



Just Click here for
Everyday Discounts

How To Design a High-Quality Dog Park

Dog Parks Pet Pro Supply Co. Aug 31, 2020



The core principles of planning a dog park, explained.

By Pet Pro Supply Co. Featured Expert,

Madeline Dock

Sales Coordinator at PlayCore, owners of BarkPark Dog Park Equipment

This article is a part of a larger Pet Pro Supply Co. series on Dog Parks. See the list of articles below:

Dog Parks: Great for Everyone, Not Just the Dogs

How to Design a High-Quality Dog Park

One Size Does NOT Fit All – Separate Spaces for Large and Small Dogs

How to Maintain Your Dog Park

Dog Park Safety Measures in the Age of COVID-19

What Type of Surfacing Should I Use in a Dog Park?

Buy Dog Park Equipment

Pet ownership continues to be on the rise in the United States. In 2017 it was recorded that 60.2 million households owned at least one pet; with this data it shouldn't be a surprise that communities across the country are introducing dog parks! Enjoyable for both owners and their pets, an unleashed dog park allows dogs to run and play off-leash and provides much needed exercise and socialization.

With the rise in demand for dog parks comes the question:

"How do I begin designing a dog park"?

It All Starts with Location

Now that you have decided to build a dog park, you have to find somewhere to actually put it. When looking at locations throughout your community, you will need to be mindful

of not only access to the location, but also the natural landscape. You will want to plan ahead and know what mix of equipment and amenities you are going to include and how many dogs will visit the space in a given day.

There are often unused areas of land throughout a community that may be a good option. Talk to the city. Is there an area that is on a floodplain? Is there an area with rolling hills that they do not plan on developing? The area does not have to be flat and it does not have to be a perfect rectangle. We have seen dog parks built on a long strip of land and a wide-open field.

A good place to start it to involve the community and dog owners who will be utilizing the space. What do they envision? Many architects use dog parks as ways to revitalize a community by taking a previously underutilized or abandoned area and creating a wonderful space for socialization and play.

Factors to consider when choosing your location, as advised by The Humane Society of the United States:

1-5 acres – large enough for the park to not become overcrowded and small enough to keep the park well-controlled.

Good drainage – you'll want to prevent muddy conditions which could make the space undesirable

Water fountain – Dogs need water while exercising and utilizing the park

Shade – to prevent any overheating which might occur on some of the hotter summer days

Access for people with mobility devices – inclusion is essential so all people can enjoy the park

5-6 foot fencing – important to make the fencing high enough to keep dogs from jumping over

Benches for pet owners – so owners can stay around longer to relax and supervise their pets

Signs to clearly display rules – typically placed at the entrance/exits, so no one misses it

Parking lot close by – to make it as easy as possible for community members to enter the park

Buffer zone - natural landscaping around the dog park creates a boundary between the park and neighbors to reduce noise

Agility Equipment, Site Amenities, Shade and Water

If you observe dogs in an outdoor setting, they're jumping over natural objects, running, going underneath bushes or climbing. It's important to imitate these various obstacles by including dog park equipment for the dogs and owners alike to maximize enjoyment. Besides offering the benefit of overall exercise, dog park equipment can help dogs build strength, gain confidence, and improve their agility. The challenges also task them mentally as they learn to navigate the equipment.

DOG PARK EQUIPMENT TO CONSIDER

Jumps – Incorporating jumping helps dogs advance in their strength and coordination. A series of circles to jump through makes this piece suitable for dogs of all sizes as they can choose which hoop to use based on their size.

Platforms – Platforms are great for small or large dogs seeing as they can be placed at different heights. They encourages jumping, which promotes coordination and concentration as they prance from platform to platform.

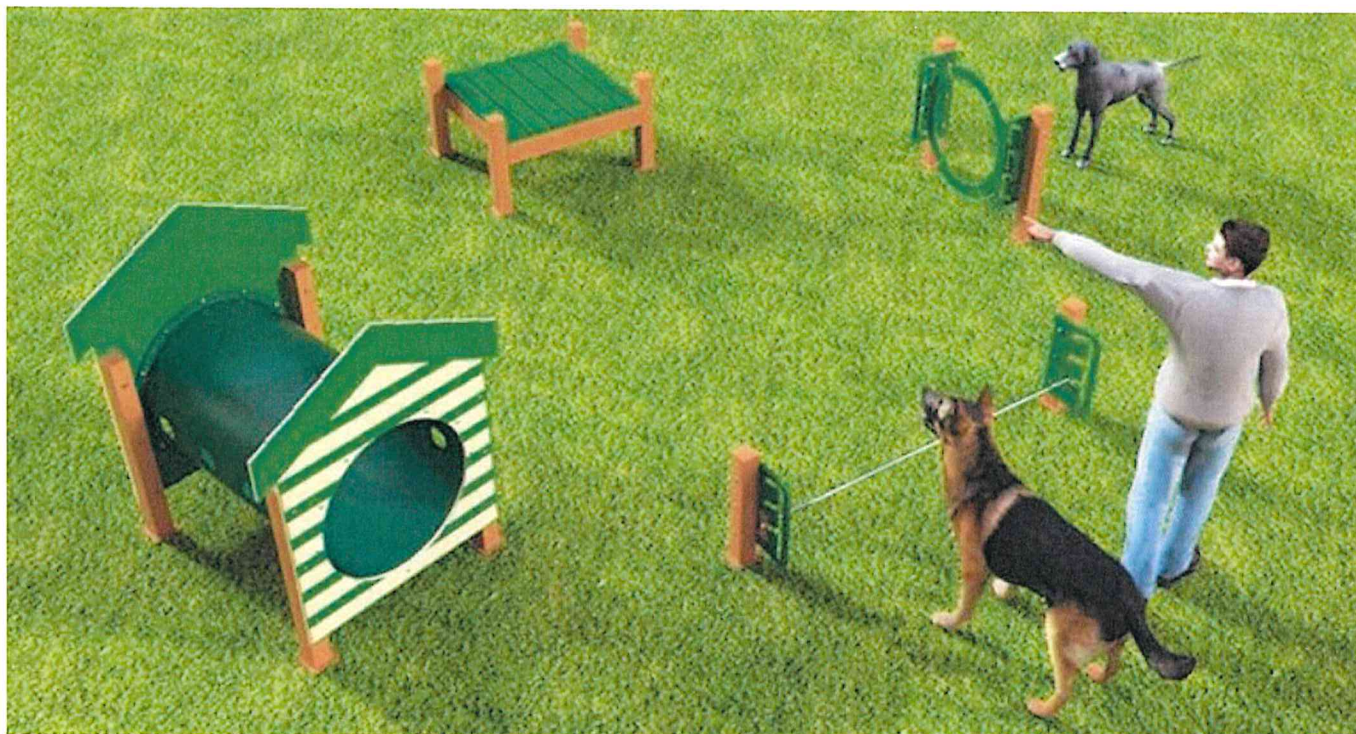
Hurdles – Hurdles are best suited for larger to medium dogs and help enhance leg strength and coordination by avoiding touching the support while in the air.

Solid Vented Tunnels – Tunnels are great for dogs of all sizes and help them become more familiar in navigating tight spaces.

Bridges – Bridges are geared towards larger dogs to help them develop control, patience, and concentration.

Weave Posts – Dogs of all sizes can utilize this equipment to increase their coordination skills, speed, and agility.

Photo Booth Panel – While not a traditional agility product, photo booths are a fun add-on to any size dog park. The photo booth panel serves not only as an adorable Instagram opportunity to capture your dog at their cutest moments but also helps them practice their ability to sit and stay control.



AMENITIES & ACCESSORIES:

Dog Park Rules - We do advise having signage close to the entrance, clearly stating the hours of operation and rules to abide by while utilizing the park.

Seating – Providing benches throughout the park allow dog owners to take a break, relax, and socialize with other dog lovers. A good rule of thumb is to keep benches away from fences so dogs cannot use them as launching platforms to escape the fence. Consider placing around trees for natural shade.

Shade – Whether you go for natural shade with tree coverage or a fabric shade structure, both offer a break from the sun and encourage longer visits at the dog park.

Leash Posts – Leash posts help owners keep track of leashes worry-free.

Misters – Take your dog park up a notch by adding a fun water element to keep them cool and refreshed while playing in the park. Misters ensure overheating is avoided in the hot summer days.

Watering & Cooling – Dogs need access to water while exercising at any level. Dog-level water fountains meet this need to keep dogs refreshed and lets them exercise for longer.

Gates – Adding a gate is a great way to decrease the possibility of dogs escaping. Remember to keep in mind accessibility by ensuring the gate is wide enough for those with mobility devices. A double gated entrance is a best practice to allow dog users to enter the park securely as others exit.

Waste Stations & Trash Receptacles – Waste stations are a must to give individuals the ability to clean up after their dog and to keep the dog park an enjoyable place for everyone. It's recommended these be placed at various locations throughout the dog park.

Lighting – Adding lighting not only adds an element of safety and visibility to the park but will also increase hours of use, especially in the fall and winter, when it becomes darker earlier in the day.



Parting thoughts

It's highly recommended that when you go to buy the equipment that you find a manufacturer that specializes in dog park equipment. You will want equipment that will withstand the outdoor elements so that community members can utilize the dog park for years to come. To keep our furry friends safe and having fun, dog park equipment needs to be durable and installed properly.

Making sure the park is equipped with amenities such as waste stations, benches, and water fountains is the perfect finishing touch for a well-loved community dog park

destination. You can also buy dog park kits (an ensemble of pre-selected items) for convenience.

Lastly, in designing your dog park, please remember these best practices:

The best dog parks are the ones that include activities for dogs of all sizes, small, medium, and large for leisure play and training.

The best layout is one that is fenced in with a gate and an accessible path back and forth from the parking lot to the park itself.

The best separation concept is to create separate areas for small dogs and large dogs and placing size appropriate equipment in those areas.



About Madeline Dock: Madeline is the Sales Coordinator for the National Accounts team at PlayCore. She works daily with customers nationally to promote products across the entire PlayCore spectrum, including playgrounds, site amenities, dog parks, fitness parks, surfacing, aquatic products, shade & shelters, etc. Her favorite part of the job is providing solutions to help others connect and stay healthy by assisting communities in building up their outdoor spaces. It's her own way to leave a positive impact on communities across America.