



Dog Park Etiquette

In order that everyone enjoys their time in the dog park we ask that you respect the rules of the park and be considerate of your fellow dog guardians.

You are responsible for your dog's safety, behavior and for any damage or injuries caused by your dog while at this park. Help us keep the dog park safe and clean.

To report injuries, learn about what we do or to volunteer contact:

* We thank Sharon Mear, Trainer and Behaviorist, of Training Cats and Dogs, for consulting and contributing for this poster. To learn more contact: www.trainingcatsanddogs.com.

To learn more about dog parks go to the New York Council of Dog Owner Groups: www.NYCDOG.org.

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***Open and Close One Safety Gate at a Time** when entering the park. Dogs love to meet and greet newcomers. Please pay special attention when entering and exiting so no dog has a chance to run out.

***Unleash your dog within the safety gates** before releasing your dog into the dog park. A leashed dog can excite problem dogs into aggression. Dogs can also be more aggressive when leashed due to the loss of control over their environment. They may feel frustrated, anxious and or threatened and since they can't do what they instinctually do (flee or fight) to protect themselves and/or their owners they do what they can, they bark and lunge. It is safer to leash your dog up within the safety gates and not in the dog park itself.

***Stay conscious of the environment.** Using headphones in the dog park is not a good idea.

***Keep an eye on your dog.** Always keep your dog in view and under control. Be especially aware of your dog when children are near.

***No aggressive dogs.** At the first sign of aggression please remove your dog from the dog park. When a dog park is open to all (non-membership) we and our dogs could be vulnerable to dogs that don't know their physical boundaries. The dog that knows good physical boundaries can play without shoving the other dog. There is a difference between rough play and fighting. Dogs at play often mouth, jump on and/or nip each other. It can look like fighting, but no blood is drawn and the biting is inhibited as it doesn't break the skin. A dog in play will play without accentuated or obsessive physical contact. If your dog begins to get aroused divert his/her attention before it escalates and if necessary leave the dog park.

***Know the signs of aggression.** Although difficult to define on certain breeds, the conflicted or overly confident dogs' ears are usually up and/or forward. They face and stare directly at the other dog or human with whom they are interacting. Eye contact is sustained hard and direct. Their brow is furrowed. The tail carriage is likely to be high up and arched over the rump. The (hackles) fur along their back stands up like a ridge and the chest and stance is forward. Dogs with shorter tails might be straight and wagging stiffly.

***If a fight breaks out,** all involved dog owners should immediately help break it up.

****First and foremost –** Please try and remain calm and **never** put a body part between the fighting dogs.

Here are some suggestions: Ask the steward at your dog park to provide a container that could permanently hold some blankets, water bottles, horns, whistles etc. so you will always have an aversive handy.

At the first sign of a fight take one of the items from the container and get as close to the fighting dogs as possible without endangering yourself and either:

- bang 2 large garbage can covers together like cymbals
- spray water bottle
- grab a blanket, shirt and/or jacket and throw it over the dogs and when they separate take your dog and leave the dog park.
- use the water hose in the summer

- For the experienced guardian only- take your dog by its hindquarters – just below the rump – and raise them up like you are holding a wheelbarrow and start backing up slowly as you pull the dog with you. Be very careful as you pull because if one dog has another by a body part and decides to hold on you risk tearing the skin.

Once the dogs have separated themselves take yours away.

- If you suspect damage has been done to you or your dog exchange vital information with all involved parties as you leave to get vet care.

***If your dog consistently harasses** other dogs or people by intimidating, mounting, or annoying another dog, correct that behavior immediately. If it continues please take your dog out of the dog park at least for a short time out.

***Closely supervise intact males.** If your intact male is involved in any altercation, regardless of which dog started it, please leave. (Intact males commonly provoke aggression.)

***No dogs in heat in the dog park.** Since most females go into heat only 2x a year and are considered to be “in heat” for 21 days (7 days going in, 7 days in heat and 7 days going out, it is advisable not to bring them to a dog run during this time. Male dogs can sense females in heat through pheromones. These are airborne chemical attractants that are liberated from the female when she is cycling. They travel through the air for great distances.

***Teach your dog to be quiet.** Some barking is fine, expected and normal. However incessant barking can be annoying to those around you. Try and find creative ways to discourage barking by changing your dogs focus towards something more fun, like a game of chase and interaction with you.

***During slow hours please limit your stay to 20 minutes if another dog owner is waiting to use the dog park.** Dog owners who have dogs with behavior problems will often bring them late at night or very early in the morning, when the dog park is likely to be empty. (These dogs need to be exercised also.) Always ask if it is safe to join another dog if it is the only dog in the dog park.

DO'S AND DON'TS

***No prong, spiked collars or choke chains in the dog park.** The ring ends can get caught on other objects as well as other dogs' collars. Leave on your dog's regular collar with ID and license while in the park.

***Do not bring rawhides and toys to the dog park.** Many dogs are so crazy for rawhides and toys that they will fight over them. (This does not apply to special events.)

***The small blue balls for playing handball are dangerous for medium and large dogs** as they can easily get lodged in their throat. If you bring a handball or any small ball to the dog park and a larger dog is interested in playing, please refrain from using them and be sure to take them with you when you leave.

***Don't bring dogs that are ill into the dog park.**

***Shared water bowls** can cause dogs to get sick if one of the dogs drinking from the bowl is sick. Refresh the water bowl as often as possible or bring your own water bowl.

***Put dog hair in a trash can** if you groom your dog in the dog park.

***No glass containers in the dog park.**

***Pick up after your dog. Alert others if they miss a pick up.**



ATTENTION PARENTS

***Bring your children into the dog park at their/your own risk.**

However we recommend that children under 8 years of age not be permitted in the dog park but if you choose to please, for their safety, keep children under your supervision and within arms reach at all times.

***CHILDREN SHOULD NOT BE BROUGHT INTO THE DOG PARK IN STROLLERS!**

*** KEEP BABIES AND TODDLERS OUT OF THE REACH OF DOGS!**

Dangling feet are stimulating to dogs. They may jump up as if playing with a toy.

PLEASE EDUCATE CHILDREN ON SMART BEHAVIOR AROUND DOGS:

1. Do not run or scream in the dog park. (Running and screaming are invitations for dogs to chase.)
2. Do not touch or take a dog's ball without speaking to the owner first.
3. Ask an adult before petting an unfamiliar dog. All dogs are potential biters no matter what size. Just because a dog is small it does not mean he is safe and can't do damage. Wait for the dog to approach you instead of offering your hand.
4. Do not touch dogs while they are resting or sleeping, especially if they are under a bench.
5. Do not hug or kiss dogs that are not your own, however friendly they may seem.
6. Avoid rough play with dogs or other children while in the dog park.
7. If a dog growls at you, avoid eye contact by looking immediately away. Do not run away. Instead, back slowly away, continuing to avoid eye contact. If you have something in your pocket like a ball toss it to distract the dog as you continue to back away.