

Cats generally do a good job of keeping themselves clean, but for various reasons, there will be occasions you'll need to bathe your kitty. It's not as hard as you may think, once you both know the routine, so practice when your cat is young.

Difficulty Level: average **Time Required:** 30 minutes

Here's How:

1. Assemble your "tools" next to the kitchen sink: Two thick towels, cat shampoo, conditioner, (for longhaired cats), two large cups or mugs, clean sponge.
2. Put a rubber shower mat in the bottom of the sink so kitty will not slip and slide.
3. Run about two to three inches of body temperature water into the sink-- just enough to come up to kitty's belly. Test the water on your wrist, much as you'd test a baby bottle. You should not be able to discern heat or cold.
4. Place a capful of the cat shampoo in a mug of warm water and mix well, to keep from shocking warm cat flesh with cold shampoo.
5. Pick up your kitty and lower her gently but quickly into the water, talking calmly to her all the while. Another human helper is optional at this step.
6. Give her a few minutes to relax to the idea that you aren't going to kill her, all the while talking to her and petting her.
7. Turn on and test the temperature of the shower spray and holding it right up against the cat's skin, wet her body, taking care not to splash in her face.
8. When she is well soaked, pour the diluted shampoo evenly over her entire body, again staying away from the head.
9. Massage the shampoo gently into her fur for several minutes. Now is your chance to give her a full body massage. You may even find that she enjoys it.
10. Rinse well, using body temperature water and the shower nozzle, stroking it the way you would a brush, in long strokes from the base of her neck down over her tail. You can gently pat some water on her tummy at this time, with your other hand.
11. Give her several long petting strokes with your hand to slick away excess water, and to test for any remaining soapiness.
12. Repeat steps 11 and 12 until all evidence of soap is gone. This is the most important process, as soap residue can dry her skin, leaving it vulnerable to rashes and infection.
13. With a clean, moist sponge, wipe down the back of her head and her muzzle, again being careful to avoid her eyes, ears and mouth.
14. Using a large bath towel, lift kitty out of the sink and pat her down, using the towel to blot up as much water as possible.
15. Repeat step 13, using another clean towel, then leave her alone to continue the drying process by herself. Don't forget the praise!

Tips:

1. If your cat won't tolerate the shower spray, use a large measuring cup to pour the water over her in steps 7 and 11, taking care not to splash.
2. If your cat is cool with it, you can use a hair dryer set on low to speed up the drying process. This is helpful with longhairs, but don't brush until completely dry.
3. Although not necessary, diluted cream rinse may be applied after the first rinsing, then thoroughly rinsed out.