



## Dog Scouts of America Training & Safety Information

## Parkour 1 & 2

**WHAT IS PARKOUR?** Parkour is a great way to add interest to the walks you take with your dog. It further strengthens the relationship you have with your dog and is another way to get out and enjoy the great outdoors. This sport is intended to be accessible for dogs of all ages, sizes, and breeds. It helps improve focus and expend energy in young dogs and can help keep the mind of an older dog sharp.



**SAFETY:** Because the intention of Parkour is exploration and interaction with the surroundings, dogs will be jumping on, going under, climbing in, and going around objects and obstacles encountered while walking. Safety is extremely important. Badge evaluators will watch to make sure dogs demonstrate all required behaviors AND handlers follow all safety rules. Evaluators may call a halt to the evaluation at any time if she finds the dog to be overly anxious or stressed or if she determines there is a safety risk not addressed by the handler.

All dogs must wear an appropriate harness with a strap that comes between the dog's front legs along with an appropriate 6 foot leash. For Parkour 2, the harness should be used when safety calls for it, such as when gradually increasing the height of an obstacle for the dog to jump onto. However, there may be times when the harness might impede the dog from completing his task, like when he is asked to crawl under something quite low or with a dog very experienced in Parkour doing the uneven balance maneuver. When in doubt, use the harness! Safety comes first! The harness must have straps that are appropriately sized for the dog and straps must be a minimum of one inch in width for all but the smallest dogs.



The harness is intended to help with spotting and assist the handler should the dog start to slip or fall. Proper spotting technique requires the handler to be close to the dog with eyes on the dog at all times and hands ready to guide. The handler must avoid becoming distracted while the dog is performing any maneuver.

A leash should be used for Parkour 1 unless the leash itself poses a safety risk. The leash must be attached to the back of the harness and may be dropped if the area is safe in order for the dog to complete a maneuver. Certain situations might necessitate the dog being off leash but only if the area is safe and the dog is performing a simple maneuver at ground or otherwise low level. Long lines may be used for sends in busy areas, but the handler must be aware of the line at all times to avoid any dangerous situations or entanglements for people or dogs.

For Parkour 2, a leash is not always used. However, this does not mean that the dog is sent away from the handler to perform a required behavior. The dog should NEVER be out of reach so that the handler is unable to support the dog appropriately in either mounting or dismounting an obstacle. The only exception would be with a maneuver that a very experienced dog is quite skilled in. Even with a dog of this sort, the dog should have a harness on and the handler should be within reach of the harness whenever the dog is asked to do something that could be a safety risk (jump on something higher than



## Dog Scouts of America Training & Safety Information

## Parkour 1 & 2

shoulder height or something that moves.) Often, the handler's ability to grab the harness is more important than the leash with the more advanced Parkour 2 moves.



It is critical that the handler understands the importance of spotting and supporting the dog at all times AND how to spot the dog appropriately. A handler's lack of understanding of these important safety skills should be a disqualification for Parkour, especially as the difficulty of the exercises increases with Parkour 2. Any handler wanting to do Parkour with their dog should view this important video on [Spotting & Supporting for Parkour](#) before attempting to complete any of the required maneuvers. During the course of evaluation for the Parkour 2 badge, the handler must demonstrate a skill that requires the dog to be supported during

the mounting of the object.

Consider the shoulder height of the dog before allowing him to jump down onto any hard surface such as concrete, asphalt or natural rock. If the height of the obstacle is greater than the shoulder height of the dog, the handler must assist the dog in getting down from the obstacle. This does NOT mean you should lift the dog down. If the dog is jumping down to a soft surface such as dirt, grass or sand the height may be increased to twice the dog's shoulder height.

Due to the stress and strain that Parkour maneuvers can put on a dog's joints, every handler must evaluate whether or not Parkour activities are appropriate for their dog. Dogs under 1 year of age should not be doing Parkour moves that require them to dismount any object that is of wrist height or greater, and as such, they are not candidates for the Parkour badges.

**WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE:** Dogs must perform all obstacles independently and with confidence. The evaluator will determine if the dog is acting with confidence and will deny the badge if the dog performs the required behaviors but does not do so in a confident manner. Independence in this case does not include the dog performing required behaviors without the appropriate cues. Dogs should be able to and must demonstrate that they can distinguish between cues even when using the same object.



**HANDLER'S ACTIONS:** Handlers may touch their dog at any time in order to ensure safety but may not lift or pick up a dog and put them on an obstacle. The only time picking up a dog is allowed is to safely remove a dog from an obstacle, but this should be a very rare occurrence. Handlers should consider how their dogs will get **OFF** an obstacle before asking them to get **ON** it. It might be easy enough to lift a 20-pound beagle off a waist high bolder but impossible if the dog is a 100-pound St. Bernard. Both the Parkour 1 and Parkour 2 badges require that the dog be able to get both on and off obstacles.



## Dog Scouts of America Training & Safety Information

## Parkour 1 & 2

**CHOOSING APPROPRIATE PARKOUR OBSTACLES:** Handlers must be aware of the appropriateness of obstacles before asking the dog to engage with them. Playgrounds may be used only if playground rules allow it and only if children are not using the equipment at the time.

Traditional agility equipment is not generally appropriate to use for this badge. It may be used sparingly and only after a diligent effort has been made to locate another suitable obstacle. If agility equipment is used, the use must be very minimal and must be used in a novel or non-traditional way. An agility jump, for example, may not be used to meet the over requirement for the Parkour 1 badge. However, a pause table might be used for the 4 feet on requirement for Parkour 2 if the dog is very small and no other suitable object can be found in the environment. In this case the pause table would be used not for its intended purpose, but rather as an object that is 1 ½ times the little dog's height.

Every effort should be made to find objects in the environment for a dog to interact with before introducing an obstacle into the environment. Don't overlook obstacles such as benches, bleachers, railings, etc. Take advantage of what you find while on a walk in the woods to practice Parkour. A lake shore or beach is also a great place to find things for your dog to interact with as is an urban park, particularly one that has built obstacles for use in mountain biking.



Both the Parkour 1 and Parkour 2 badges have requirements for the height and width of various obstacles. When looking at the height of your dog look to the top of his shoulders. Shoulder width refers to the shoulder points on the front of the dog. However, this is **NOT** a sport that requires specific measures. You are not expected to take a ruler or tape measure with you on walks as that would ruin the experience that Parkour provides for you and your dog. The best rule of thumb here is to eyeball it. Know what your dog's shoulder height or what a 60-degree angle looks like before you go out. Make sure you can tell if a fallen tree is 6 inches wide or not. But be aware that your evaluator will eyeball it too, so you want to be sure you know understand these measurements in relation to your dog.

This sport really teaches us to look at an environment in a different way. When thinking of Parkour as we move through the world with our dogs, we may see things in our regular environments that we hadn't seen before. In this way, Parkour can enrich the lives of dogs and humans as it strengthens the bond between the two.



Always use caution when practicing Parkour. Accidents can happen very quickly and unexpectedly. When in doubt, safety comes first!

