



How to have a Polite Pooch in Public

If you're like me, you love your dog and you don't love the time when you have to be away from him! You would like to take your dog with you when you go places, right? I have to admit, my dogs are with me so often that I feel weird when I'm without them! I take them to work with me, we go to dog shows, they come to the coffee shop, and even my kid's school.

I love seeing other people outside with their dogs, but have to admit I cringe when I see someone out in public with a dog that lacks training. Businesses and organizations are starting to become really dog-friendly, and we really want to make them happy with their decision to allow dogs! So, here are some good tips on how to have a polite pooch when you're in public.

ID tags – Make sure your dog has all of his proper jewelry on when you go out. Name tag, rabies tag, and the correct licenses for your area. Dogs can get frightened, snaps on leashes can break. Just like us, it's good to have your ID on you! Oh, and a poop bag!

Keep him leashed at all times - Please keep your dog on his leash. Even if your dog is the most well-mannered dog in the universe, other people don't know that, and I have heard a million times "he's never done that before!" There are some grown-ups and children that are genuinely afraid of dogs, so seeing a dog off of its leash in a public area can cause them to panic. Plus, it's the law.

Know your dog's signals – Sometimes when we are out with friends we may not be paying full attention to our dogs. If you take your dog out with you, be prepared to be your dog's caretaker for the entire outing! Be aware of his surroundings. If your dog seems hot, get him into the shade and get him some water. If he seems anxious, walk him off to the side to see if he has to potty. If you notice your dog is scared or shying away from someone, it's okay to ask that person to not pet your dog. There isn't a rule that says everyone is allowed to pet your dog. I'm sure your dog will feel more secure if they know this is the case also. Two of my dogs are very friendly and they will welcome attention from pretty much anyone, but one of my dogs is pretty shy. I simply tell people to ignore the shy one, and if she chooses to approach them, then they can look at her and maybe even talk to her. She's my five-pound Chihuahua/Pomeranian Mix, so believe me when I say it's really hard for people not to scoop her up!

Be respectful of other dogs – If you see another owner out with their dog, please be respectful and don't let your dog run up to it. Just because their dog is in public doesn't mean it wants to interact with other dogs. I usually don't let my dogs greet other dogs when we are in the people world (coffee shop, outdoor café, etc). If we are out hiking, or swimming, or doing doggy things, then yes. As long as the owner is in agreement, we will let our dogs say "Hi", sniff and even play. This also comes in handy because my dogs know that they don't always get to greet other dogs. Many dogs become frustrated when they can't greet another dog, so this is good practice too!

Keep your dog at home – Sometimes it's a better idea to leave our dogs at home. I know, you really want him to come! But, if you're going to be somewhere that won't be fun for them, they would probably appreciate being left in the peace and quiet at home. Fireworks, large crowds with strollers and little walking room, hot summer days when you might not be able to find adequate shade. Those are all really good times to just let your dog chill at home.

Tied up or in a hot car? Never! Yikes, I can't even imagine leaving my dogs tied up somewhere! The first reason is liability. Think about all the "what ifs" that could happen. What if you go into a store (even for a moment) and someone walks past your dog and teases them. Or heaven forbid hurts them. Your dog is tied up and can't get away, so his only other option may be to nip (have you heard of "flight or fight" reaction?). If this happens, your dog will now have a bite record. And you wouldn't even know what happened because you were not there to defend him.

The other scary reason is because I hear about dog-napping numerous times a year. It is often from open cars, or even the safety of your fenced in backyard. So, it could certainly happen if you left him tied-up outside a storefront. I could never leave my dog unattended, even for a moment.

Leaving your dog in the car on even a mild day can be dangerous. Every year hundreds of dogs die from heat exhaustion in hot cars. That's a topic for another day!

Bring comforts – Water, Bowl, Mat and Treats! Just like packing a diaper bag when you have a baby, be sure to bring things your dog will need! I also like to bring a mat for my dog to lie on. My dogs are conditioned to their training mats, so they know that when their mat is out, they lay calmly on it. It's also nice because the ground may be hard or uneven. Water, a bowl and a nice shady spot are also necessities during these warm summer months. Did I mention you should bring a poop bag with you?

Do your homework first! – Train your dog BEFORE you take him out in public! If your dog does not walk nicely on leash and pay attention to you when you have him out in the front yard, you can't expect him to be well-mannered in a crowded spot. Don't set him up for failure and become frustrated at him when he finds himself stressed out...

Consider how your dog feels - Know his limits and keep him happy and safe. If he seems unhappy, be selfless and take him home. Recognize what you need to do differently, whether it be more training, or a less chaotic area, and try again when you are both ready!

Want some help to get your pooch public-ready? Contact our Dog Face office, we're here to help!

Giene Keyes, Owner and Founder - Dog Face, LLC

Giene Keyes is the Owner of Dog Face, providing positive in-home training, behavior consultations and group classes. After receiving "Best of Madison" for two years in a row, Giene sold her dog daycare to focus on her behavior work. Giene has been working with pets and their owners for over 20 years. She is a professional animal trainer and behavior specialist in Southern Wisconsin. Giene divides her time between teaching group classes and private lessons – Specializing in manners and aggression cases. Giene works with vets, rescue groups and shelters, evaluating dogs for adoption, developing Canine Aggression Management Programs, and educating staff on dog language and behaviors. She consults for dog daycares and training companies on educating staff on dog body language, cues, managing a pack, difficult dogs and much more. She provides behavior consultations for service dog organizations and rescue groups in the Midwest. She is an Instructor with the American Red Cross in Pet CPR and First Aid, a Certified Canine Good Citizen Evaluator with the American Kennel Club, and a Licensed Judge with the WI Dept of Ag, Trade & Consumer Protection. Giene is a member of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers and is a Certified Pet Dog Trainer. She routinely presents seminars on dog behavior and training. Giene has been a regular guest on popular Madison radio shows and local newscasts. Giene has also been featured in numerous local magazines, including the cover for Wisconsin Woman in 2010. Giene has been highlighted numerous times in the WI State Journal for her work with Chicken Clicker Training and improving dog training skills, timing and observation. She has been interviewed for several nationwide podcasts. She also enjoys holding training workshops across the state.