

Dog Park Safety

Keep your dogs safe while visiting dog parks

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Q. I would like to treat my dog to an afternoon at the dog park. How do I prepare him for this experience?

A. Most dogs love dog parks because they can run free (with your supervision) and play with other dogs without being constrained by their leashes. A dog park is a great place to practice your dog's socialization skills because he will be around so many different kinds of dogs and people. Check with your local parks department to find a listing of local dedicated dog parks.

Your dog should have a knowledge of basic requests (come, sit, stay) before you attempt to tackle the dog park. Voice control will be your most powerful tool once your dog is off his leash, so have a couple of practice sessions before you venture to the park. If you are unsure of how your dog will respond to this new form of freedom, try a test run at a local dog park with him on his leash just to see how he socializes. If you feel comfortable, turn him loose and watch the fun.

No matter your dog's skill level, always keep his leash in your pocket so you can tether him if he gets too rambunctious or gets involved in rough play. Bring along some treats and a collapsible water bowl and bottled water in case there are no water fountains available to fill his bowl.

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For more information about dog parks, pick up the June 2007 issue of DOG FANCY.