

7 Things Dog Walkers Should Never Do

Avoid these mistakes when you're a dog walker.

Shayna Abramson, Contributor

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Dogs: they can be your best friend, but they can also be mischievous adversaries, especially when you have to balance canine needs with the desires of their human owners. Luckily, we have a few tips to help improve your professional dog-walking experience -- and to help you keep both human and canine customers happy.

1. **Never Use Your Phone While On Duty**

To quote Farrah Miller (<http://farrahsfurryfriends.vpweb.com/default.html>), pet-carer extraordinaire, "There's nothing worse than receiving a message the next day from the owner of the dog you were walking, telling you about the \$400 vet bill they have to pay because the dog cleaned up the garbage on the street while you were distracted with your phone."

Jesse Brezina, founder of Union Square Dogwalkers (<http://www.unionsquaredogwalker.com/>), adds not to use headphones or listen to music, even if you don't think you'll find it distracting.

2. Never Put The Dog Waste In A Private Garbage Bin

Miller says, "you will get yelled at," or possibly, "have the homeowner pull the bag of poop out of the garbage and chase you with it!"

3. Never Let Your Dog Approach Another Dog Without The Owner's Permission

Dogs have a huge range of personalities, and you can never predict how they will react to an unknown dog. And leashes have a way of mounting tensions. Few things are worse than an impromptu dog fight.

4. Never Avoid Telling The Dog's Owner If There's A Problem

As Brezina says, "Nothing is too small of a problem," even if it's just that the dog is eating slightly less of their meal than usual.

Also, if you mess up, "Don't be afraid to tell the owners, even if it's a big mistake."

5. Never Leave Dog Park Gates Open

While entering or exiting a double-gated dog park, make sure not to open one gate as someone is opening the other, or you might be faced by a herd of escaping dogs, and their panicked owners.

6. Never Assume You're Alone In A Client's House

Brezina says this is true even if the house seems empty. He suggests that if, for example, a client says you should feel free to have a glass of water and you take them up on the offer, you should loudly tell the dog what you're doing. As in, "Hey Jack. I'm gonna come in now to grab a glass of water." That way if there are any humans inside, they won't be startled to find a stranger in their kitchen.

7. Never Eat In Front Of Dogs

All that walking might make you hungry, but according to Miller, "Don't eat your lunch while walking a dog. Unless you really didn't want that sandwich."

The most important thing however, is not a don't, but a do. According to Brezina, the key to being a successful dog walker is simple. "You've gotta love dogs." Otherwise, "it's not worth it."

So if you have the type of love for dogs that makes you want to play with them, hurricane or shine, then grab a leash, and keep these seven tips in mind as you start walking.

Shayna Abramson is a native Manhattanite currently pursuing a master's degree in political science. She loves dogs, but loves her husband more.

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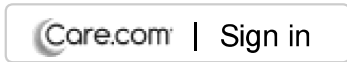
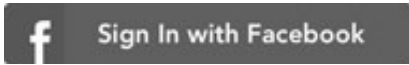
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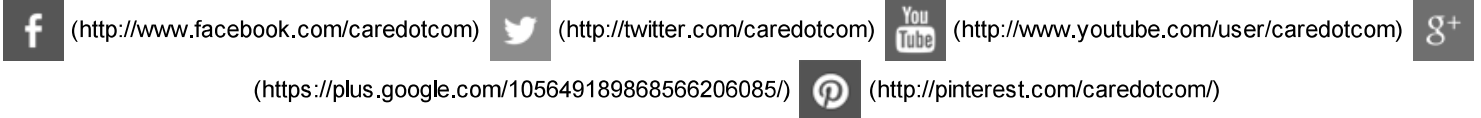


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