Dog Groomer Business Startup Checklist

A free one-page launch checklist from The Black Leaf Studio. Work top to bottom - each step unlocks the next.

1. Decide Your Model

- [ ] Mobile van grooming (higher prices, van cost)
- [ ] Home salon (low overhead, check local bylaws)
- [ ] House-call grooming (low cost, limited to small dogs)
- [ ] Renting a table in an existing salon

Pick ONE to start. You can add a second model later.

2. Skills and Certification

- [ ] Hands-on grooming skill for the coat types you will take (poodle-type coats are the hardest - be honest about your level)
- [ ] Consider a certification course (NDGAA / IPG) - not legally required, but it wins trust
- [ ] Learn dog handling and stress signals before you learn styling

3. Name, Register, Bank

- [ ] Choose a business name and check it is available
- [ ] Register the business
- [ ] Open a separate business bank account
- [ ] Set aside 25-30% of revenue for taxes from day one

4. Insurance and Legal

- [ ] Liability insurance that covers animals in your care (get quoted before your first groom)
- [ ] Service agreement signed by every owner (matted coats, senior dogs, vet-release clause)
- [ ] Cancellation / no-show policy in writing, given at booking
- [ ] Vaccination record requirement for every dog

5. Equipment

- [ ] Table with arm and loop, dryer (force dryer for doodles), clippers + blades, shears, nail tools, bathing system
- [ ] Shampoos and coat-type products (never one-bottle-fits-all)
- [ ] First-aid kit for nicks, and a written incident log
- [ ] Track supplies on an inventory sheet so nothing runs out mid-groom

6. Pricing

- [ ] Price by size AND coat condition, not just size

- [ ] Matting surcharge and behaviour surcharge defined in advance
- [ ] Price list printed and visible before your first client

7. First Clients

- [ ] Groom friends' and family dogs first - photograph every one
- [ ] Post before/after photos in local community groups
- [ ] Partner with one local vet or pet store for referrals
- [ ] Ask every happy owner for one referral and a review

8. Run It Like a Business

- [ ] Invoice every groom, same day
- [ ] Keep a groom record card per dog (coat notes, sensitivities, style preferences)
- [ ] Rebook at the door before the owner leaves - 4-6 week cycle
- [ ] Review your pricing every 90 days

Want the full kit? The Dog Groomer Business Starter Kit includes all 12 templates: service agreement, intake form, groom record, price list, daily schedule, supply inventory, cancellation policy, invoice, safety incident log, rebook tracker, launch checklist and social planner.

Template by The Black Leaf Studio. Not legal advice.