



Dog Park Misconceptions

- **My dog enjoys other dogs. The dog park is the best place for him to play with his own kind.**
Different breeds and types of dogs play differently. Two Labrador Retrievers will play very differently than two Cocker Spaniels. Sometimes different breeds of dog play very well together and other times their play is incompatible. Bully breeds tend to enjoy body slamming; Poodles however, may take offense at that type of play. Some dogs enjoy back and forth chase games, others like to roughhouse.

It can take only one bad experience to turn a social dog into a fearful dog. Conversely, rude behavior is quickly learned. Impolite dogs can be a bad influence on well-socialized dogs. You have no control over the “pack” that hangs out at the dog park, as they are not your dogs.

- **The dog park will give my small dog confidence!**
Small dogs, generally considered to be less than 20lbs, are not appropriate for dog parks unless there is an enclosed section especially for them. Unfortunately, because of their size, they may be intimidated, bullied, trampled and possibly seen as prey. Sadly, there are cases where dogs have become aroused in their play and attacked smaller dogs. If you have a small dog, consider how scary it must feel to have to stand up to a group of dogs that are overwhelmingly larger and stronger. Jack Russell Terriers are an exception to the small dog rule. They tend to have enough tenacity to hold their own at the dog park!
- **The dog park will teach my adult dog to enjoy playing with other dogs.**
Many adult dogs don't enjoy dog parks. In human terms, young children and adolescents tend to make friends quickly and easily. Mature adults are often more selective about who they spend time with and the activities they choose to take part in. For adult dogs, going to the dog park might be akin to a 45 year old person spending their free time at the elementary school playground!
- **The dog park is a good place to work on my dog's behavioral issues.**
A dog with special behavioral needs will not benefit from visits to the dog park. In fact, dog parks potentially make a behavior problem worse. The dog park is not the place to make your fearful dog more outgoing, your aggressive dog more friendly, or your reactive dog less reactive. A controlled environment is the place to deal with behavior issues and a dog park is usually anything but controlled.
- **My dog won't come back to me when I call him. A fenced in dog park is a safe place to let him frolic and play.**
Dogs who attend dog parks should have some basic manners training. A good recall is most important - to call your dog to you if unacceptable behavior breaks out and when it is time to leave the dog park. You should be able to gain control of your dog's behavior at any moment.
- **The dog park is the best place to socialize my puppy.**
Socializing your puppy is important. However, for many of the reasons already stated, dog parks are not the place to fulfill this need. Additionally, there is no way to be sure that other owners have vaccinated their dog so you could be unintentionally exposing your pup to illnesses and diseases at a time in your dog's life when he is most vulnerable.