TOP TEN TIPS FOR A SAFE & FUN DOG PARK EXPERIENCE

1. **No small children** – the dog park can be dangerous for small kids. Playing dogs can knock them over. Not all dogs are socialized with children.

2. **Remove your dog’s leash, training collar, harness before entering the play yard** – dogs’ mouths can get caught during play.

3. **Create space at the gate for incoming dogs** – use your body to back up dogs at the gate so a new dog can enter peacefully. The gate is a common area for excitement, which can lead to conflict.

4. **Keep moving & keep watch** – walk around the park, especially while your dog gets settled, to help keep dogs from overly crowding your dog. You are your dog’s advocate and his keeper: be on the lookout for behavior or body language that needs your attention.

5. **Carry your leash in case you need it quickly** – a leash comes in handy if your dog needs a “time out”, or if you are involved in helping break up an altercation.

6. **Interrupt “play” before it becomes a problem** – learn what healthy dog play looks like. It should be balanced, with dogs taking turns chasing or wrestling. If a dog is overly rough with a participant that looks nervous, or if a “fun police” is trying to manage other dogs that are playing, be ready with your squirt bottle to interrupt. A quick squirt on the rear or flank usually does the trick. A squirt to the face is the most assertive correction; save it until you need it.


8. **Don’t mix small and large dogs** – not all large dogs are socialized with small dogs. This can be dangerous for the small dog.

9. **Leave dog and human food at home** – food is an extremely valuable resource to dogs and they may go to great lengths to acquire and defend it.

10. **Know your dog: not every dog is a dog-park dog** – the dog park is usually not fun or safe for un-spayed female dogs in heat, unneutered adult male dogs, senior dogs with pain or mobility issues, puppies younger than 4 months old, dogs that are reactive to humans or other dogs, extremely fearful dogs. The dog park is not the place to socialize un-socialized dogs. Work with a professional if you’re unsure about your dog’s socialability.

For more information about these tips, dog play behavior and body language, visit www.CompliantK9.com and click on Dog Park 101.