



Dog Play...Keeping it Safe & Fun

Playing with other dogs is good exercise and a beneficial social activity for many canines. When your dog gets together with playmates, remember these tips from The Dog Gurus

When we observe dogs at play we want to see three things:

Safe Dogs— help your dog stay safe by:

- Keeping eyes and attention on your dog at all times
- Choosing playmates of similar size and play style
- Calling your dog to you several times during the play session

Happy Dogs - body language of a happy dog engaged in play includes:

- Relaxed posture with loose, wiggly body motions
- Open mouth
- Ears and tail in similar positions as when your dog is relaxed at home



Healthy Dogs - Play should not be a stressful activity. Take your dogs home if you see stress behaviors like:

- Panting or drooling before physical exercise
- Pawing/jumping at you or the gate
- Pacing or trying to hide

During play we never want to see:



Fear - Dogs see their world as familiar or unfamiliar based on their prior experiences. Social play with other dogs, can sometimes be scary. Fearful dog body language includes:

- Tense and crouched posture
- Mouth open slightly with lips drawn back
- Ears drawn back and tail lower than normal or tucked

Arousal - Arousal describes a state of high energy. Arousal levels and aggression in dogs are very closely linked so intervene immediately when your dog or a playmate shows any of these signs:

- Stiff body posture
- Fast paced frenetic movements
- High pitched vocalizations

Bullying - Just like kids, dogs can bully playmates. For the emotional health of your dog do not “let the dogs work it out”; intervene and find a different play buddy for your dog. Watch the body language of the bully’s victim and you will see stress or fearful body language signals. Bully behaviors during play include:

- Chase or wrestle play with intensity, not allowing breaks
- Pushy physical muzzle or shoulder bumps with intensity and determined focus
- Pinning a dog with no release



Join The Dog Gurus in keeping dog play safe by taking the dog owner safety pledge on their website:

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