DOG PARK DOS AND DON’TS
MITTSY VOILES & ALLI JERGER
Dog Park...Now?
Dog Park...Later?
Dog Park...Never?

Is my dog right for a dog park?
Dog Park...Now?

✓ Up to date on vaccines
✓ Solid recall
✓ History of positive social interactions
✓ Is physically able
Dog Park...Later?

✓ May not be up to date on vaccines
✓ OK recall
✓ Questionable history of positive social interactions
✓ May have some physical challenges
Dog Park...Never?

✓ Is reactive around other dogs
✓ Is fearful of other dogs
✓ Is sick
✓ Not physically able
✓ Does not come when called
Picking a Dog Park

How to find the perfect park
Public Parks

✓ Visit before taking your dog
  ✓ How big is the park?
  ✓ Do they have different areas for different sized dogs?
  ✓ Visit during the time(s) you plan on going

✓ Review the rules
  ✓ Are there posted rules?
  ✓ Do people seem to be following them?

✓ Check the reviews
Private Parks

✓ Review the rules
✓ Check the reviews
✓ Visit
It’s time to go to the Dog Park!

Before you go...
It’s Go Time!

Stuff to bring
✓ Leash
✓ Mobile phone
✓ Poop bags
✓ Water
✓ Treats?

Stuff to leave at home
✓ Prong collars, electric fence collars
✓ Strollers
✓ Distractions
It’s Go Time!

Before you go
✓ Sniffing walks
✓ Other activities to burn off the “fizz”
✓ Quick health check
It’s time to go to the Dog Park!

Yay! Dog Park!
Oh Boy! Oh Boy! Oh Boy! DOG PARK!!!!!

Arriving
✓ Pick the right area for your dog’s size
✓ Pick the right gate
✓ Pick the right time
✓ Leash ‘em up!

You’re In!
✓ Release the hounds!
✓ Mobile phone...put it away
✓ Keep it moving
✓ Keep your leash with you
✓ Avoid marshy areas
Dog Park Behaviors

The good, the bad, and the ugly...
Watch for doggy body language

- **PLAYFUL**
  - wiggly
  - ears forward and up
  - tail high
  - weight forward
  - mouth open
  - play bow

- **ALERT/ARoused**
  - ears back or sideways
  - body low
  - weight even
  - mouth closed
  - stare

- **APPEASING**
  - ears back
  - body low
  - weight backward
  - “whale eye”
  - tail tucked

- **FEARFUL**
  - body low
  - tense
  - ears back
  - flush to head

*Illustrations by: DESIGN LAB CREATIVE STUDIO*
The good...
The good...
Engaging play: The classic play bow

Rear higher than front, elbows bent.

The bend in the elbow is an extremely important message.
The bad...
The bad...
IS YOUR DOG SCARED?

HELLO
HELLO!

Please leave
me alone.

Look who’s
here!

LOW
BODY POSTURE

LOOKING
AWAY

TAIL TUCKED

PINNED EARS

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IS YOUR DOG PUSHY?

TAIL UP
ALIGNED FORWARD STANCE
EARS UP
DIRECT STARE

(GASP)
He's staring at me.

sniff sniff

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Give dogs plenty of space to get through gates at the park
People standing still or petting other dogs can accidentally produce conflict

Keep moving, greet briefly, pay attention to the body language of the dogs around you
Some dogs are good at conflict dispersal

...and some dogs go a bit overboard and ruin all the fun. If a dog is regularly splitting up normal play, that dog may be too stressed or overstimulated by the dog park.
There's sniffing, and then there's SNIFFING

A little greeting sniff is fine, and normal for dogs to learn about each other. Sniffing repeatedly and for long periods of time, even by a friendly dog, can be intimidating and harassing. A little redirection can help.
Shadowing is social harassment. Dogs following each other are not always having fun.
The ugly...
When the ugly happens...

- Pick up your dog?
- Avoid grabbing the collars
- Wheelbarrow/back of dog
- Butt...butt...butt
What’s happening here?
What’s happening here?
What’s happening here?
Any Questions?