

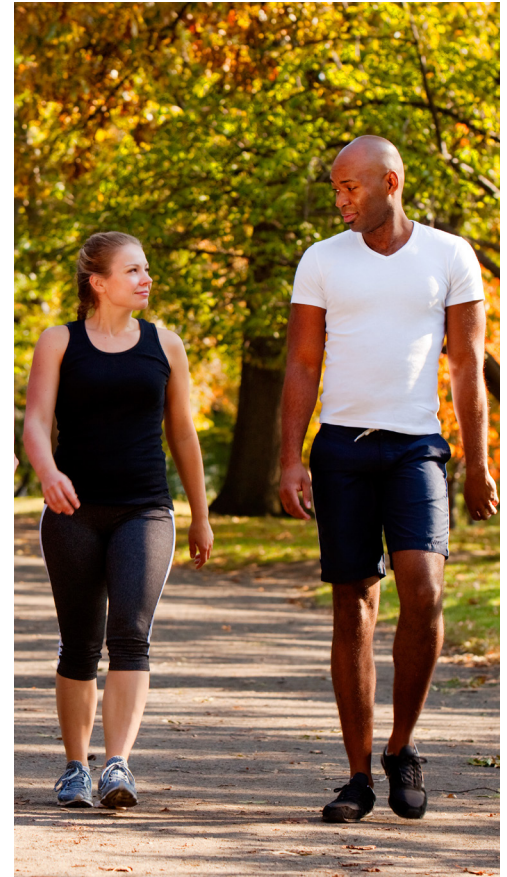
# Shared-use Park Etiquette and Safety:

## A Guide for Public Policy, the Health and Exercise Professional and Participants

Realizing the vision of a nation fully committed to health and wellness demands a new kind of collaboration among health and exercise professionals, health-care leaders, policymakers, employers and educators. The American Council on Exercise (ACE) welcomes the opportunity to take a leadership role and advocate for incorporating more activity-based programs into our communities.

Government leaders at the local, state and federal levels have the opportunity to play a more significant role in initiating, supporting and promoting activity-based programs and initiatives and to harness the expertise and leadership of exercise and other professionals living in the community.

The guidance presented here was developed by the American Council on Exercise to maximize safety, utility, preservation and enjoyment of community park resources for all users by establishing best practices for the use of public parks by health and exercise professionals and participants.



### FOR THE POLICY MAKER

Livable communities with space for residents to engage in active, healthy lifestyles are considered a cornerstone of public health policy and a key to curbing the obesity epidemic. The conversation often focuses on the infrastructure and ensuring that there are adequate spaces for recreation and activity for residents of the community in the form of parks, open spaces and sports fields. As residents of communities seek out opportunities to engage in physical activity with others, defining who is qualified to lead structured physical-activity programs in the community has resulted in a greater focus on, and interest in, shared-use agreements.

Conversations regarding shared use usually originate as a discussion around how to cultivate more physically active, dynamic community utilization of parks or how to effectively manage existing programs that are delivered in public parks.

ACE believes that a proactive approach to managing for- and not-for-profit entities that offer structured physical-activity and fitness programs in community

parks serves the community by creating safe opportunities for residents to engage in healthy, active lifestyle behaviors, and ensuring access for all users. ACE recommends the following best practices to policymakers for consideration.

Community parks should be available as a venue for structured, professional-led fitness activities organized by for- or not-for-profit entities subject to appropriate regulation, including the following:

- ▶ Establish a permit requirement with a reasonable fee to allow use of the parks.
- ▶ Set a limit on the number of permits issued for a given space to ensure access to all users.
- ▶ Establish reasonable revenue share/royalties consistent with other park vendor programs if applicable.
- ▶ Require professionals leading fitness instruction in parks to have a credible fitness certification that is accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) and proof of adequate liability insurance.



## FOR THE HEALTH AND EXERCISE PROFESSIONAL

ACE has developed “Shared-use Guidelines” to promote responsible and courteous conduct when leading fitness activities in public parks and settings. Keep in mind that the parks are available for the use and enjoyment of the entire community. The fitness community must be good stewards of the park and representatives of the profession as outlined in the ACE Shared Use Guidelines:

- ▶ **Comply with all laws and regulations that apply to the use of the parks:** Obtain and maintain all use permits and business licenses required by the municipality.
  - ▶ **Professionalism:** Maintain a current NCCA-accredited fitness certification, professional liability insurance that meets the requirements of the municipality or county and continuing education appropriate for the programs that are offered.
  - ▶ **Educate:** Provide education and leadership to your participants on best practices and etiquette for their interactions with other park users.
  - ▶ **Respect noise ordinances, posted park hours and holiday restrictions:** Limit classes and boot camps to established park hours and avoid the use of amplified music or equipment that generates excessive noise.
  - ▶ **Safety:** Familiarize yourself with the locations of medical and public safety resources and develop an emergency response plan specific to the park venue to create a safe exercise experience for your participants. Inspect the area where classes will be held prior to activity for hidden hazards and debris. Keep a cell phone and first-aid kit accessible.
- ▶ **Respect the rights of other park users:** Avoid crowding high-traffic areas of the park, including walkways and trails, and maintain access to park resources and facilities for others.
  - ▶ **Minimize impact on park infrastructure:** Avoid excessive wear and tear on the park, equipment and habitat. Park landscaping, furniture, lighting and other fixtures should not be used as attachment points for equipment unless specifically designed for fitness activities. Instructor-provided equipment should be limited to portable options.
  - ▶ **Leave no trace:** Remove all garbage and debris from the area following every class.
  - ▶ **Outreach:** Give back. Consider volunteering in outreach programs and events that are held in the park that support other park users or park maintenance or improvements.
  - ▶ **Communicate:** Create and maintain an open line of communication with neighbors of the park and the municipality to provide feedback and answer questions regarding your programs.
  - ▶ **Advocacy:** Take an active role in the political process that determines how parks and other community resources are managed and utilized to promote active, healthy lifestyles.



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