected in *The American Kennel Club National Core Dog Grooming Educational Standards*.

### 1. Professional Dog Groomer Safety

Core Standard One - Professional Dog Groomer Safety **(PDGS)**

### 2. Pet Safety and Humane Treatment

Core Standard Two - Pet Safety Professional Practices **(PSPP)**

Core Standard Three - Safe and Humane Handling of Pets **(SHHP)**

Core Standard Four - Safe and Humane Behavior Management **(SHBM)**

### 3. Dog Grooming Sanitation Procedures

Core Standard Five - Dog Grooming Sanitation Procedures **(DGSP)**

### 4. Description and Physical Characteristics of Dogs

Core Standard Six - Description and Physical Characteristics of Dogs **(DPCD)**

### 5. Professional Pet Grooming Practices

Core Standard Seven - Professional Pet Grooming Practices **(PPGP)**

### 6. Professionalism and Business Soft Skills

Core Standard Eight - Professionalism and Business Soft Skills **(PBSS)**

**DOMAIN ONE - PROFESSIONAL DOG GROOMER SAFETY**

<b>Core Standard 1</b>	<b>Professional Dog Groomer Safety</b> - Safety practices must be considered and implemented to ensure the safety of groomers.
<b>PDGS1.1</b>	Complete an intake form that includes the following before receiving the pet: owner and veterinarian contact information; up-to-date vaccinations or titer information; pet name; breed; microchip information if available; dog treat denial or permission; and current medical and behavioral concerns.
<b>PDGS1.2</b>	Take steps to correct or guard against possible hazards during all stages of the grooming process by staying alert, focused, and aware.
<b>PDGS1.3</b>	Assess that all equipment, tools, grooming, and bathing areas are in good repair and safe operating conditions.
<b>PDGS1.4</b>	Check for the placement of a non-slip surface on the floor by each tub to prevent groomers from slipping and falling.
<b>PDGS1.5</b>	Apply knowledge of reasons dogs may bite. Evaluate and select preventive measures, e.g., staying out of the bite range, using a muzzle, leash, grooming loop, or groomer's helper to direct the dog's mouth away from the groomer.
<b>PDGS1.6</b>	Report any bite to the owner. Note the incident in the owner/pet file. Apply knowledge of first aid for bite wounds and scratches.
<b>PDGS1.7</b>	Apply knowledge of personal protective equipment and measures and consider wearing the following recommendations: water-resistant and quick-dry clothing; closed-toe shoes with non-slip soles; mask to prevent breathing in and out of hair and dandruff; gloves, long pants, and arm coverings; hearing and eye protection.
<b>PDGS1.8</b>	Locate a first aid kit for groomers and a fire extinguisher to be maintained on-site, including eye wash products and equipment.
<b>PDGS1.9</b>	Apply knowledge of ergonomically friendly practices.

<b>PDGS1.10</b>	Practice hand hygiene; wash hands upon arrival and exit of the salon, before and after handling each pet, after cleaning tasks, before eating and drinking, and after restroom use.
<b>PDGS1.11</b>	Follow the practice of storing clean backup clothing at the salon for changing if necessary, especially to prevent zoonotic diseases from spreading.
<b>PDGS1.12</b>	Apply knowledge of the dangers of parasites and take precautions.

### DOMAIN TWO - PET SAFETY AND HUMANE TREATMENT

<b>Core Standard 2</b>	<b>Pet Safety Professional Practices</b> - Safety practices must be considered and implemented to ensure the safety of pets.
<b>PSPP2.1</b>	Assess all equipment, tools, and grooming and bathing areas are in good repair and safe operating conditions.
<b>PSPP2.2</b>	Evaluate that products and chemicals used on dogs are pet-friendly and comply with local, state, and federal guidelines, rules, and regulations.
<b>PSPP2.3</b>	Ensure all grooming and drying tables are safe, sturdy, and operating well. Equip table tops for pets with a non-slip surface that is easy to clean.
<b>PSPP2.4</b>	Check for the placement of a non-slip surface on the floor by each tub to prevent dogs from slipping and falling.
<b>PSPP2.5</b>	Be attentive to the pet's eyes and ears. <b>PSPP2.5 A</b> - Use a gentle facial shampoo around the face <b>PSPP2.5 B</b> - Utilize cotton balls to remove earwax. <b>PSPP2.6 C</b> - Pinch the ear leather closed while bathing. <b>PSPP2.7 D</b> - Avoid plucking internal ear hair; gentle external cleaning is permissible.

<b>PSPP2.6</b>	Ensure and set water to an appropriate temperature to prevent discomfort or injury from excessively cold or hot water.
<b>PSPP2.7</b>	Maintain all dryers, assess safe operating conditions, and use them safely and professionally.
<b>PSPP2.8</b>	Locate a first aid kit for pets and a fire extinguisher to be maintained on-site, including eye wash products and equipment. Contact information of a local emergency veterinarian is readily available.
<b>PSPP2.9</b>	Operate all dryers at low heat settings, avoid heated air concentrated on one area, and keep airflow moving.
<b>PSPP2.10</b>	Operate air movement dryers safely and humanely. Closely and frequently monitor pets' safety and comfort. <b>DGSF2.10A</b> - House only one pet per kennel with an air mover. <b>DGSF2.10B</b> - Determine if the enclosure will accommodate the pet to sit comfortably, stand, and turn around. <b>DGSF2.10C</b> - Frequently monitor pets during drying every 5 - 7 minutes.
<b>PSPP2.11</b>	Slowly introduce the clippers, be aware of clipper sensitivity and burns, and be cautious trimming.
<b>PSPP2.12</b>	Notify the owner of possible symptoms and signs of health concerns; however, diagnosis and treatment are the role and responsibility of veterinarians.

<b>Core Standard 3</b>	<b>Safe and Humane Handling of Pets</b> - Safety practices must be considered and implemented to ensure pets' safe and humane handling.
<b>SHHP3.1</b>	An AKC S.A.F.E. Certified Groomer must supervise students during grooming hours.
<b>SHHP3.2</b>	Practice safe and humane use of pet-friendly restraints and use only under constant direct human supervision. Safely and humanely secure pets when necessary with restraints such as leashes, cross ties, muzzles, groomer's helpers, and loops.
<b>SHHP3.3</b>	Accept pets and return them safely to owners. <b>SHHP3.3A</b> Exchange pets using a slip lead with the pet on floor level. <b>SHHP3.3B</b> Do not accept pets from the owner's arms to avoid the dog's biting range.

	<p><b>SHHP3.3C</b> Toy size dogs are the exception to SHHP3.3B; utilize the back-to-back/slip-and-transfer between owner and groomer movement for dogs that experience limited to no floor contact time.</p> <p><b>SHHP3.3D</b> Ensure all exits are secure and closed with two barriers.</p>
<b>SHHP3.4</b>	Offer fresh water and out-of-crate movement for pets confined for more than four hours.
<b>SHHP3.5</b>	Follow protocol that no pet be left unsupervised within an arm's length while on the grooming table or in the bathing tub.
<b>SHHP3.6</b>	Report incidents to the school or facility in case of an accident, including the owner's name, address, phone number, pet's name, service provided, and date of service.
<b>SHHP3.7</b>	<p>Arrange kennels in an escape-controlled environment where groomers can safely see and access all areas of the kennels.</p> <p><b>SHHP3.7A</b> Remove the dog's collar from the dog before placement in a kennel to prevent accidental choking.</p> <p><b>SHHP3.7B</b> Utilize the bottom kennel for dogs with kennel aggression tendencies.</p>
<b>SHHP3.8</b>	Evaluate and select kennels that meet the following requirements: in good repair, secure, safe, stable, durable, ventilated, clean, and accommodate the pet's ability to sit, stand, and turn around completely.
<b>SHHP3.9</b>	Monitor air and water temperatures at levels that provide a safe and comfortable environment.
<b>SHHP3.10</b>	Recognize that at least one person is familiar with pet first aid during grooming hours.
<b>SHHP3.11</b>	Follow emergency action protocols to ensure all pets receive care should an emergency arise.
<b>SHHP3.12</b>	Define situations and select best practices for the prevention of zoonosis and removal of ticks and parasites.

<b>Core Standard 4</b>	<b>Safe and Humane Behavior Management</b> - Safety practices must be considered and implemented to ensure pets' safe and humane behavior management.
<b>SHBM4.1</b>	Speak in a calm, friendly, and assertive manner to pets.
<b>SHBM4.2</b>	Evaluate the pet's stress level and respond accordingly to reduce fear and anxiety.
<b>SHBM4.3</b>	Obtain permission from the owner if providing treats.
<b>SHBM4.4</b>	Acquire knowledge of the pet's known behavior tendencies or triggers.
<b>SHBM4.5</b>	Identify behavioral changes, such as but not limited to pacing and showing teeth and ears pinned back.
<b>SHBM4.6</b>	Utilize proper methods of correcting behavior during grooming.
<b>SHBM4.7</b>	Refuse service of aggressive and unmanageable pets.
<b>SHBM4.8</b>	Report behavioral incidents to the school or facility and owner that include the owner's name, address, phone number, pet's name, service provided, and service date.
<b>SHBM4.9</b>	Refuse to administer either natural or prescription sedation or medications to dogs. Recommend that clients contact a veterinarian.
<b>SHBM4.10</b>	Recognize that puppies and geriatric dogs require accommodations for age-related needs.

**DOMAIN THREE - DOG GROOMING SANITATION PROCEDURES**

<b>Core Standard 5</b>	<b>Dog Grooming Sanitation Procedures</b> - Best practices of sanitation must be considered and implemented to maintain the health of groomers & pets & safeguard against disease transmission.
<b>DGSP5.1</b>	Dispose of sitting water to mitigate stagnant water diseases.
<b>DGSP5.2</b>	Follow the protocol of regular and proper trash disposal.
<b>DGSP5.3</b>	Execute immediate cleaning of urine and feces.

<b>DGSP5.4</b>	Disinfect all grooming areas, tools, equipment, and cages after grooming each dog.
<b>DGSP5.5</b>	Use disinfected clippers, shears, leads, and tools for each dog.
<b>DGSP5.6</b>	Follow the daily cleaning schedule of all grooming areas, tools, equipment, and cages.
<b>DGSP5.7</b>	List and label all products used for cleaning and disinfecting at the salon. Prepare, use, and store solutions according to the manufacturer's instructions.
<b>DGSP5.8</b>	Verify disinfectants are bactericidal, virucidal, and fungicidal compliant and registered by the United States Environmental Agency (EPA).
<b>DGSP5.9</b>	Disinfect product bottles and containers to avoid cross-contamination.
<b>DGSP5.10</b>	Compare and contrast the processes of cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting.

#### DOMAIN FOUR - DESCRIPTION AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF DOGS

<b>Core Standard 6</b>	<b>Description and Physical Characteristics of Dogs</b> - Students will apply knowledge of the dog's body from an anatomical and physiological standpoint, the form of the dog's body and size, coat phenotype, and breed classification for grooming decisions.
<b>DPCD6.1</b>	Define and learn anatomical terminology related to dogs for clear communication to converse accurately about health and grooming issues.
<b>DPCD6.2</b>	Apply knowledge of the physiological functions of nails, skin, hair, and anal sacs and glands while grooming.
<b>DPCD6.3</b>	Identify coat phenotype and understand the form of a dog's body and size for grooming decisions.
<b>DPCD6.4</b>	Identify breed classification for grooming decisions.

<b>DPCD6.5</b>	Apply knowledge of anatomical and physiological features of brachycephalic breeds for grooming decisions.
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**DOMAIN FIVE - PROFESSIONAL PET GROOMING PRACTICES**

<b>Core Standard 7</b>	<b>Professional Pet Grooming Practices</b> - Consideration of best grooming practices to ensure safe and healthy grooming.
<b>PPGP7.1</b>	Select the type of tool best suited for the intended purpose and coat type.
<b>PPGP7.2</b>	Apply knowledge of best practices of brushing and combing techniques for grooming decisions.
<b>PPGP7.3</b>	Remove the undercoat by carding and undercoat raking, especially for dogs with double coats.
<b>PPGP7.4</b>	Select the best practices of different patterns according to coat types.
<b>PPGP7.5</b>	Examine the coat for matted areas and follow the procedure for basic dematting techniques.
<b>PPGP7.6</b>	Determine the necessity of shaving for mat removal. Inform clients of shaving negatives, and if shaving is deemed necessary, obtain written permission.
<b>PPGP7.7</b>	Select the best bathing and drying practices and basic skin and coat conditioning procedures.
<b>PPGP7.8</b>	Determine best practices and tools for nail trimming, paw care, and sanitary trims.

**DOMAIN SIX - PROFESSIONALISM AND BUSINESS SOFT SKILLS**

<b>Core Standard 8</b>	<b>Professionalism and Business Soft Skills</b> - Use the appropriate skills and behaviors for personal and professional environments.
<b>PBSS8.1</b>	Demonstrate professionalism by meeting attendance expectations, promptness, preparation, task completion, and following policies, rules, and regulations.
<b>PBSS8.2</b>	Demonstrate professionalism by taking responsibility for creating a safe and positive work environment.
<b>PBSS8.3</b>	Apply and express professional etiquette and effective communication skills to clearly express ideas and messages to others that foster positive relationships.
<b>PBSS8.4</b>	Apply effective speaking and listening skills to communicate the client's desired style and grooming expectations for their pet.
<b>PBSS8.5</b>	Maintain and update files, such as but not limited to intake forms, release forms, waivers, and contact information.
<b>PBSS8.6</b>	Advocate for pets. Take immediate action and inform the supervising instructor if a pet is being mishandled or in an unsafe situation.

**Core 2** *Pet Safety and Humane Treatment*, **Core 3**, *Safe and Humane Handling of Pets*, and **Core 4**, *Safe and Humane Management of Pet Behavioral Issues* standards are not static documents. It may be revised to consider advances in understanding animal physiology and behavior.