



“It Starts In Parks”

Prevent an accident before it happens:

- A. POSTURE:** Dog body language can communicate fear, hostility, or submission. Learn to read and respond to your dog’s posture and body language.
- B. PACKING:** Several dogs packed together can lead to trouble. Prevent packing behavior by leading your dog away from the group to a neutral area.
- C. POSSESSION:** Whether it’s you, a toy, or a treat, dogs will protect what’s theirs. Food, either dog or human, is not permitted in the dog park. Remain alert when bringing toys to the park and consider not bringing these items.
- D. PROVOKING:** if your dog is annoying or provoking other dogs or people and requires a lot of attention, it’s time to leave the park and return another day.

Dogs that have been declared dangerous or aggressive are prohibited. Dogs showing aggression towards people and/or other dogs, as determined by Parks Recreation and Conservation personnel, will be removed from the park.

Cooperation between owners is expected and required.

An owner, age 16 years or older, must be present and supervise the dog at all times and must be solely responsible for the actions of their dog(s).



Children, 6-15 years, must be accompanied by an adult and must have a dog to enter the dog park area.

Keep the area safe and clean.

Help enforce the rules. Help us keep the dog park safe and clean. Don’t allow your dog to dig holes, which can cause injuries to unsuspecting people and dogs. If your dog digs a hole, fill the hole immediately. Leave the site in a better condition than you found it. Small actions multiplied by thousands of visitors are what keep our off-leash dog areas a success.

Always scoop your dog’s poop!



Bags are provided for your convenience, so please use them. Also, please help with “Orphan poop” because you will occasionally miss some of your dog’s poop.

Please help keep Your dog park clean.

Pick up trash and anything else on the ground that may end up in a dog’s mouth. Before you drop something on the ground, ask yourself, “Would I want my dog to eat this?”



Board of County Commissioners

**Parks, Recreation and Conservation Department
(813) 635-3500**

www.hillsboroughcounty.org/parks

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OFF-LEASH Dog Park



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Dog Park Etiquette (“Petiquette”)

Because the first dog park visit can be a little stressful for the novice user (human and dog), first-time visitors might want to consider visiting the park at non-peak times (mid-day, Monday through Friday). Peak times are Monday through Friday in the early morning or late afternoon until dark and all day on Saturdays and Sundays. It may take a couple of tries, or even a few weeks of visits before your dog comes out of his/her shell. If you give your dog a little time; however, you may be pleasantly surprised by the change and you will have a healthier, friendlier, and more playful dog.

Know your dog!

Not all dogs are good candidates for off-leash dog parks. If your dog has not had regular interaction with other dogs, he may lack the necessary social skills to make your trip safe and enjoyable. Supervise your dog closely at all times to prevent aggression and other inappropriate behavior.

When entering or leaving the non-leash area, do not enter the double-gates transition area if there is already someone in that area.

- This will eliminate the possibility of both gates being open at the same time.
- Place your dog off-leash in the transition area before entering the non-leashed area.
- Some dogs can feel threatened if they are leashed in the presence of unleashed dogs.

Quickly move away from the entrance as you enter.

That will help disperse the group of dogs that will come over to welcome your dog to the park. Move away from the fence so that your dog will



not feel cornered or threatened. This will lessen the problem caused when several off-leash dogs, already in the park, come running over to greet the new arrival, perhaps overwhelming the arriving dog.

Keep your dog leashed at all times while outside the fenced dog park area.

Even if your pet is under perfect voice control, many non-dog people have fears and any dog that is off-leash outside the fenced area violates the county’s leash law. Keep the park gates closed and watch for dogs on the other side when you are entering or leaving, so they do not escape.

Ask the owner’s permission to approach a dog before befriending it.

Use caution when permitting curious dogs to greet yours, both within and outside the dog park.

Stay alert at all times...

as there will likely be groups of dogs running around the park having fun. People standing around the park are obstructions and a dog may run into them which can cause an injury to both the dog and the people.

Dogs that bark persistently are a nuisance and requested to be removed from the premises by the owner.

Be aware that dogs have different play styles, temperaments and physical abilities.

Many dogs love rambunctious play, but some dogs suffer from injuries and some are more timid and aloof. Always respect the wishes of the owner and be prepared to move to another area of the park if your dog is too rambunctious.

Remove dogs that play too rough.

If your dog’s play is making other dog’s owners uncomfortable, go to another area of the dog park or perhaps return another time.

Keep Walking!

Walking rather than sitting or standing will help minimize defensive and territorial behaviors. This means that your dog is more likely to pass another dog with a friendly sniff instead of a stare-down.

Do not bring dogs with aggressive tendencies into the dog park.

You are risking harm to others and creating a potential liability to yourself. Dog fights in dog parks are rarely a problem, because dogs consider it to be a neutral territory. This is because, since the dogs are all visitors, none of them are protecting their turf. However, if a fight does break out, owners are responsible for immediately breaking it up. The safest way to break up a dog fight is to pull the dogs apart from behind. If any dog remains unruly, the owner must leash and remove the dog from the park. Mounting can initiate a potentially harmful situation. The owner of any dog displaying mounting behavior must immediately leash and remove the dog from the situation.

If your dog inflicts an injury:

You must give your name and phone number to the owner before leaving the area. Owners are legally and financially responsible for their dog’s behavior and any injuries, damages, or loss their dog may cause.

