

# Homeward Bound Golden Retriever Rescue

## Golden Rule Training

### Dog Park Safety

#### What are the Pros and Cons of a Dog Park?

Visiting a dog park can be an excellent way for your dog to exercise and socialize with other animals in a natural environment. For people who live in a large city, a dog park may be the only exposure your dog has to a large grassy area and can be the only conveniently located area for your pet to run and play.

However, there is a darker side to these canine playgrounds. Injuries to dogs and people alike can occur due to the ignorance or actions of other dog owners. Homeward Bound is very cautious about dog parks and generally do not recommend them, they may not be safe. You know your dog, but you do not know all other dogs; they may not be well mannered or friendly.

Do not assume all dogs are there to play and play well with others. Most people are not prepared to protect their dog if another dog attacks them. There are always signs if there is going to be an altercation, but we do not always know how to read the signs before it is too late. If you do take your dog to a dog park, please pay attention at all times, and stay close.

If you have a reactive dog, or a very shy/fearful dog, do not take them to a dog park! This may be too stressful for them and their behavior can regress or can cause a dog fight. Some dogs will pick on shy and submissive dogs, and fearful dogs can become overly stressed.

#### Follow the Rules

Any dog park you go to should have clearly posted rules. Be sure to read and follow them. If for any reason your dog park doesn't have rules, there are some practical guidelines to follow for health, safety and courtesy. Below you can find some of these common-sense rules.

1. While at the park, do not leave your dog unattended! Many people read books, talk to others and do not pay attention. When you are there, please stay close and pay attention to your dog and others in the park. It is always a good idea to understand canine body language so you can identify any posturing that may turn into a fight.
2. Make sure your dog has a valid license and tag for where you live as well as being current on all of his vaccinations. This ensures everyone's safety. There are just too many people and too many dogs in one location to risk it. Vaccines aren't just about keeping your dog from getting sick; they help prevent your dog from transmitting disease as well.
3. Don't bring puppies younger than 6 months to the dog park. They won't have had all the necessary inoculations that make them safe to play with other animals. If you must bring children, supervise them very closely. Never bring small children or infants. The dog park is a place for dogs to play with each other. A child can easily be overpowered by one or more dogs that feel threatened.

4. Do not bring an unaltered dog to the park. Spayed or neutered dogs are recommended for everyone's safety; hormones may cause some dogs to be too interested in others and cause a problem.
5. Keep your dog on his leash until you get to the off-leash area. Do not leave your dog's leash on him in the off-leash area because this can make him a target to the other dogs.
6. If your dog becomes unruly or plays rough, leash him and leave immediately.
7. Do not smoke or eat while at the Dog Park. Cigarette butts are not only poisonous to dogs but are a choking hazard as well. Bringing food just opens yourself up to having every single in your face while you are trying to eat. If you encounter a no-so-well trained dog, you could lose more than just your sandwich.

Before you head off to the dog park, make sure the park you are visiting a park for dogs. Designated dog parks should be completely enclosed with a double gate fence. A good dog park will also have a water fountain (for the dogs), poop bags or scoopers, a trash can with a secure lid, and posted rules to follow. Do some online research to find a dog park near you and read reviews by other dog owners. Remember to follow the rules and watch your dog closely.

## **Resources**

*[www.DogPark.com](http://www.DogPark.com)*

*[www.Animal.Discovery.com](http://www.Animal.Discovery.com)*