

Why is Personal Play Best for Some Dogs?

There is a common misconception that **most** dogs enjoy being out with large groups and that the only reason dogs would be on personal play is that they are “mean” towards other dogs. However, this is simply not true.

Here at West Chester, we strongly advocate for the welfare of each individual dog in our care. For some dogs, group play simply *isn't enjoyable*. The graphic below describes this beautifully.

Does My Dog Love Other Dogs?

Just like people, dogs have different levels of tolerance for other dogs.

As a dog matures, he or she will often quite naturally become less social and tolerant. There are many developmental changes that happen between sexual and social maturity, and most dogs will continue to display these changes until two to three years of age. Proper facilitation of dog-dog introductions and friendships can change your dog's sociability for the better over time, and bad experiences can quickly make things worse. Good leadership and direction is important to set your dog up for success with their species.

~10%
of all dogs

DOG SOCIAL

I generally LOVE all dogs, even the ones who get in my face and do rude, annoying stuff. I am either a PUPPY or a VERY SOCIAL ADULT.

*Most puppies start here

~40%
of all dogs

DOG TOLERANT

I get along with most dogs. I am generally tolerant of rude behavior, and stay pretty calm on leash. I'm cool and relaxed, and have good communication skills.

~40%
of all dogs

DOG SELECTIVE

I have dog friends but am picky about new dogs. Seeing unfamiliar dogs when I am on leash is really stressful. I don't cope well with some types of dogs or styles of interaction. I need human supervision, positive guidance, and proper introductions.

~10%
of all dogs

DOG AGGRESSIVE

NOPE. Not into other dogs. If I have to select 1 or 2 dog friends, I am super sensitive around them too, and may act like a jerk when triggered. I need extra management and patience from my humans, whom I love more than dogs!

DISCLAIMER: the percentages are very rough and fluid estimates

A dog's social tolerance changes over time and is flexible and manageable!

#adoptdontshop #respectfordogs
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Source: paws4udogs.wordpress.com/2017/02/16/understanding-dog-dog-sociability

As you can see, it is only a small percentage of dogs that are accepting of **all dogs and play styles**. If your dog does not fall into that 10%, it does not mean that anything is wrong or that you should've done something differently. We go above and beyond at our resort to ensure that the **majority** of our canine friends are able to play in some sort of group setting. This is why we offer a much **longer** orientation period than many other resorts. By offering a slower introduction, we can hopefully help the “Dog Tolerant” pups and the “Dog Selective” pups feel more comfortable about our group settings.

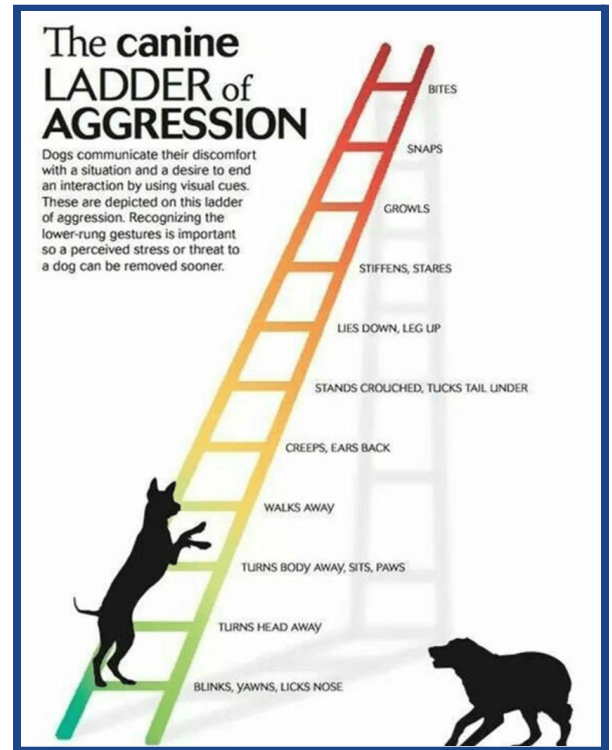
Our Calm and High Energy group divisions also allow for more “Dog selective” dogs to join in on the fun. However, at the end of the day, many “Dog Tolerant” and “Dog Selective” dogs simply *do not enjoy group play*. They may be stressed out having many other unfamiliar dogs around them. This is nothing to be concerned



about, but it is also not something to be ignored. Our dogs use their body language to communicate their wants and needs to us. If we ignore what they are telling us, **that** is when issues begin to escalate. In fact, ignoring their signs can push dogs closer to that “Dog Aggressive” category - which is something we **never** want to see happen.

On the right is a graphic explaining the canine “ladder of aggression.” When dogs are not comfortable in a given situation, they use their body language to tell us this. Dogs start at the bottom of the ladder with their warnings. If a dog’s warning is ignored, they continue to climb up the ladder - meaning their warnings escalate. Sometimes this escalation takes days, weeks, or even months. However, if the dog is stressed enough, it can happen in a matter of **seconds**.

Our job as your dog’s advocate is to notice these warnings and remove your pets from uncomfortable situations **before** that escalation occurs. We want all of your pets to enjoy coming to us for daycare. We don’t want them to worry about whether or not they will be put in these stressful situations.



So, in shorter terms, most dogs are not placed in personal play because they are attacking other dogs or “causing problems.” More often than not, our personal play dogs are dogs that simply feel safer and more comfortable around **humans**.

Additionally, there are some other factors that can determine whether or not a pet is eligible or well suited for group play. Below are some other examples of pets that would be best suited for personal play.

- Pets with major health concerns such as..
 - Heartworm positive pets
 - Severe arthritis that affects the safety of their play
 - Recent injury
- Certain behavior/training issues such as...
 - Lack of recall (poses a potential safety risk)
 - Inappropriate play (jumping on other dogs, nipping, etc.)
 - Inability to read another dog’s stress signals
- Pets that are still intact after 6 months of age
 - See our handout on our spay/neuter policy for more information.
- Pets displaying obsessive/compulsive behaviors such as...
 - Obsessive spinning
 - Resource guarding
 - Inability to disengage from another dog that is not interested in play
 - Humping
 - Excessive barking
 - Chasing down other dogs to “referee” in their play with other dogs

*At the end of your orientation week, we will provide you with a report card that describes **why** we chose a specific play style for your pet. If your dog is selected for personal play instead of group play, we will also give you information on the reasoning behind this choice.*