



## A Good Visit Starts at the Gate

How you and your dog enter and exit the holding area can set the tone for your visit. Here are some tips to ensure your dog's introduction goes smoothly.

- Make sure both gates are shut when you enter or exit the holding area. If you have children with you, double check that they have closed the gates.
- Only one permit holder and their dog(s) should be in the holding area at one time. Dogs are more likely to get into a scuffle in an enclosed area than in the open.
- If possible, remove your dog's leash in the holding area. If your dog is still leashed when you open the gate and other dogs run up to greet him, it can place your dog at a disadvantage. The leash can make your dog feel defensive and nervous when other dogs rush up to check out the new guy. Off leash, he can move out in the open and greet the other dogs on his own terms.
- Most dogs do their business within a few minutes of entering the park. You may want to grab a bag at the gate so you don't have to walk back later. Once your dog has gone and you have scooped his poop, you can both get on with greeting your friends and enjoying the rest of your visit!



## Dog Behavior: This is Normal!

### Check out the new kid!

Dogs are social animals and need to know where everyone fits in with the "pack." When a new dog arrives, the first few minutes are a transition period while they all determine how the new dog fits in. There will likely be rear-end sniffing, posturing, possibly even growling or a curled lip, but things will calm down quickly. Unless your dog is truly terrified, it is best to let the dogs work it out.

### Let's play!

Dog play is quite physical. Chasing, wrestling, even chewing on each others' faces while making fearsome noises is normal. As long as both dogs are enjoying it, let them play.

### Leave me alone!

Occasionally fights do break out. While they sound ferocious, these don't usually last long or cause injury and will usually stop on their own. You may want to walk your dog away for a time-out afterwards. Unless a dog is a known aggressor, all-out fights are rare when two dogs meet on neutral territory.

# The “Small Dog Area”

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Perhaps you have wondered if anyone ever uses that small, wedge-shaped area at the front of the park called the “Small or Shy Dog Area.” While this enclosure can be used for small dogs, that is certainly not its only purpose.

The first important point is that small dogs do not *have* to be kept in this area. Many little dogs can more than hold their own with the big guys.

So if little dogs don’t always need it, who does? Well, it is an excellent way to gradually introduce a new dog to the park. The dog can spend some time getting used to the sights and sounds of other dogs, even sniff noses through the fence, before venturing into the main area. In addition, any dog can go into the small area if he becomes scared or overwhelmed.

Another appropriate use of “the wedge” is as a cooling down area after an altercation. Dogs can remain “pumped up” after a fight, and a time-out can help cool tempers (and not just the dogs!).

Any dog can have a day where, for whatever reason, he feels like taking on the world and insists on nipping, mounting, or otherwise imposing himself on other dogs. In this case, some time in the small area may be warranted.

Finally, the small area can be used for training or otherwise working with an individual dog away from distractions.

In short, perhaps we should think of this area more as an “adjustment area” than simply an enclosure for small dogs.

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## No Food Please — For Dogs or People

Permit holders should not bring food inside the dog field, for obvious reasons. First of all, you would become the object of attention of almost every dog in the park. You would not enjoy your food, and a dog may get hold of something it shouldn’t have. There are picnic tables outside the fence where you are welcome to enjoy your food before entering the dog field.

Some people want to bring dog treats into the park, but this is also not a good idea. Again, you run the risk of being jumped on and “hounded” by the dogs. In addition, dogs can become aggressive toward one another in the presence of food. Please leave treats at home, or take your dog into the “small dog area” if you want to use treats for training your dog.

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## Dogs and Children— And Safety

If you bring children to the dog field, please remember to monitor their activities. To avoid potential problems, parents should remind their children of the following:

- Never pet a strange dog unless the owner says it’s o.k.
- Don’t run around waving your arms and screaming. This can stimulate a dog’s chase instinct, and you may get nipped or knocked down.
- Sit on a bench and watch the dogs. That is the safest place you can be other than outside the park.
- Don’t bring kid toys into the park. Dogs can’t tell the difference and may try to take them.

And remember, babies in strollers are right at dog level; probably not a great idea.

**A friendly reminder:  
Your permit tag must be  
visible at all times.**



This park district rule makes it easier for park personnel to do their job. The brightly colored lanyard is visible from a distance so someone can be easily identified as a permit holder.