

# THE PRIMAL PLAY REFERENCE GUIDE

## What is Primal Play?

*A BDSM activity in which the participants set aside their conscious inhibitions and act in a way that is led by instinct, allowing for the exploration of raw emotions and sensations.*

- Often, but not always involves imitating the role of an animal. Sometimes this is a specific animal (i.e. a wolf or tiger), other times it is acting vaguely animal-like. Other times the players involved do not act like non-human animals at all, and behave more like primitive or uninhibited humans.
- Often, one player takes on a submissive role, and the other, a Dominant role. Primal Play can also be done in top/bottom roles, between switches, or completely egalitarian. Many primal play scenes also involve multiple players on both sides of the slash. Your Primal Character may end up being different than your typical D/s or BDSM role!
- Primal play is fundamentally about **experiencing deep vulnerability** in its purest form. It is about letting your walls totally down and being allowed totally inside someone else's walls in turn. Reveling in sensations, unveiling raw emotions, and creating intense physical stimuli are ways of interacting with this deep vulnerability.

## Misconceptions About Primal Play

1. *"Primal Play is always sexual! Primal Play is rough sex."*
  - a. While Primal Play can be sexual for many people, it is not always about sex and it is not the same thing as rough sex. Primal Play can be motivated by other things, such as a desire for deep emotional intimacy, a need for release, or a sense of self-expression. Rough sex can be a part of Primal Play, but not all rough sex *is* Primal Play, and Primal Play can be much more than rough sex.
2. *"Primal Play is all about acting like an animal."*
  - a. See bullet point #1 under "What is Primal Play?" — Primal Play can involve acting like an animal. It can also involve acting vaguely animalistic rather than like a specific animal. People also act like humans too, though without the usual social mores.
3. *"Primal Play is synonymous with takedown and capture and Predator/prey."*
  - a. While Predator/prey is a popular dynamic within Primal Play, and takedown and capture is one popular scene type, they are not the sum total of what Primal Play can be. If Predator/prey doesn't fit you, or you don't like takedown or resistance play, you have many other options under the Primal umbrella to choose from.
4. *"Primal Play is advanced BDSM and newbies should never attempt it."*
  - a. Primal Play is as advanced as you make it! Some scenes contain more advanced elements, like wrestling, bloodletting, and resistance play, but those are unnecessary for every Primal scene. Primal can also be gentle, loving, and exploratory. In fact, I believe that the methods I recommend for accessing your Primal headspace are

excellent for new folks learning how to connect with their bodies and with their partners for the first time.

5. *“Primal Play is incompatible with D/s relationships”*
  - a. Primal Play can be a beautiful part of D/s relationships, just as much as bondage is, CGL (caregiver/little) is, or any other kink. Not only do folks in power exchange relationships often have multiple roles and desires, but they can also ebb and flow between them. One day being a more traditional high-protocol D/s couple, and the next doing a no-protocol primal romp. Many animals have hierarchies and pecking orders in their social order, and Primal Players can take inspiration from that for their D/s relationships. It can also be a subtle background flavor most of the time, emphasizing the Primal aspect only during some scenes.
  
6. *“Primal Play means you don’t need limits or boundaries”*
  - a. Primal Play actually means you need *more* clear limits and boundaries, not less. While many do approach Primal Play from a CNC (consensual non-consent) framework, this means you must be very clear upfront with where you are comfortable going, what your goals are, and what you don’t want to experience. Primal play can include safewords and limits.
  
7. *“Being Primal means I can’t be expected to control myself. It’s just my instinct!”*
  - a. Primal Play requires exact control in order to do well. You still have to maintain self-control to avoid stepping on boundaries or ignoring a safeword. If you cannot control yourself, you are not ready to do Primal Play.
  
8. *“Being Primal is mysterious and superior to other ways of relating. Outsiders can’t be expected to understand. It is only for a select few.”*
  - a. Like other misunderstood practices, such as Tantra or transcendental meditation, Primal Play is sometimes discussed with an air of superiority and mystique by some of its practitioners. But in reality, Primal Play is not better than either other types of kink or vanilla ways of relating. It is a different way to get to the same place that many folks enjoy: deep intimacy, vulnerability, and trust while being able to express our genuine desires in a safe way.

### Primal Play Roles

- More submissive/bottom-type roles: prey, beta/omega, submissive mate
  - **Prey:** A primal who wants to be hunted by a predator.
  - **Beta/omega:** A primal that is part of a pack power structure with one or more other primals, who has a submissive or subservient role.
  
- Switch or power-neutral roles: packmate, egalitarian mate, “prey-dator”
  - **Prey-dator:** Someone that is both a prey and a predator. This can mean they take on a prey role with some partners and a predator with others. It can also

mean that they play both a predator and a prey role at the same time within one scene.

- **Mate:** Someone you engage in Primal Play with, typically with a deep emotional and/or romantic connection. Mates can either have a power exchange component to their dynamic, or they can be egalitarian, or switch.
- More Dominant/Top-type roles: Predator, Hunter, Alpha, Dominant Mate
  - **Predator:** A primal who wants to hunt and/or attempt to capture prey, typically while acting like an animal or in an animal-like way.
  - **Hunter:** A primal who typically maintains a human mindset and does not take on an animal role while hunting prey or otherwise engaging with Primal prey.
  - **Alpha:** A primal that is part of a pack power structure with one or more other primals, who has a Dominant or authoritative role.
- Common animal inspirations include tigers, wolves, foxes, bears, lions, dogs, cats, sheep, rabbits, deer, snakes, alligators, even dragons, were-creatures, or vampires!
- You can subvert these roles! You can be a trickster prey that gets one over on the Hunter or Predator, or a Hunter that gets taken down by a larger and stronger Predator, etc.
- Your role/character can take on many personality traits. Including bratty, sassy, defiant, resistant, brave, compliant, subservient, passive, weary, tricky, wily, silly, cruel, compassionate, cold, stern, or brutish.

#### Methods for Finding Your Primal Headspace

- Listen to a guided nature meditation or primal-themed ASMR recording if playing solo or without a partner. What sensations come up?

Only do these techniques with explicit, informed consent:

- **Shared breathing with a partner:** While in a comfortable pose such as sitting with your legs crossed, get as physically close to your partner as you can. Place one of your hands on their chest, and have them place one hand on your chest. Synchronize your breathing and take deep, slow, diaphragmatic breaths. Visualize your connection with your partner. If close enough, touch your foreheads together and continue breathing. See what energy naturally arises out of this exchange.
- **Hand-to-hand connection with a partner:** While in a comfortable pose such as sitting with your legs crossed, get as physically close to your partner as you can. Place your palms and fingers against their palms and fingers. While breathing calmly and deeply, concentrate on the connection through your hands. Move your hands in a way that feels authentic while staying in contact. Do you want to move with them? Resist them? Lead them? Do you want to follow, or flow together? Go back and forth?

- **Shared pulse with a partner:** While in a comfortable pose such as sitting with your legs crossed, get as physically close to your partner as you can. Reach out and touch their neck delicately (no choking!) with your fingertips, and have them do the same for you. Breathe slowly and calmly. Notice the sensations on your fingertips and what feelings arise in your head and/or your body. If neck touching does not feel safe in your body, please use an alternate location for the pulse such as the wrist.
- For all: focus on your bodily sensations. How does the temperature of your skin on theirs feel, or vice versa? What about the sound of their breathing or voice? Can you smell them? If it feels safe, make eye contact. What reaction does this cause?
- Ask yourself: *How does this make me feel? How does this make me feel about my partner? Do I want more of it or less?* Use [a feelings chart](#) if you are having trouble identifying what the feeling is.

### Telling a Partner About Primal Play

I do not recommend having Primal Play be the first thing that you introduce to a new partner who has never done kink before. Bring up your interest in a non-pressuring, pleasure-focused fashion, like, *“I really enjoy getting to be intimate with you, and I’ve been brainstorming some ways to do that even more. Do you know anything about kink?”* Leave it as an open dialogue. No deep, dark dramatic confessions.

If someone seems open to exploring, you can start sharing media and movies and go from there. I recommend *Beastars* for Primal Play and *Love and Leashes* for general BDSM.

Then once you’ve established that they’re generally into kink and enjoying it, then you can introduce the Primal Play element. Something like, *“So you remember the BDSM test we took? One of the scores I got really high on was Primal Prey / Predator. I did some reading about it and it looks really fun. Would you wanna learn more about it and maybe try it?”*

### Questions to ask During a Negotiation

- What is your previous experience with Primal Play, if any?
- What would you enjoy most, or think you would enjoy most, about our play together?
- Do you have training or experience doing [insert desired activity here]?
- Is this a sexual experience for you? What does that mean?
- Do you have any other goals during play? How do you want to feel?
- Are there any things that actively turn you off, or hard limits?
- How do you normally prefer to communicate during a scene?
- Do you go non-verbal, have trouble communicating, or have trouble hearing a safeword?
- What are your aftercare needs?

### Primal Play Scene Ideas

- Takedown and capture
- Rough body play, wrestling
- Hide-and-go-seek
- Tease and chasing around the house, aka light rough body play
- Resistance play
- Sensory exploration
- Grooming behaviors (hair brushing, licking)
- Acts of service (preparing a “nest”, getting food, etc)
- Primal dancing
- Restraint and bondage, especially with hands, body, or natural materials.
- Massage
- Pressure points
- Sharing food
- Wet and messy play
- Pinching, tickling
- Claws, biting, hair-pulling
- Blood, esp. fake blood
- Watersports
- Spitting
- Breeding roleplay
- Tools such as feathers, porcupine quills, stones, or metal claws
- Primal vocalizations (growling, howling, purring, etc)
- Knifeplay “skinning”

### Scene Space Creation Tips

Use all of your senses when creating a scene space. Even small adjustments can take a simple apartment and turn it into something entirely different.

1. **Temperature:** What feels comfortable for being naked? What about a warm spot, especially a sunny spot by a window? What about a crackling fireplace, a warm sunroom, or a chilly, cave-like basement?
2. **Lighting:** Soft, filtered natural light, direct sunlight, complete darkness, or red-hued lightbulbs. Whatever suits your vibe just do it with intention! A dimmer switch and red bulbs can transform a basic apartment into a completely different space.
3. **Sight:** Create a separation from everyday life detritus. Use screens, room dividers, curtains, or sheets to carve out a separate area. It’s hard to get into headspace when your work laptop and printer are in eyesight! Plants also make for great practical decoration if you can’t go outside.
4. **Sound:** Music! Nature sounds, meditation music, whatever gets you into your headspace. Again, let me remind you here that [I have a playlist](#) with 6+ hours of different primal mood music. Also good for covering up noise to ward against noisy neighbors.
5. **Touch:** Textural furnishings. Soft blankets, sheepskin, faux fur rugs. Leather furniture or pillowcases. Jute rugs, tatami mats, wool, linen. If you want to do any rough body play, I recommend having some crash matting for maximum safety.
6. **Smell:** fresh grass, herbs, essential oils, musk, amber, ozone. Consider incense, flameless candles, wax warmers, and room / soft furniture spray. Candles may not be the best choice since you are likely to not be able to watch the flame continually and could knock it over.

But you don’t have to be confined to just your living space either. Dungeons can sometimes offer suitable primal spaces. You can also take your play outdoors at remote camping sites,

off-the-grid yurts, a private backyard, or a similar environment. Just take care to ensure that you will actually be secluded and have the space to yourself. This allows for the best opportunities for a genuine “wild hunt” feeling. But I would not recommend playing this remotely unless the person you are playing with is also a trusted partner and you have some way to call for help.

### Safety & Aftercare Concerns

This play can be very emotionally intense. Leave room for lots of aftercare, either by yourself or with your partner. Standard aftercare recommendations apply: watching a relaxing movie, taking a bath or nap, or going for a walk. Etc. Especially if your play was very physical, be extra sure to get some hydration, take care of any bruising, and eat a healthy meal or snack.

Biting, exchanging fluids, drawing blood, wrestling, and restraint all carry their own risks and safety concerns. You should be well-versed in them before engaging in play with those elements. Make sure you have a plan in place for dealing with injuries, doctor visits, and so on. I recommend [knowing how to check for signs of a concussion](#). Watch out for those signs for several days after the scene is over, and the hours immediately after.

Remember, you can't get what you want unless you ask for it! So be sure to leave room and ask for aftercare time while you're negotiating.

### Recommended Resources and Further Reading

- [The Ferrous Scrolls aka the Iron Wynch Blog](#)
- [Sofia Gray Blog](#)
- [Wiley Wolfe](#) and [Recorded Classes](#)
- [Primal Support Group](#) (online)
- [The Animal Within Fetlife Group](#)
- [Lee Harrington](#) (often teaches Primal classes, so keep an eye out)
- [Kink University Primal Play How-to](#) (warning: VERY NSFW!)
- [Primal Play by MsFoxNYC](#)