



# Tips for Safe Dog Park Visits

**Take your time entering!** When you arrive with your dog, stand outside the fence or in the small dog area, if it's available, and watch the play underway. Will your dog feel comfortable in this mix? Is your dog well matched in size with the other players today? Always err on the side of caution.

**Unleash your dog in the entryway, between the two gates,** so that she can move away easily if other dogs crowd her inside the park. If other dogs are crowding the gate, wait until the other dogs leave the gate area.

**If your dog seems edgy or uncomfortable, either leave or use the Small Dog Area as a transition space.** Some dogs gain confidence if they have time to size up the other players, blow off pent-up energy, or play with a single dog before joining the crowd.

**Focus on your dog at all times.** Your first responsibility is to keep your dog safe. By doing this, you can help ensure that the dog park visit is an enjoyable experience for other dogs and owners.

**Keep moving** while inside the park, and occasionally call your dog to you. Play a quick game or just give him a scratch and send him back to play. Avoid standing in a stationary group of people, as this can cause dogs to cluster in one place.

**If children—over four years of age only—are with you, monitor them, too.** Children may not run in the off-leash area and should not play with balls or other toys that will entice dogs. All children must be coached on what to do if a fight occurs: Walk—do not run—calmly and quietly away from it, even if your own dog is involved. (Every dog in the park will be aroused by a fight, and screaming kids could endanger themselves.)

A special note to owners of small dogs: A squeal from a stepped-upon dog or just a glimpse of a small animal running can be all it takes for some dogs to shift from play into predatory pursuit.

**Owners of small dogs are cautioned against taking them into the Large Dogs Area unless activity is very quiet there.**

**Avoid staying too long,** especially when the park is busy. Know your dog's limits. Tired dogs can be as volatile as tired children.