

At Take Five Dogcare, to ensure a seamless and safe environment, we've established specific criteria and behaviors for dogs joining our playgroups. This initial screening serves as our primary step in welcoming new clients. These criteria are meticulously designed along with our applicant dog evaluation policy to identify dogs that align with our daycare setting. This guarantees a seamless fit within our group while prioritizing the well-being of all pets entrusted to our care.

Basic Requirements

Spay/Neuter Requirements: All dogs participating in off-leash group play must be spayed or neutered by six (6) months of age. This policy is in place to maintain a harmonious environment and reduce potential behavioral issues.

Age Requirements: Our daycare welcomes dogs 16 weeks and older. We cater to the unique needs of different age groups—puppies have structured play and rest cycles, while senior dogs enjoy a quiet area away from energetic younger dogs. For smaller breeds under 16 weeks, we may adjust the age requirement to ensure their safety and well-being.

Breeds: While we don't discriminate based on breed, we carefully evaluate each dog's temperament and behavior rather than imposing breed-specific restrictions.

Health Requirements: Dogs must be up-to-date on vaccinations, flea and tick prevention, and any other health-related necessities. Puppies must have received their complete series of vaccinations and therefore must be 16 weeks or older.

Minimum Time in Home: We believe in the Rule of Three when it comes to dogs and the acclimation period they need in their new home. The 3-3-3 rule refers to the first 3 days of feeling overwhelmed and nervous, 3 weeks of settling in, and 3 months of building trust and bonding with you. We welcome newly adopted dogs after 3 weeks of being in their new home.

Fence Jumpers and Escape Artists: In instances where a dog has a history of or demonstrates tendencies toward fence jumping or escaping, we will carefully assess additional measures to exercise discretion regarding their acceptance. This is essential to prioritize the safety and security of every dog within our facility.

Defining a "Good Fit" in Off-Leash Play Environments

By considering these factors, a "good fit" dog seamlessly integrates into the playgroup, contributing positively to the overall environment while enjoying their time with other dogs.

1. **Enjoyment of Group Play:** A dog that is a good fit relishes the experience of engaging in group play activities. They actively participate, show interest, and exhibit signs of enjoyment, such as play bows, relaxed body language, and enthusiasm in interactions with other dogs.
2. **Comfort in Off-Leash Environments:** A dog considered a good fit feels at ease and relaxed while off-leash in a room with other dogs. They display confidence, exhibit natural social behaviors, and don't exhibit signs of excessive stress, fear, or anxiety when in the company of other dogs.
3. **Appropriate Response from Other Dogs:** A good fit dog not only enjoys group play but also elicits appropriate responses from other dogs in the playgroup. This includes positive interactions, mutual respect, and an overall harmonious dynamic among the dogs. Other dogs respond positively, engage in play or socialization, and do not display undue aggression or

discomfort in the presence of the new dog.

Behaviors That Indicate Red Flags

These behaviors indicate that a dog is not comfortable or might not be a good fit for our off-leash play environment at Take Five Dogcare:

1. **Excessive Aggression:** Dogs displaying consistent aggression towards other dogs can disrupt the balance of the playgroup and pose a safety risk to other dogs. Aggressive displays in dogs can take various forms, and they may signal discomfort, fear, stress, or a desire to assert dominance. Here are some examples of dog aggressive displays:
 - a. **Growling:** A low, guttural sound often accompanied by bared teeth. It's a warning sign that the dog is feeling threatened or uncomfortable.
 - b. **Snapping:** A quick and sudden attempt to bite without making physical contact. It's a clear warning that the dog is feeling stressed or provoked.
 - c. **Lunging:** A sudden forward movement, often with an open mouth, directed toward a person, another dog, or an object. It's a strong aggressive signal indicating the dog's intent to harm or intimidate.
 - d. **Showing Teeth (Snarling):** Baring teeth along with a wrinkled nose can indicate aggression. This display is meant to intimidate and warn others to stay away.
 - e. **Stiff Body Posture:** Dogs exhibiting stiffness in their body, rigid muscles, raised hackles (hair along the back), or a rigid tail might be showing signs of aggression. This posture indicates tension and readiness for confrontation.
 - f. **Prolonged Staring:** Staring without blinking or with a fixed gaze can be a sign of aggression or a challenge to another dog. It's an attempt to assert dominance or intimidate.
 - g. **Raised Tail and Erect Ears:** While a raised tail and perked ears don't always indicate aggression, when combined with other body language signs such as stiffness or direct eye contact, they can signal an aggressive stance.
 - h. **Mounting or Dominance Behavior:** Mounting other dogs or people may be a display of dominance or a way to assert control, rather than a sexual behavior.
 - i. **Biting:** Actual contact with the intent to harm or defend territory, resources, or oneself.

It's important to note that while these behaviors can indicate aggression, they might also result from fear, stress, or insecurity. Understanding the context, triggers, and body language cues is crucial in interpreting a dog's behavior accurately.

2. **Excessive Fear or Anxiety:** Dogs showing signs of extreme fear or anxiety may not be comfortable in a group setting. These behaviors can indicate discomfort or stress in the environment. Excessive fear or anxiety in dogs can manifest in various ways, and recognizing these signs is crucial in addressing their underlying stressors. Here are some common signs of excessive fear or anxiety in dogs:
 - a. **Trembling or Shaking:** Dogs may shake or tremble uncontrollably in response to fear or anxiety, especially in new or stressful situations.
 - b. **Panting or Excessive Drooling:** Rapid, heavy panting or increased drooling, even in cool conditions, can indicate stress or anxiety.
 - c. **Avoidance or Hiding:** Dogs might try to escape from the situation by hiding, seeking shelter under furniture, or retreating to a secluded area.
 - d. **Pacing or Restlessness:** Restlessness, repetitive movements, or pacing back and forth can indicate agitation or discomfort.

- e. **Excessive Barking or Whining:** Dogs may bark or whine excessively when they're anxious, seeking attention, or trying to express their unease.
- f. **Destructive Behavior:** Chewing on furniture, excessive digging, or destroying items can be signs of separation anxiety or stress.
- g. **Lack of Appetite or Digestive Issues:** Dogs might refuse food or exhibit digestive issues such as diarrhea or vomiting due to stress or anxiety.
- h. **Excessive Licking or Grooming:** Dogs might excessively lick their paws or other body parts as a self-soothing mechanism, leading to irritation or hair loss.
- i. **Calming Signals:** Submissive behaviors like yawning, licking lips, or tucking their ears back might indicate discomfort or anxiety.
- j. **Body Language Signs:** Raised hackles, pinned-back ears, lowered body posture, dilated pupils, or avoidance of eye contact can all signal fear or anxiety.

It's essential to consider the context in which these behaviors occur and to note any triggers that might be causing the dog distress.

3. **Non-Play Behaviors:** Behaviors indicative of status issues or competitions, such as excessive mounting, bullying, or persistent attempts at dominance, might disrupt the harmonious atmosphere essential for safe group play.
4. **Persistent Disruption of Play:** Dogs that consistently interrupt or disrupt the play of other dogs without regard for their cues or boundaries might create an uncomfortable environment for the group.
5. **Prey Drive:** Dogs with a high prey drive may display intense focus, stalking behaviors, tagging dogs, or fixation on other dogs. While natural, excessive fixation and inability to redirect this behavior might not suit our daycare environment.
6. **Overwhelming Desire to Ingest:** Behaviors including but not limited to consuming dirt, rocks, feces or exhibiting tendencies such as ingesting employee belongings. These behaviors warrant careful consideration to maintain a safe and hygienic environment for all dogs under our care.
7. **Resource Guarding:** Dogs exhibiting possessive behavior over toys, food, or other resources, leading to conflicts with other dogs, may disrupt the playgroup dynamic and lead to potential confrontations.
8. **Inability to Read Social Cues:** Dogs that consistently misinterpret or ignore social cues from other dogs, leading to repeated conflicts, misunderstanding, or disruptions in play, might struggle to integrate effectively into the group.
9. **Overwhelmed or Overstimulated Reactions:** Dogs that become overly excited, hyperactive, or unable to self-regulate their energy levels may disrupt the playgroup dynamics and potentially cause discomfort or stress to other dogs. This can result in erratic behavior or difficulty integrating into playgroups.
10. **Inability to Settle or Take Breaks:** Dogs that continuously engage in play without taking breaks or showing an inability to relax might not understand or respect the need for rest periods, causing potential exhaustion or stress.
11. **Shut Down Signs:** A shut-down dog may display withdrawn behavior, avoidance of social interactions, or an overall lack of engagement with the environment. Such dogs may not benefit from or contribute positively to group play activities.

Identifying and monitoring these behaviors during the evaluation process or within the daycare setting can help ensure a safe and comfortable environment for all dogs participating in off-leash group play. Dogs displaying these behaviors might require alternative activities or specialized attention rather than participating in the off-leash playgroup.

Our Commitment

The safety and well-being of every dog in our off-leash group play setting remain our paramount concern. We recognize that dogs, like humans, can exhibit changes in behavior influenced by various factors, including health, environment, and social dynamics. Therefore, our commitment to continuous monitoring and understanding the nuanced signs of stress, discomfort, or behavioral shifts is unwavering. By staying vigilant and attuned to these factors, we ensure a proactive approach in maintaining a harmonious and safe play environment for all our four-legged guests. Our ongoing dedication to learning and adapting allows us to provide the best possible care and support to every dog entrusted to our facility, fostering a positive and enriching experience for all.