

## TOP 10 TIPS FOR A FUN AND SAFE DOG PARK EXPERIENCE

1. **No small children** – the dog park can be dangerous for small kids. Playing dogs can knock them over. Not all dogs are socialized with children.
2. **Remove your dog's leash, training collar, harness before entering the play yard** – dogs' mouths can get caught during play.
3. **Create space at the gate for incoming dogs** – use your body to back up dogs at the gate so a new dog can enter peacefully. The gate is a common area for excitement, which can lead to conflict.
4. **Keep moving & keep watch** – walk around the park, especially while your dog gets settled, to help keep dogs from overly crowding your dog. You are your dog's advocate and his keeper: be on the lookout for behavior or body language that needs your attention.
5. **Carry your leash in case you need it quickly** – a leash comes in handy if your dog needs a “time out”, or if you are involved in helping break up an altercation.
6. **Interrupt “play” before it becomes a problem** – learn what healthy dog play looks like. It should be balanced, with dogs taking turns chasing or wrestling. If a dog is overly rough with a participant that looks nervous, or if a “fun police” is trying to manage other dogs that are playing, be ready with your squirt bottle to interrupt. A quick squirt on the rear or flank usually does the trick. A squirt to the face is the most assertive correction; save it until you need it.
7. **Pick up poop** – it spreads disease. Humans and dogs step in it. It's yucky.
8. **Don't mix small and large dogs** – not all large dogs are socialized with small dogs. This can be dangerous for the small dog.
9. **Leave dog and human food at home** – food is an extremely valuable resource to dogs and they may go to great lengths to acquire and defend it.
10. **Know your dog**: not every dog is a dog-park dog – the dog park is usually not fun or safe for unspayed female dogs in heat, unneutered adult male dogs, senior dogs with pain or mobility issues, puppies younger than 4 months old, dogs that are reactive to humans or other dogs, extremely fearful dogs. The dog park is not the place to socialize unsocialized dogs. Work with a professional if you're unsure about your dog's socialability.