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## How to Teach Dogs To Use a Nail Board for Dewclaws

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October 27, 2023



A cut piece of PVC pipe makes a perfectly curved scratchboard. Image Courtesy Barb Deg, RVT, CDBC, CPDT-KA, CSAT

Teaching your dog to use a nail board can reduce the stress of nail maintenance. You may wonder how to get those pesky dewclaws.

Once your dog knows how to use a nail board for their front feet, they can adapt their skills for their dewclaws. This may take a little more work initially.

You will need:

- A non-slip surface
- High-value treats
- A curved nail board appropriate for the diameter of your dog's paw

A curved scratchboard is created by cutting PVC pipe, a can, or a bucket in half. The material should also be sufficiently strong so it does not bend. Apply stair tread or skateboard grip tape to both the inside and outside. The dewclaw should come in contact with the sides when the dog's paw is inside.



Image Courtesy of Barb Deg, RVT, CDBC, CPDT-KA, CSAT



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- Start by presenting the curved scratch board to your dog and give the cue you use for the front foot scratchboard. Mark and reward any scratching attempts.
- Adjust the angle of the scratchboard as you hold it so that the dewclaw comes in contact with the surface.
- If your dog struggles with scratching on the inside surface of the scratchboard, you can teach them to scratch the outside.
- To work with the outside of the curved scratchboard, present it to your dog vertically and give the cue. When your dog scratches, mark and reward. With each repetition, rotate the angle of the board so that the dewclaw is in contact with the board if needed.

- Mark only for the dewclaw contacts. Reinforce generously as your dog works to figure out what part of their paw is being rewarded. You may need to reduce your criteria slightly if your dog struggles so that they do not lose interest in the game. They will begin to purposely aim to have their dewclaw contact the surface.

Nail maintenance can go from a dreaded event to a fun game with your dog.

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