

Welcome to the “What is My Dog Saying at the Dog Park” Power Point presentation!

- To progress through the presentation, use the up-down arrows on your keyboard. If using a mouse, left-click to advance to the next slide. Right click and select “previous” to go back one slide. If your mouse has a scroll button, you may scroll forward or back.
- You may also advance using the enter or space key. The back space key will also take you back one slide.
- If you see this icon  there is a movie clip!

Click the  to play the video.

- A viewer will open separately from the slide – some are large, give them time to load. Newer operating systems will display a safety warning when you click on the video links – it’s a Microsoft security issue. It can be over-ridden, but leaves your system vulnerable.
- To exit, right click, select “end show” or hit the “escape” key.
- I designed WIMDS without sound so trainers can narrate over it as a training aid for their students.

What is My Dog Saying *at the Dog Park?*



Dog Park Etiquette & Safety **Dog Play: Canine Communication 101**

Carol A. Byrnes, CPDT-KA ~ Diamonds in the Ruff

“What is My Dog Saying – at the Dog Park?”

**1. Is My Dog A Dog Park
Dog?**

2. Etiquette at the Dog Park

3. Learning Dog Language

**4. How to handle a
“Bully”**



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A dog park is a great place to run!



- Dogs need exercise! Opportunities to run free and fast, chase balls, sniff and explore.
- The average walk on leash just doesn't fill the bill.
- Tired, satisfied dogs are more content and less likely to be destructive.

Are dog parks safe?

Dog parks can be wonderful.



But when the wrong dogs collide and owners aren't prepared, dog parks can also be dangerous.

Your dog's mental well-being and physical safety are in your hands.

- You bring your dog to the park to meet new friends and have fun.
- You don't take him there to learn unwanted behavior or have bad experiences – or to be a bad experience for another dog!

This presentation will help you make sure your dog has a safe and successful time at the dog park.

The dog park is not a good choice for all dogs.

Not every dog is a “dog park dog”.



- Uncomfortable dogs are often targeted by bullies. It's like they have a “kick me” sign or a bull's eye on their backs.
- Shy dogs may be more comfortable in the small dog area.
- Your dog is not a “bad dog” if she simply doesn't enjoy “playing” with unfamiliar dogs at the dog park.

**Many dogs do not enjoy being surrounded by space invaders.
Does your dog really think this environment is “fun”?**

You may want your dog to be a dog park dog, but does your dog?

- **Your dog should truly enjoy the company of dogs**, not just tolerate it. He may prefer quality time with just you!
- **Normal dogs don't get along with all dogs**, just like you don't get along with all people.
- **Symphony or mosh pit?**
Dogs have their own personal play style. Some prefer chase over wrestle. They will tell rowdy dogs to back off if they are pounced upon.



Stranger danger!

- Dogs who are “fine” with dogs at home may not be fine with all the dogs at the park.

Your dog is interacting with dogs he doesn't know.



- Even a dog who has other dogs living at home with whom he plays well, won't automatically be good with unfamiliar dogs of varying sizes, temperaments and social experience at the park.



- **The dog park is not a good place to socialize young puppies.** Choose a well-run puppy class instead.
- Avoid public parks, especially dog parks, until they have completed their vaccinations.
- Older pups should start in the small dog area on quiet days. Choose their friends carefully!
- Young, inexperienced dogs are often targeted by bullies.

A bad experience could impact a young or shy dog for the rest of its life.

***“A dog park is for
socializing, not for
socialization”***

– Pat Miller, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, CDBC

“It’s a terrific place for a dog who understands how to read and respond appropriately to the body language of other dogs. It’s a great place for a dog who enjoys the company of other dogs and likes to engage in appropriate play.

It is not a good place for a dog who is socially challenged.”

- Whole Dog Journal – Volume 14, No. 6

Don't bring a dog with social issues to "get over" his problem.



Not appropriate for the dog park:

- Aggressive dogs.
- Very shy dogs.
- Young puppies.
- Dogs who are possessive of toys, food or you.
- Unvaccinated, injured or ill dogs.
- Dogs in season.

He'll more likely get worse, not better.

Is your dog's behavior around dogs improving from his park experiences?

- **Leash frustration.** Dogs who bark in the car and strain at their leashes all the way to the gate may be practicing being frustrated and out of control. Not to mention they are being inadvertently rewarded for pulling on lead!
- **Learned Aggression.** Dogs who rush in too fast and get decked for it, may learn to be defensive – they start looking for trouble instead of a friend.

Your dog gets better at ANY thing he practices.

A Happy Day at the Park!

- There are simple things we can do to make a good day at the park for all
- Everybody should be a team player
 - Remind others if need be of how to be a good citizen at the park!

Read the rules – and follow them.





Be polite



- Scoop the poop – your dog's and anyone else's.
- See someone who needs a bag? Share!
- Toss all garbage – yours and anyone else's.
- Is someone else's dog running to you for help? Help him out!

**Feces and garbage may carry bacteria and parasites.
Keep the park clean!**

Pack wisely

- Bring poop bags
- Bring water & a portable bowl
- Keep a first aid kit in your car
- Bring your cell phone and the number of the nearest veterinarian/emergency clinic



Bring a towel !

SAFETY FIRST!

- Make sure your dog is in good health, vaccinated and free of parasites.
- Your dog should be safe with dogs & people, large and small, and enjoy the company of other dogs.
- On your first visit, choose a quiet time of day when the park is not crowded and hang out in less-populated parts of the park. Let your dog sniff and explore and meet a few quiet, appropriate dogs.
- Your dog's safety is paramount. Your first duty is to your dog when inside the dog park. Leave the kids and your Kindle at home.
- **Close the gates behind you!**

Leave young children at home.

Dividing your attention parenting dogs and young children at the park, can be a risk to both.



**Monitor child/dog interactions closely. Never trap a dog for a child to pet.
Running, squealing children are a dangerous mix in the dog park!**

No chain collars, prong collars or shock collars in the park.



Remove harnesses and seat belt straps, too.

Dogs can become tangled and panic. They are next to impossible to separate without serious human and dog injury.

No females in season!



Many intact males can be testy with other males.

Don't bring your picnic into the dog park.



High value treats are not a good idea in a crowd of dogs.

If you know your dog is likely to guard food, toys, or you, he is probably not appropriate for the dog park.

SUPER-vision: **Keep your dog in sight at all times.**

- Monitor his behavior. He may be “fine” but is the dog he is playing with having fun, too?
- Think of the park as a place to go for a walk. Don’t stand and chat; walk and visit.

Keep moving!

- **Pay attention to your dog**
- not your phone, your book, or texting your friends.



Before you go in, scan for safety.

- Watch and listen.
- Are these dogs your dog should play with?
- If you note a bully on the playground, wait, or come back another day.



ENTERING THE PARK:

Let's begin with a few dog park basics:

- Keep your dog on lead until safely inside the gated area.
- One dog family in the pass-thru at a time.
- Stay back from the gate until others have exited. Close the gates behind you!
- Wait to go in if there are dogs congregated at the gate.
- Move away from the gate and steer clear of heavily congregated areas – ***keep moving.***



The safest parks have divided areas for large & small dogs

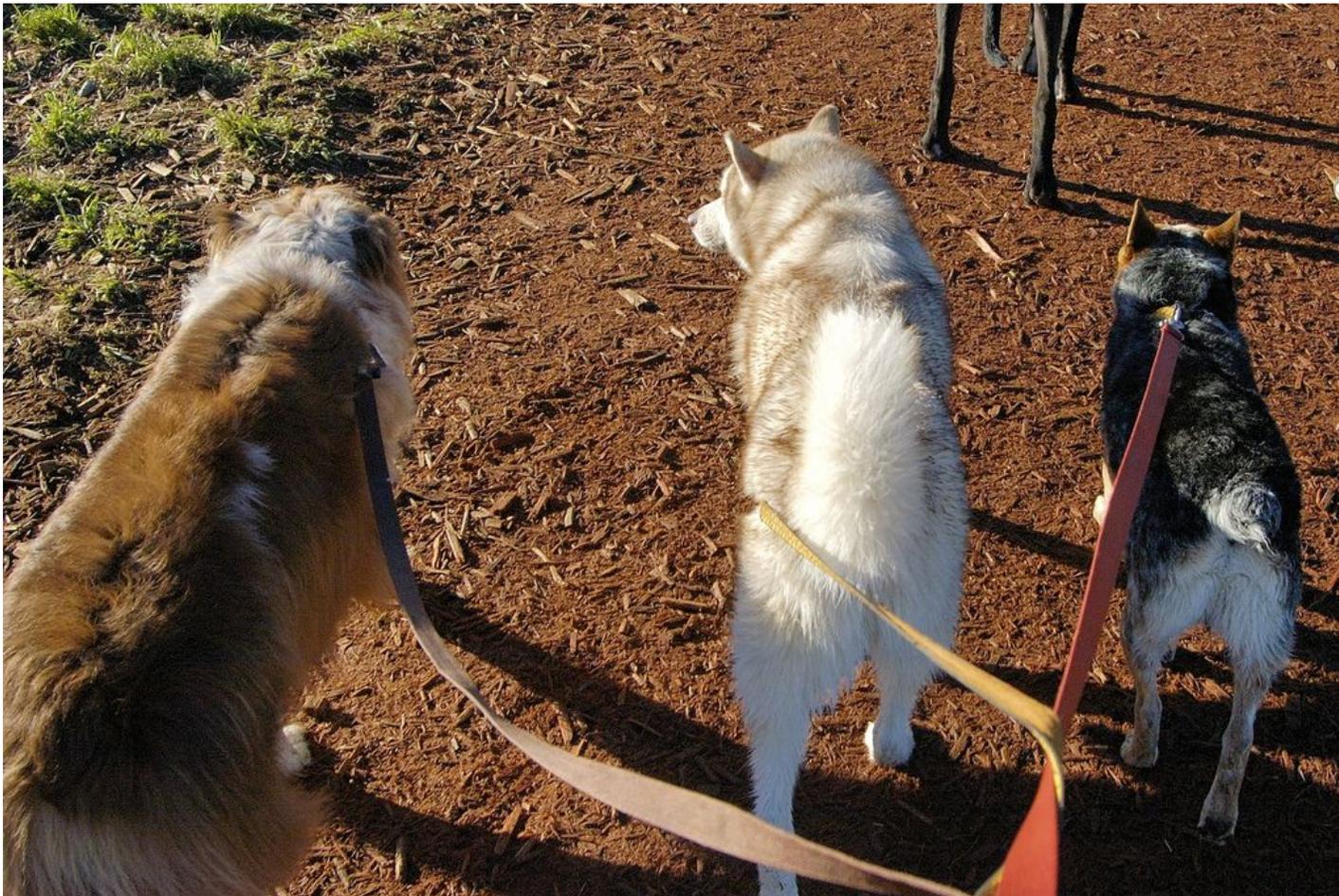
- Large dogs belong in the large dog area.
- Small dogs belong in the small dog area.
- Your small dog may love big dogs, but some large dogs may see your small dog as a squirrel or a squeaky toy.
- Collisions could result in broken bones.
- Small dogs or young puppies in the large dog area could result in tragedy.



Most little dogs don't know they are small!

Leashes on until safely inside the gated area.

Dogs must remain on leash until inside the dog park fence and re-leashed when leaving the gated area by city ordinance.



To leash, or not to leash ... is not a question at the dog park.

- **Leashes off** inside the park. The leashed dog becomes overwhelmed when surrounded by unfamiliar dogs.
- On leash, he doesn't have the option to escape if he feels threatened, or leave when he is "done" saying hello.



**The result is miscommunication
and a defensive response.**

***The dog who acts out is not a bad
dog, it is a dog asking for help out of
a potentially dangerous situation.***

Social Protocol

- The first few minutes is a period of introduction, arousal, attaining social equilibrium.

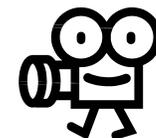
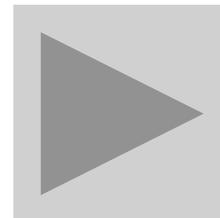
It is stressful.

- **The gate is a hot spot.**

Trouble is likely there.
Wait for the gate to clear, avoid walking straight into crowded, high traffic areas.



Video – traffic jam at the gate:



What are our dogs saying?

- Paying attention to all dogs body language can help diffuse a bad situation at the park.
 - How is my dog behaving?
 - How are other dogs interacting?

Red flags

- **High tails are red flags.**
The higher and stiffer the tail, the higher the arousal.
- **Stiff bodies, tense movements.**
Arousal often tips over into aggression.
- **Dogs hunched, slinking, crouching, hiding, running to their owners for help.**
General avoidance is a red flag.
- **Hot pursuit.** Stalking in ambush. Ganging up on smaller, weaker dogs.
- **Vocalization** – angry barking or growling from dogs -or their owners.
People correcting other people's dogs is a bad sign.
- **Owners not stepping in when needed** – or absent. As well as owners constantly micromanaging when they don't need to.



Wait until troublemakers leave. Or come back another day!

Our goal is to help you identify red flags as well as appropriate signals in canine communication.



REMEMBER!

*Every moment you are in the park,
you are your dog's advocate, his life guard.*

Don't let him down when he needs your help!

Toys: Fun ? Or bones of contention ?



How much does your dog want to keep his ball?

Protectiveness of something of value is normal dog - and human - behavior! What would you do if someone started going through your wallet? Ask nicely? Warn them (growl)? What if they didn't stop? Would you snap at them? Snatch it away? Bite them?

Play safely!

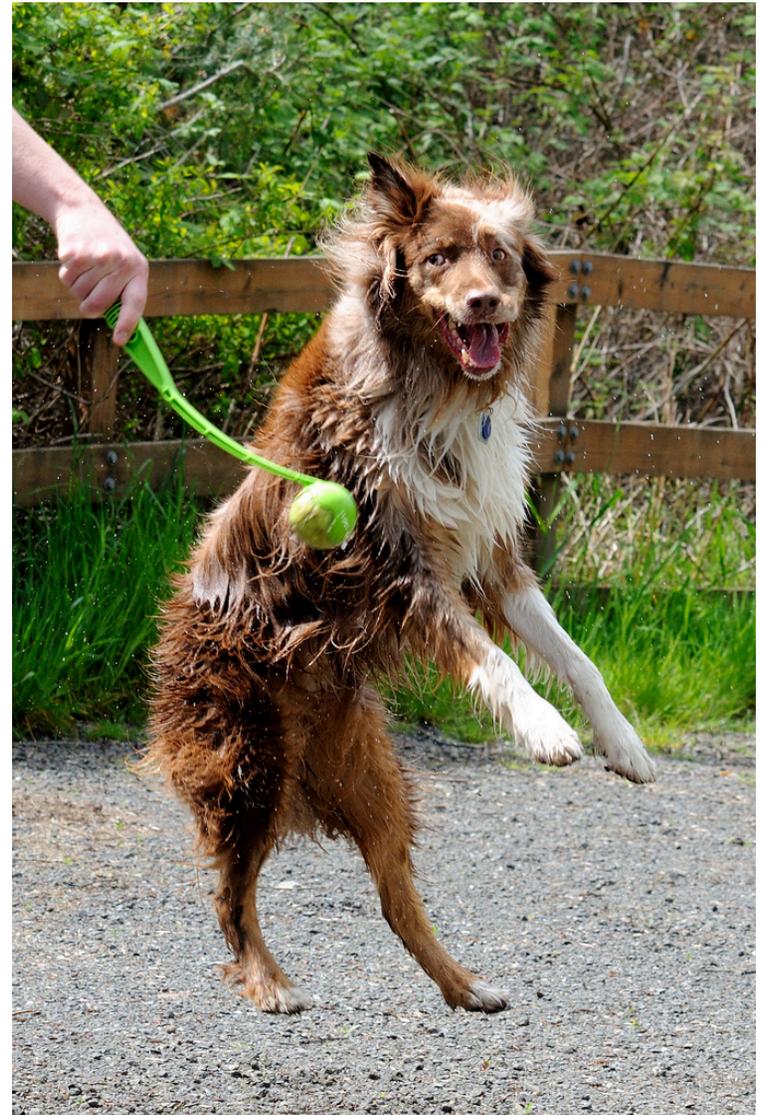
Competitive play can quickly spiral into a fight.



Play fetch in open areas away from crowds, or save those games for the privacy of your own backyard.

Don't throw his ball into a crowd of dogs.

One ball, five dogs and a race to get to it first – this could go poorly.



**Beware of the dog who is poised to jump the dog chasing the ball.
Change locations or wait until he moves on to throw your ball.**

Canine Communication 101

Knowing what your dog and other dogs are saying can mean the difference between a great day at the dog park, and a bad one.



Dogs signal comfort level and intent through body language.

What would these phrases look like?

- “I’d like to meet you.”
- “I’d like you to leave me alone.”
- “I’d like to play.”
- “You’re playing too rough.”
- “You’re too close to my stuff.”
- “You’re scaring me.”

Canine Communication 101

“I’d like to play.”

Soft expression, relaxed jaws, play face. >



“I’d like to meet you.”



“I’d like you to leave me alone.”

< Look-away, lip lick, ears back, avoidance.

Uh-oh.

“You’re playing too rough.”

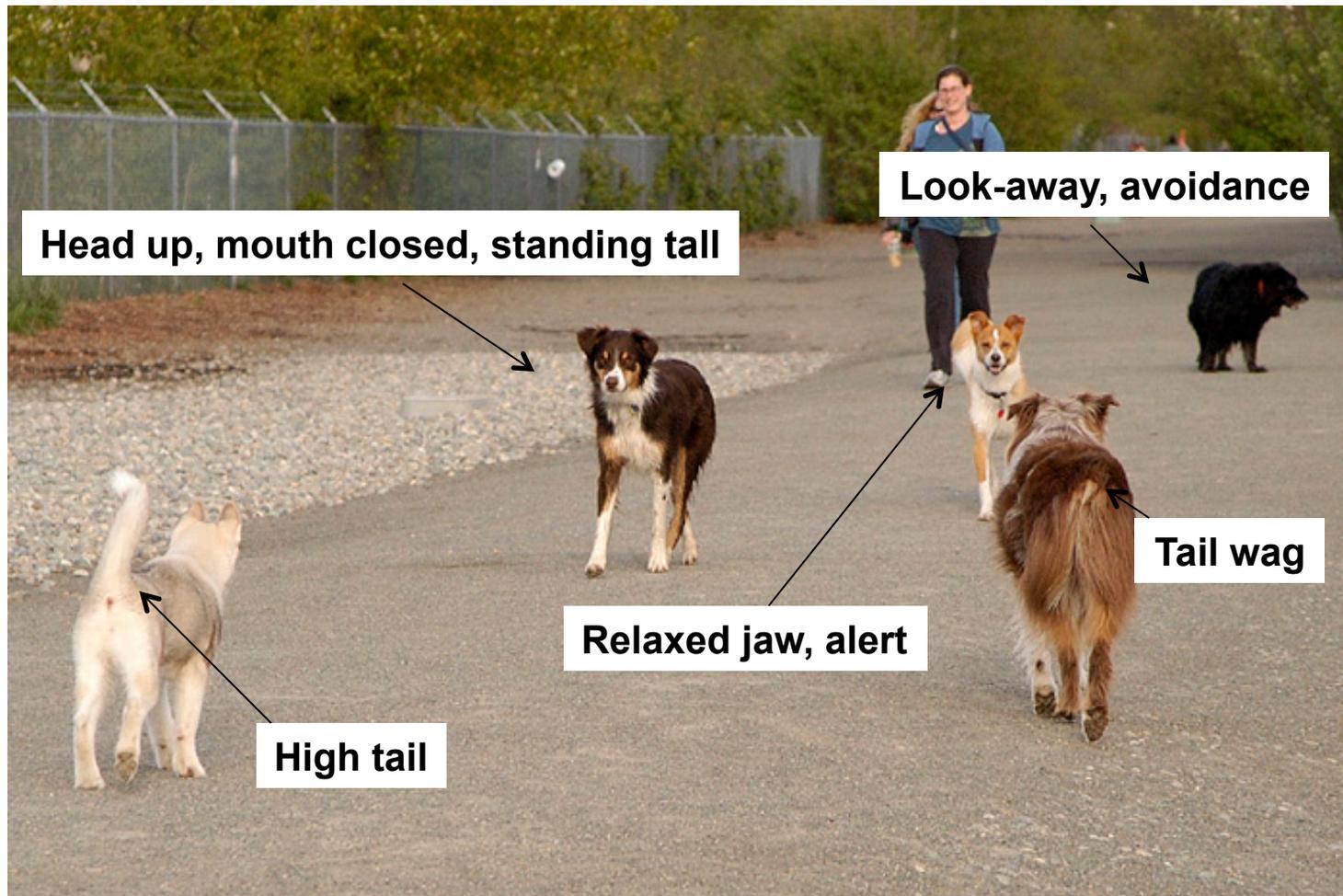


“You’re too close to my stuff.”

“You’re scaring me.”



Dogs begin to size each other up and communicate their intentions from a distance.



A dog signals intent and stress level in many ways:

- Weight shift
- Blinking, licking, yawning, sniffing
- Looking – or looking away.
- Mouth open or closed, corners forward or back
- Posture, tenseness of face/body muscles
- Bend or stiffness of elbow
- Speed and direction of movement



The most SUBTLE body language signals carry great meaning.

- An almost imperceptible shift of weight
- Change in breathing
- Tenseness of muscles
- Squinting eyes, blinking

A few 'words' in a sentence of dog language.

Danger signs:

- High tail, tense muscles, standing tall.
- Stillness, mouth closed, direct stare.
- Strong focus, staring, stalking
- Relentless pursuit, targeting or ganging up on small/shy dogs
- Hall monitoring, social harassment
- High arousal, intensity
- “Fun” at the expense of another dog’s comfort



Stiff, upright, tense, high tails



Tension, high arousal.

Friendly wags are broad, loose and horizontal.



Vertical play

This level of sparring could easily turn into a fight.



Interrupt any “fun” at the expense of another dog’s comfort.

This is often a problem when dogs form a “pack” (often dogs from the same household) & gang up on a third dog.



How do I know when to step in?

- When is it time to step in?
- What to do in case of a dog fight?
- Incident Protocol Form



- Ears flip back, tail drops
- Back rounds, body lowers, head drops
- Looks for an escape, runs to owner for help, hides under something, goes belly up

Signs of distress



- Whale eye
- Licks lips, looks away
- Yawns
- Stress panting
- Hackles (hair stands up along spine)

Weight shift

- **Caution**
- **Politeness**
- **Calming Signal**
- **Play invitation**
- **Deference**





Yawning

A measure of
anxiousness,
indecision or
conflict.



Sometimes a yawn is just a yawn.
Tired dogs yawn at the end of a long day.

**But if the yawn is in response
to social pressure,
it's probably a calming signal.**

**A yawn could be considered an
exaggerated lip lick.**





Can your dog depend on you?



**Uncomfortable
pup runs to
owner for help**

**Intercept the forward
pup - allow the shy one
the space he needs!**



Don't trap your dog by grabbing his collar or hugging him into your legs.

A trapped dog cannot escape. If other dogs don't heed his request for space, his only option is to drive the invader away by snarling and snapping to create the space he needs.

If your dog runs to you for assistance, help him out!

Move away to increase space and safety or step between your dog and the space invader to block his approach.





Dogs use body blocking –

It could be a person or a thing that creates separation and safety.

^ Like a soccer goalie, this handler uses body blocking to give his pup a bit of relief from the invasive pup's advances.



Dogs use splitting – and so can you.

Running interference when an interaction becomes too intense.



Casually insert yourself between dogs.

Don't step into a dog fight !! This is preventive to diffuse tension, not to split up a serious altercation.

He runs to you for support and then turns to aggressively take them all on.

If your dog runs to you, but your presence (back-up) gives him just enough confidence to escalate into an aggressive display, show him what to do:

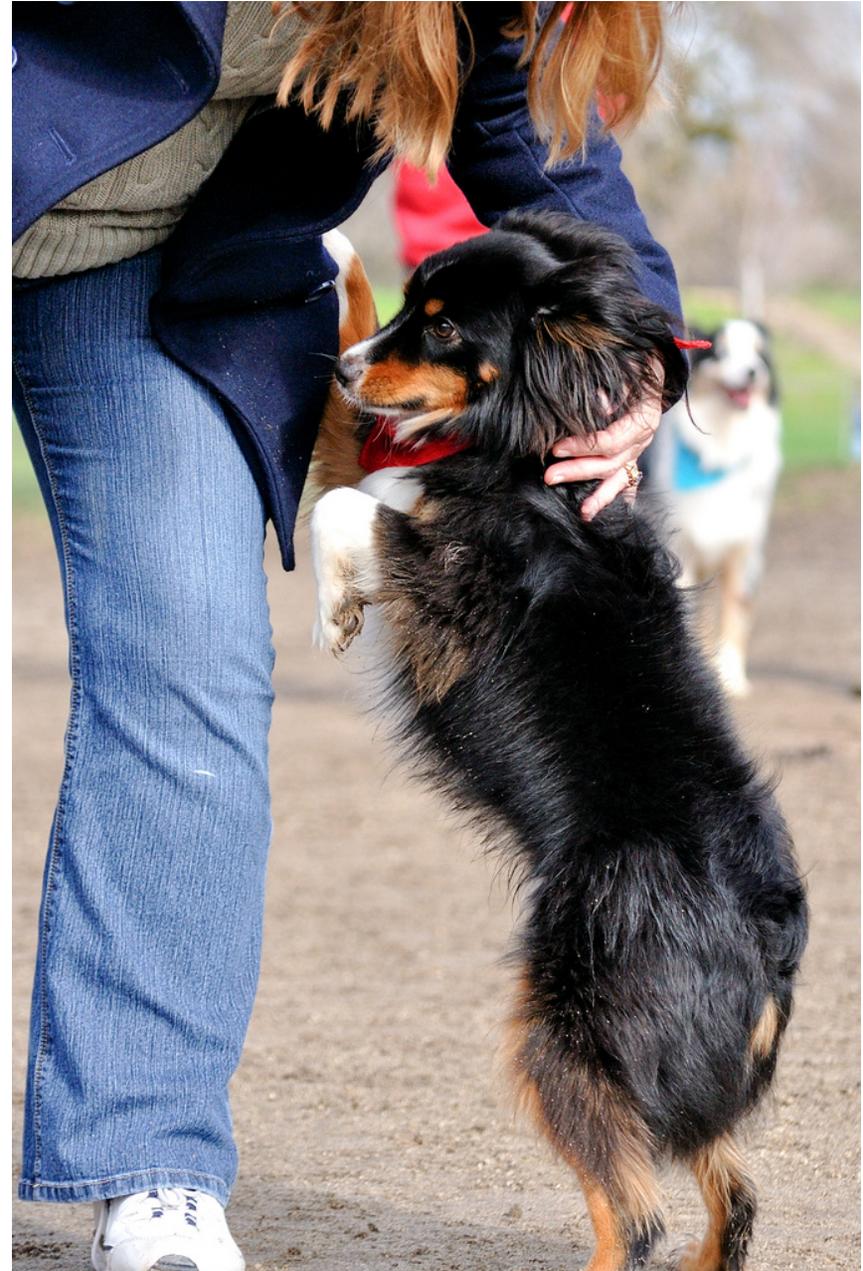
Move away.

Don't take hold of the collar to try to pull your dog away, just leave.

“Let's go!” – *and praise him for following!*

You are your dog's life guard.

- Don't throw him in the deep end to sink or swim. If his ears flip back and his tail drops, come to his aid!
- He needs to trust that you are his safety net.
- If he is uncomfortable, move to the “shallow end of the pool” – a quiet part of the park, away from the crowd.
- If he's not having fun, don't make him stay. If you don't like roller coasters, I won't make you ride one!



Ask other owners for help

HOW you ask is important - be calm and supportive.

Owners may become defensive regarding complaints about their dog.

“Could you call your dog, please?”

“It’s okay, my dog is friendly - he’s just playing.”

“I know, but my dog is a scaredy cat, he doesn’t know that – could you please call your dog? Thank you!”

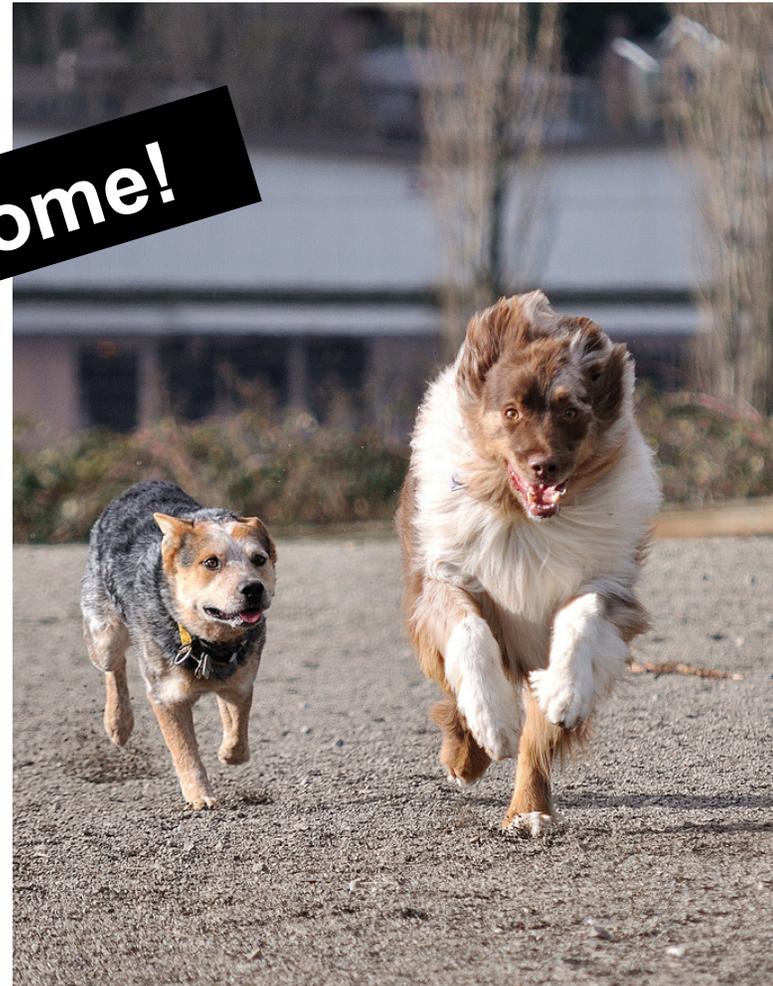
Good dog parenting

- Watch the dogs he is playing with. If either dog is not having fun – if anyone's tail drops and ears flip back – interrupt and redirect.
- Your dog needs guidance to learn appropriate manners in the park.
- Do not allow your dog to bully others or have fun at the expense of another dog's comfort. Interrupt. Take a break to calm down.

**A truly safe dog park dog
keeps track of its owner & comes when called**



Come!



Joyfully, the first time!

Your dog will be safer, and so will all the dogs in the park, if you can call them out of a tricky situation.

Practice at home!

- **Call often and reward generously with a high value food reward, a game with a favorite toy, or any activity that your dog loves.**
- **Every time you call your dog and reward him well, you increase the speed and likelihood of future reliable responses.**
- **Avoid calling to anything your dog finds disappointing or unpleasant, or he will learn to avoid you when you call.**
- **Congratulate your dog every time he checks in.**
- **Call, praise and then send your dog off to go play frequently, so your dog doesn't think that the only time he hears "come" is when it's time to go home.**

NOTE: *Avoid giving out treats to other dogs, or even to your own dog, while other dogs are gathered – you don't want to start a conflict, competing over you as a food source.*

Even when it's going well, continue to monitor arousal levels closely!

Just like kids on a play ground,
what starts out fun could end up in tears!



Cooperative play ^
side-by-side sharing.

*^ Note: high tail and hair
raised on spine of brown dog.*

Red flag!

v Competitive exchange, arousal rising
Dogs face-off – “it’s mine!”



Hackles raised
eyebrows lowered

When in doubt, call him out!

If a fight breaks out

Unfamiliar dogs of varied experience levels and temperaments meeting off leash ... it's not surprising that there will be spats and even serious altercations. Sooner or later you will see a fight.

- **Remain calm.** Kicking and screaming will only make matters worse. Some times just the action of humans surrounding the fight will disperse it. Get their attention and move away.
- **Avoid grabbing collars.** Dogs reflexively bite anything that grabs them in the heat of a fight – even their owners.
- **Insert an inanimate object between the dogs.** Water, citronella spray, lawn chair, beach bag, garbage can or ?
- **The safest way to separate dogs is the “wheel barrow” technique.** Get behind the dog and grab the hind legs. In one smooth move, lift upward and quickly swing the dog away from the fray. Don't lean over the dogs. Lean back and keep your face away from the action. Let centrifugal force propel the dog away. Let go quickly if the dog wheels around.

Remember, you are more likely to be injured than the dogs are.

Check for injuries after every outing.

- Ticks
- Foxtails & burrs
- Scrapes or punctures
- Injuries to pads of feet or torn nails
- Head shaking, scratching, licking, sneezing
- Limping, sore muscles

Play is hard work!

At the end of the day, you and your dog should leave the park smiling.

- Monitor stress levels – watch for red flags.
- Stay in touch with your dog - keep him in sight at all times.
- Body block to protect your dog if he runs to you for help. Don't grab your dog to "save" him. Intercept and redirect the incoming space invader to give your dog room to escape.
- Call your dog and move away from troublesome activity any time things get tense or your dog seems uncomfortable.
- **Praise for all great choices and good manners!**



Thank you!

- For being a responsible and caring dog owner who makes your dog's life as enriched as possible.
- For being a dog owner who wants to learn all you can to make a day at the park a safe and fun experience.
- For being your dog's advocate and safe place to turn to if he needs help at the park.
- For being ready and willing to leave the park and try another day instead of "seeing how it goes" and risking a bad experience.



Please share this information!

Discuss what you learned.

- Chat with other dog owners at the park.
- Recognize people who are attending to their dog's needs and being their dog's advocate.
- Compliment dog owners for the good things they do. Don't chastise them for mistakes. People don't learn from uninvited criticism.

Let's make our dog parks a great -and safe place- to run!

Summary

- Well-socialized, trained dogs are safer dogs!
- You are your dog's safe place – his port in a storm.
- Not all dogs are “dog park dogs” - if your dog isn't enjoying the experience – take him home!



What is Required to be a BCBP Member?

- Completed Application on File
- Completed Orientation Presentation
- Up To Date Shots
- Review and Retain copy of BCBP Rules and Regulations
- Paid Fees
- BCBP Tags worn while at the Park
- Review and Retain Incident Resolution Protocol
- Signed Waiver and Release Form
- Nelson County Residents must have Nelson County License tag
- Completed Sign Off Sheet

BCBP Contact Information

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To husband Dana for all his help, patience and technical support and son Travis for video taping a day at the dog park.