

Dog Park Safety

General Etiquette and Tips



Karen Peak

West Wind Dog Training and The Safe Kids/Safe Dogs Project

Dog park safety begins with humans.

- There is no perfect dog for a dog park. Your dog must be flexible, adaptable, slow to anger, able to walk away from a challenge, ignore problem situations and come away from distractions when called.
- Your dog must be well socialized to dogs and humans and able to come when called when there are major distractions around him.
- Make sure your dog is healthy, current on vaccines and has not had diarrhea or vomited at least 48 hours before visiting the park. If he seems sore, stay home.
- Observe the park dynamics before entering. If you see something worrisome, do not enter.
- The further away your dog is, the less control you have, use a 4 or 6 foot lead only at the park.
- Make sure your dog is safely leashed before entering and leaving.
- The entrance is a higher stress area. Avoid hovering at the entrance. Get in or out and move away.
- Pay attention to your dog; that text can wait. You must be alert to everything at the park.
- Immediately clean up after your dog.
- Bring water; never assume a dog park will have water available.
- Keep favorite toys at home. Your dog may not be willing to share or may become threatened if another dog tries to take his toy. Another dog may challenge him for that toy.
- Never leave the park without taking your dog; even if just headed out to greet a friend or get something from your vehicle. All it takes is a second for something to happen.
- All dogs involved in a scuffle are in a heightened state of excitement or stress and there is a greater risk of another scuffle. Even if a dog did not start it, if he became involved he must leave.
- Do not allow friends, relatives or dog walkers to bring your dog to a park. Do not bring someone else's dog to a dog park. There is too much liability.
- Keep children at home unless they are very well behaved. A yelling, screaming, fussing, running child or one getting into strange dogs' faces could be injured or cause an injury.

Remember, not all dogs are dog park dogs. Sometimes we have to accept that fact and move on.

This may be reproduced for educational purposes. Credit will be given to Karen Peak, West Wind Dog Training and The Safe Kids/Safe Dogs Project. This is not designed to replace professional assistance. © 2012