

Dog Park Etiquette & Safety



“A dog park is like a cocktail party, where you don’t know anyone and everyone is drunk. You could have fun, but it could be a disaster.”

DO

- Make sure your dog is healthy and up-to-date on vaccinations.
- Use the double gated entrance/exit pen as a safe place to unleash/ leash your dog. Unleash your dog inside the pen before entering and vice versa. Never keep your dog on-leash inside the park or off-leash outside the park.
- Do not open the entrance gate or enter the pen while another owner is in the process of leashing/unleashing their dog.
- Avoid entering the park if there is a “gang” of dogs congregating around the entrance, and wait until the crowd disperses a bit.
- Keep your eyes on your dog.
- Leave special toys at home to avoid resource-guarding problems.
- Be cautious about taking advice from other park patrons who are not dog professionals.
- CLEAN UP AFTER YOUR DOG!

DON'T

- Take your eyes off your dog.
- Assume a dog is aggressive when she is only trying to communicate her discomfort.
- Force your frightened dog to remain in the park and hope things get better.
- Believe that dogs can “work it out” if you just let them do so.
- Congregate with other owners at a picnic table or other small areas. Spread out and keep your dog moving with you around the park.
- Bring small children to the dog park. They **will** get jumped on.
- Bring puppies under 4 months of age. Young puppies need very structured socialization to ensure only positive experiences. Instead, find a good puppy class/school.
- Bring a dog showing any signs of potential illness: coughing or gagging, vomiting, sneezing, diarrhea, etc.
- Bring dogs that are known to have exhibited aggressive or fearful behaviors. Contact a certified, professional trainer for help. www.apdt.com

Pay close attention to your dog’s play style and supervise constantly. The moment you feel the play is becoming too intense or rough, interrupt the play to calm your dog down.

PLAYFUL ACTIONS TO WATCH FOR THAT INDICATE APPROPRIATE, BALANCED PLAY:

- Back and forth play – dogs change position – role reversals
- Bouncy, exaggerated gestures
- Wiggly bodies
- Open relaxed mouth
- Play-bows
- Twisted leaps or jumps
- Pawing the air

RED FLAGS THAT REQUIRE INTERVENTION:

- Excessive mounting
- Pinning (holding another dog down and standing stiffly over them)
- Shadowing another dog (following) incessantly
- Bullying: repeatedly bothering another dog that does not want to interact
- Fast non-stop running with a group – high arousal situation
- Full-speed body slams
- Putting head repeatedly onto another dog's neck or back
- Staring with a fixed gaze directly at another dog
- Snarling or raised lips
- Showing teeth
- Hackles up at the shoulders

SIGNS OF FEAR/ANXIETY/STRESS:

- Fast wagging low tail
- Whining or whimpering
- Ears may be back
- Hiding behind objects or people

BE WILLING TO LEAVE THE PARK:

- if she appears afraid or is just not having fun
- if she is bullying others.
- if your young dog is being bullied or learning bad manners from the other dogs

Know your dog. There are many dogs who simply don't enjoy the dog park, just as there are many people who simply don't enjoy going to parties. The dog park is by no means a necessity for your dog to have a happy, balanced life. If they don't love it, don't force them and respect their wish to leave.

EDUCATE YOURSELF!

<https://apdt.com/pet-owners/dog-park/>

<http://drsophiayin.com/videos/tag/dog+body+language>

http://www.doggonesafe.com/Speak_Dog

<https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/virtual-pet-behaviorist/dog-behavior/canine-body-language>