

The Do's and Don'ts of Dog Parks

Dog parks can be the best, or worst, places for your dog

Dog owners and their best buddies tend to love dog parks. They can be terrific places for dogs to [socialize](#), from learning how to be part of a pack to learning doggie social graces. Dog parks are also great places for [exercise](#). However, just like playgrounds for our kids, dog parks hold hidden dangers, such as opportunities to catch whatever sickness might be going around, to get bullied, and learn bad habits.

To ensure that your trip to the dog park is a fun and safe experience for your dog, take a look at our list of dog park tips and tricks. And have fun!

- 1.** Make sure your dog is at least 4 months old and current on all vaccinations. Dog parks can be very dangerous for a dog that isn't fully vaccinated or is too young to be exposed to certain infectious diseases and parasites.
- 2.** Assess who's at the park before you enter. See if the dogs in the park have the same energy as your dog (calm, high-strung, assertive, or submissive) and are good pairings with regard to size.
- 3.** Keep your eyes on your dog at all times -- don't talk on the phone, get distracted by other dog park friends, or read a book. It is important to know what your dog and others around him or her are doing every moment you're there.
- 4.** Make sure your dog is under voice control. You need to know he'll come when called, no matter what, to ensure that you can get him by your side and away from any scuffles or quarrels with other dogs.
- 5.** Watch your dog and read his body language. Arguments and fights happen every day, at every dog park, even among the best dogs (just like with kids at a playground). Your dog is likely going to be aware of an impending tussle before you are: if he seems to become nervous, agitated, or on guard, call him and prevent any squabbles before they happen.
- 6.** Remember, it's the people at dog parks that ensure a safe and fun experience. If you feel like other pet owners might not have appropriate control over their dogs, it's probably best to take your dog on a walk

elsewhere, find a well-attended daycare with the opportunity for your dog to socialize, or just enjoy an afternoon in the backyard.

If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian - they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.