



Dogparks of Greater St. Louis

Dog Park Basics

What is a dog park?

In general an off-leash recreation area, or dog park, is an outdoor space established for dog owners to allow their dogs to run free. There are no rules for layout or construction. A dog park can be fenced or unfenced, from less than an acre to hundreds of acres. It can have water, restrooms, benches, shelters, trees, plants-or no facilities at all.

The best off-leash recreation areas are over an acre in size, but big enough to support the number of users. They offer easy access from a parking lot of adequate size, are handicapped accessible, and have access to water and a restroom. The terrain offers stimulating opportunities for dogs to use their senses, space to run all-out with other dogs, and shade to rest in after such a run.

Typical rules

Most dog parks have rules for the users to follow. The following rules seem common to all dog parks:

- Owners are legally responsible for their dogs and any injuries or damage caused by their dogs.
- Pick up dog waste.
- Keep your dog on leash while entering and exiting the dog park.
- Carry a leash at all times.
- Limit three dogs per person in the off-leash area.
- Supervise children closely.
- No children under eight years of age.
- Please do not bring food, treats, or glass into the off-leash area.
- Never leave your dog unattended.
- All dogs must be licensed and immunized.
- No dogs in heat.
- Closely supervise intact males
- No puppies under four months of age.
- Owners must stop dog from digging and must fill any holes caused by their dogs.
- Professional trainers may not use the park for conduct of their business.

Entering/exiting a dog park

Most dog parks have double-gated entries. Use this to help your dog make the transition into the group of dogs already there. Here's how:

- Check that the inside gate is closed before opening the outside gate.
- Enter the holding pen and close the outside gate.
- Remove your dog's leash inside the holding pen. This will help reduce the anxiety he/she may feel when confronted by a group of strange off-leash dogs.

- Open the inside gate and enter the dog park.

When you leave, if possible, reverse the process. This may not be possible if your dog is having a lot of fun. Like kids, a dog doesn't always want to leave the park when you do. It is a good idea to practice coming when called with your dog before coming to the dog park.

Dog park manners

- **Pick up and dispose of dog waste.**

It's gross, but this is the best thing you can do to weaken the arguments against off-leash recreation areas in our public parks. Thousands of dogs visit these sites every month. If we don't pick up after our dogs the dog parks will be closed, and no new ones will be opened. Most of all, nobody likes to look at or step in dog waste. It's unhealthy and unsightly. Be courteous and use common sense.

- **Teach your dog good manners**

Contact an obedience school near you to help your dog learn to be a mannerly pet.

- **Be a responsible dog owner.**

Keep licenses and vaccinations up to date, spay or neuter your dog, educate yourself about dog behavior (many books, magazines and websites are available), and join the organization that is supporting your site!

- **Keep the area safe and clean.**

Pick up trash, cigarette butts, and litter. Pick up dog waste even if it isn't from your dog. Chances are you have missed your share from your own dog. Don't let your dog dig holes. Leave the site better than you found it. It's the small gesture multiplied by dozens of daily visitors that makes these sites successful.