

## **Know Your Park:**

Please familiarize yourself with the dog park you wish to visit before your first visit with your dog. Become familiar with the Posted Rules for the park (when you have your dog with you he may want to pull you into the park before you have a chance to read the rules), talk to park users and find out if there is any information a first time user should be aware of. Most dog park rules are very similar but vary from park to park. Dog park etiquette however is universally the same. [Obey the posted rules, pick up after your dog](#), and make sure your dog doesn't cause problems for others. (Human or Canine)

## **Know Your Dog:**

Before you use the dog park, know your Dog! Check your ego at the gate and be realistic rather than idealistic when it comes to your dog's temperament. Is he a bully and pushy with other dogs? Is he shy and timid? Is he old and might he feel vulnerable in this environment? Dog parks are great for most dogs, but for some you must WATCH YOUR DOG very carefully to ensure they WANT to be there. If your dog lives with another dog he may get along fine with that dog, but if he hasn't been introduced to strange dogs on a regular basis he may need time to adjust to the many different doggie personalities he may encounter at a dog park. Aggressive dog's, even if he is your "best buddy", are not allowed and are not appreciated by others. No matter how cute you think he is and no matter how much you want your dog to be able to use the park, if he's acting aggressively he needs to leave.

Most dog parks are very busy on the weekends and on holidays. For your first couple of visits with your dog visit during the week, when the park is not crowded, stay a short time, and keep these visits short and sweet. You might also consider visiting one of the smaller parks the first few times. Some dogs could get very frightened and run far away in a large park. Some parks are large enough that your dog can run out of sight, and out of hearing range of your voice command (making them even more frightened because they feel lost).

If your dog has not interacted with other dogs and you are not sure if he will get along you can find out how he may act meeting other dogs by inviting another owner with a dog that is known to be dog friendly to meet at a fenced location unfamiliar to both dogs ("neutral territory") and turn them both off leash (or just drop the leash on your dog to drag on the ground) at a distance from each other. Let them meet on their own terms. If an altercation does break out you will be right there to intervene.

If your dog is very young (4 months is the minimum age limit for dogs in a dog park) or is timid by nature, please bring him often to the dog park but not during busy usage times, and stay only for short time periods. As his confidence grows make his visits longer. Some dogs never get over the fear of dog parks. They are happier and safer at home.

## **Know How to be Considerate:**

Some dogs have rough play styles and can be overpowering though non-aggressive. If your dog is in any way menacing or continually annoying another dog, please re-move your dog to another part of the park. Don't wait for someone to ask you to do the polite thing. Remember, a little common sense and courtesy will go a long way when the success and enjoyment of the dog park relies on the people who use it.

## **Know How to Handle Problems:**

If you are concerned that someone is not following the posted rules and he or his dog is presenting a problem for others (even after receiving considerate requests from others to comply) please do not hesitate to call for help from park constables or park rangers to handle the situation. Do not confront combative or argumentative individuals, just call the authorities or leave the park (and call the authorities). Please research information for your dog park authorities' numbers and pre-program these numbers into your cell phone or keep them in your car or wallet.

## Know about Dog Fights:

They can and do happen at dog parks, though not often. Many dog fights will end faster than you can get involved - leaving the dogs only a little ruffled. It is very natural dog behavior to decide who is boss with a little tussle. Bringing treats in a dog park is also guaranteed to cause a fight - that is why it is against the rules. Dog parks are for running loose and playing, not training. Blood will typically only be drawn if the fight goes on and neither dog backs down for several minutes. If a fight occurs at a dog park and does not end quickly, and you feel a need to intervene - pull the dogs apart by the **BACK LEGS ONLY** (Wheel barrow style). Never reach for collars or try to pick up a small dog being attacked. Or you are VERY likely to get bitten. Grabbing even one dog (the biggest one) by the back legs and walking backwards to pull them out of the fight will usually end the fight - and you are safely far away from any teeth. If you are afraid to grab the dog's back legs, you can try to slip a leash made into a noose on the dogs back foot and pull him away that way.

## Know when to use your leash and when not to:

Please use your leash while in the parking lot or just outside the dog park. This is the law but it is also a matter of common courtesy to your fellow dog park users. UNLEASH your dog inside the double-gated areas or just inside the dog park while other dogs are not immediately close to your dog. When a leashed dog is greeted by off leash dogs, the leashed dog will not be able to display normal doggie greetings and he may feel trapped or threatened. If he does feel this way he may act defensively and a tense situation may arise. When all dogs are off leash they can display normal dog greeting signals and they can get away from a pressure situation if they feel they need to. This is very important!

The equipment you use and the collar your dog wears may be something you may want to consider while you are at the dog park. A snug fitting flat buckle or snap together leather or nylon collar, with his tags attached, may be a good choice while he is in the dog park. (Pinch, prong, or even choke training collars may cause injury to another dog that may catch his teeth or bottom jaw in it while playing with your dog.) Retractable leashes or "Flexi" leads are not a good idea even in the parking lot or outside areas of the park. These long thin cords can get entangled around people or dog's legs and panic or injure others. These leashes can offer no help to you if your dog gets into an altercation with another dog while inside the Dog Park. A regular 6 ft. leather or nylon leash (you should carry with you at all times while in the dog park) can act as an emergency leash to help separate dogs or quickly get control of them by putting the snap end of the leash thru the hand loop and "turning the leash handle inside-out". This leash can then be quickly slipped over the dog's neck or back leg to gain control of a situation without having to reach in close to grab a collar to attach a leash by the snap. This leash can also be used in this way to add extra security from your dog slipping out of his collar while you shower him off (no-one likes a cold shower at first) at the dog park, by attaching the snap to his collar as usual after you pass the "looped noose leash" around his neck.

Even though the dog park presents a social outlet for both dogs and for people, be advised to walk around the park as you enjoy conversations with other users. People gathered closely with each other for periods of time will find their dogs want to "gather" as well. This creates a space that may be uncomfortably tight (socially) for some dogs and they may get a little "testy" with each other.

## Children:

Please carefully consider whether you want to bring small children into a dog park, if they are allowed. Please observe park rules if children are prohibited. It is for your child's own safety after all.

Opinions differ greatly about the safety of small children in dog parks, and whether they should be allowed or not. It is important parents are informed and stay alert of certain issues in order to make good decisions so we share them with you here:

1. Your child may be familiar and get along fine with your own dog, however, please be advised while only non-aggressive dogs are allowed in the dog park, some dogs do not live with or understand small children and may be unpredictable around them.
2. Large, playful, running dogs can easily knock down adults, and a young child could be unintentionally hurt by being knocked down if a large dog bumps into him.
3. Dog parks are not children's play grounds and extra care must be taken.
4. If you want to bring your child to the dog park to show them "all the doggies" - please note: Children who have not been around dogs could become very frightened suddenly even by a friendly dog, and dogs sense fear and react to it in odd ways.
5. It is not easy to closely watch your children and WATCH YOUR DOG while in a dog park but both must be done equally for the safety of all.
6. Having a child with you does not excuse you from picking up after your dog or from controlling his actions.

If you do decide to bring your children to a dog park we suggest you follow these guidelines:

Before you go to the park, have a talk with your children to make sure they are confident around all dogs, and they understand that they could get hurt if they do not follow these rules:

1. Make sure they understand that not every dog is as nice as theirs, and not every dog is accustomed to children.
2. No running or screaming is allowed in the dog park.
3. Do not chase the dogs, do not approach them, and especially **do not pet them** (unless the owner says it's ok and the parent says it's ok).
4. If approached by dogs, just stand still and ignore them, do not raise your arms as that will most likely trigger the dog to jump on you and it could knock you over on accident.

### **Small Dogs:**

#### **Please be cautious when allowing a small dog to play in a mixed or large dog area.**

Even in play, a larger dog could seriously injure a small dog if the size difference is too great. Even though aggressive dogs are not allowed in the park, the prey instinct while running and chasing can overly excite even the nicest large reactive dog and this could turn into a potentially dangerous situation for the smaller dog. In parks with water features size of swim buddies could also present a problem for smaller dogs when the water is too deep for them to stand.

Again, many problems can be proactively avoided if all parties **WATCH YOUR DOG!** When available, **it is advised that little dogs play in little dog areas.**

### **Females in Heat:**

It is a rule in most dog parks (and is just plain common sense) females in heat are not allowed. This is for obvious reasons. You should also know that intact non neutered males are statistically responsible for most dog fights and bites in the country. If you do not plan to become a breeder, please consider strongly the option of spay and neuter.