



Conway Area Humane Society

Dog Park Etiquette

All friendly and well socialized dogs are welcome. Aggressive dogs are not allowed. The handler of any dog exhibiting aggressive or unruly behavior is required to immediately remove the offending animal. The owner/guardian is fully and completely responsible for the actions of their aggressive and or unruly dog.

APPROACHING THE DOG PARK

- All dogs must be kept on their leash until they are *inside the double gate*.
- The first gate must be closed before entering the second gate to ensure there is no chance that a dog can run out of the park.
- Unleash your dog in the double gate area before entering the park. A dog often feels vulnerable being on leash while other dogs around it are off leash. The leashed dog knows that it cannot maneuver freely and cannot get away if it wants to. This sense of vulnerability may lead to aggression.
- *Users already inside the park should call their dogs away from the gate until the new arrivals have entered.* It is difficult for a new arrival to enter the park if a wall of dogs is blocking the gate. Dogs are territorial creatures, and the boundaries of a territory are flash points for aggression. Once the dog is inside the territory, the chances for conflict are much less. If people are not calling their dogs to them when you are about to enter, you may ask them to call their dog, or stand there until their dog walks away.

INSIDE THE DOG PARK

- Proof of membership must be in the handler's possession.
- Know your dog's play style. Some dogs like a very rough-and-tumble style of play, with lots of growling, grabbing, tackling, and wrestling. Some dogs have a daintier style, with bowing and chasing but not much physical contact. Some dogs like to herd other dogs and may bark or nip at the other dogs. The important thing is to know what is normal for your dog, and what the warning signs are that your dog may be getting over-stimulated and may be in danger of crossing the line into aggression. It's also important to be sensitive to the other dogs with whom your dog is playing. You should always watch your dog closely and be prepared to intervene if the interaction seems to be getting out of hand or becoming too uncomfortable for any dog(s). If your dog seems to be "pestering" another dog who might be growing stressed or annoyed, intervene and direct your dog's attention elsewhere.
- *Understand canine communication.* Dogs that enjoy rough play may growl and snap as part of that play. Dogs may also snarl and/or snap to "set their limits" with other dogs - for example, to let another dog know that it is being too rough or too pushy.
- Dogs are programmed to be part of a pack, with some dogs being higher in the pack hierarchy (dominant) and others being lower in the hierarchy (submissive). Dogs have various ways by which they communicate their dominance to other dogs. This may include a stiff-legged posture with the head held up and back; raising the hackles on the back; raising the tail; or laying the head across another dog's shoulders or back. If you see two dogs exchanging dominant gestures with each other, watch carefully and be ready in case a fight is brewing.
- *Mounting ("humping") is often a way by which one dog expresses dominance over another. Do not allow your dog to mount another dog, as this behavior is very likely to lead to a fight.* Even if your dog means no harm, the other dog is very likely to take offense. Sometimes this can occur during play but watch the dogs carefully to see how each dog is responding.

- Respond promptly to aggressive behavior. It is very important to stay calm and not to scream when breaking up a fight.
- Dogs displaying significant aggression toward other dogs, or any aggression toward humans, must be leashed and removed from the park for the day. It is acceptable to remove a dog to the small side of the dog park if it is unoccupied and it was not significant aggression nor injury causing actions. This is not only for the safety of other park users. It can also help with the dog's own education. A dog soon realizes that aggressive behavior will cause it to be removed from park which can aide dogs in quickly learning to mind their manners.
- If a dog that displayed significant aggression is not removed by the owner, other dog park members can and should ask that the owner remove the dog for the day.
- You may find that your dog gets along better with certain dogs, or with certain types of dogs, than with others. You may want to avoid entering the park when there are dogs present with whom your dog has a problem.
- A dog that repeatedly displays aggressive behavior with a variety of dogs is not a good dog park candidate and should stop coming to the park.
- A dog that barks consistently should be removed from the dog park.
- It is required that dogs be spayed or neutered before coming to the dog park because intact males in particular are much more likely to get into fights with other male dogs.
- Dress for the mess- Do not overdress. No, it's not polite for dogs to jump on people, but it may happen. At the dog park you should expect dirt, mud, slobber, wet dogs, and yucky toys in your lap. Please know that grime is part of the scene.
- Dress your dogs for the mess—avoid using harnesses or dog clothes. During play, other dogs may grab onto harnesses or clothes which could result in injury to your dog.
- No children under 12 are allowed in the dog park. While greeting or playing, an overexcited dog may unintentionally knock over or injure a child. A dog who is afraid of children may react aggressively to a child's attempt to make friends. In rare cases, a dog may view a child as prey, or attempt to herd the child.
- No Rawhides, Food, Glass Containers or Smoking allowed inside the park.
- While you can bring your own dog toys like tennis balls or Frisbees®, make sure that no other dogs will be competing for them. Dogs may have adverse reactions to other dogs attempting to take toys.
- Always clean up after your own dog and any other waste you find. Trash receptacles and disposal bags are available for this purpose.
- Always keep your eyes and ears on your dog. Do not leave your dog unattended inside the park.