



Cocker Spaniel

Exercise Chart

Daily requirements by life stage — covering duration, walking distance, activity types, and seasonal adjustments.

DAILY EXERCISE BY LIFE STAGE

PUPPY

Growing Pup

0 – 12 months

5×

minutes per month of age

2 months	10 min
4 months	20 min
6 months	30 min
8 months	40 min max

⚠ Soft surfaces only. No sustained pavement walking until 12 months. Growth plates are still open.

ADULT · WORKING LINE

Working-Line Adult

1 – 7 years

90–120

minutes daily · split sessions

Morning session	Advanced mental work
Evening session	Physical activity
Weekend outing	5–6 mile trail hike
Key rule	Mental work essential

ADULT · SHOW LINE

Show-Line Adult

1 – 7 years

60–90

minutes daily · two sessions

Morning session	45–50 min off-lead
Afternoon session	25–35 min leashed
Walking portion	50% of total
Mental work	15 min minimum

English Cocker standard. American Cocker: 45–60 min. See breed note below.

SENIOR

Senior Spaniel

8+ years

30–45

minutes daily · gentle pace

Preferred surface	Flat, even ground
Best exercise	Swimming
Mental work	10–15 min scent work
Arthritis days	Skip walk → indoor scent

You cannot exhaust a working Cocker physically – extra walks build fitness, not calm. Mental tasks are non-negotiable.

Mental engagement matters more as physical capacity declines, not less. Scent games replace walks on bad days.

5' The Puppy Five-Minute Rule

Five minutes of structured walking per month of age, once or twice daily. This rule exists because over-exercising a puppy before growth plates close (12–14 months) risks permanent joint damage. Puppies will show no signs of fatigue – stop before they do.

3 months = 15 min

5 months = 25 min

7 months = 35 min

9 months = 45 min

WALKING DISTANCE REFERENCE

HOW MANY MILES

Distance Guide

Build mileage gradually – no more than +1 mile per week from a 2-mile baseline.

CONDITIONED ADULT

4–5 mi

Per single outing. Built up over weeks, not assumed from day one.

DAILY WALKING BASELINE

3–4 mi

At moderate pace across two sessions. ~75 min total walking time.

HOW TO SPLIT THE DAILY TOTAL

Ideal Daily Exercise Composition

For a healthy adult Cocker on a 75-minute day

Walking 50%

Walking (40–45 min) – foundation for joint health and socialization

Mental work (15 min) – more fatiguing than physical activity alone

Play / retrieval (20–25 min) – satisfies working instinct

Mental 20%

Play / Retrieval
30%

ACTIVITY REFERENCE

Physical Activities

Listed lowest to highest joint impact

Mental Stimulation

Replaces (not supplements) walks on recovery days

Swimming

Best for seniors and joint conditions. No impact.

Walking

The foundation. 50% of daily exercise target.

Hiking

Excellent for adults. Build to 5 miles over weeks.

Retrieval / Fetch

Higher impact — involves sprinting. Limit on hard surfaces.

Interval Running

10-min sessions only. Use a no-pull harness. Not for puppies.

Scent Work

Hide treats across multiple rooms. Progress to scent discrimination.

Puzzle Feeders

Replace food bowl. Increase difficulty as proficiency builds.

Snuffle Mat

Foraging behaviour. Calming for anxious dogs.

Trick Training

Multi-step commands. Builds focus and handler bond.

Hide and Seek

Hide owner or toy. Engages tracking instinct naturally.

Cocker-Specific Hazard: Grass Seeds & Foxtails

The dense ear feathering and paw fur Cockers carry traps grass seeds easily. After every trail or grass walk, run your fingers through the ear feathering and between paw pads before anything else. A grass seed embedded in the ear canal is a veterinary emergency — the most common summer trail injury in the breed.

SEASONAL ADJUSTMENTS



Summer Protocol

- Exercise before 8 AM or after 7 PM. Pavement can exceed 60°C in afternoon sun.
- Pavement test: hold palm flat for 7 seconds. Uncomfortable = too hot for paws.
- Carry water on any outing over 20 minutes. Stop at first sign of panting or pace slowing.
- Check ears and paws for grass seeds after every trail walk.
- Light-coloured Cockers: limit midday sun on muzzle and ear flaps.



Winter Protocol

- 5-minute gentle warm-up before any increase in pace. Cold stiffens joints.
- Check paw pads after walks for cracks (dry air) and de-icer irritation.
- Apply paw wax (Musher's Secret) before walks in icy or salted conditions.
- Dogs with arthritis: below 5°C, substitute outdoor walk with indoor scent session.
- Working-line and lean dogs: consider a coat below 5°C (41°F).

OPTIMAL DAILY TIMING

7–8 AM

5–7 PM

11–3 PM

MIDDAY · AVOID IN SUMMER

MORNING SESSION ·
RECOMMENDED

Coollest pavement. Natural activity peak. Sets a calm baseline for the day ahead. Priority session when only one is possible.

EVENING SESSION ·
RECOMMENDED

Temperatures have dropped. Decompression walk after the day. Aids overnight settling for dogs prone to anxiety.

Peak pavement temperature. Highest UV. In cooler months, an acceptable window for light leash walks.

Vet note: This chart is a general reference for healthy Cocker Spaniels. Always consult a veterinarian for dogs with diagnosed health conditions, post-surgery recovery, or sudden changes in exercise tolerance. A vet experienced with sporting breeds will provide more breed-specific guidance.

COCKER SPANIEL
EXERCISE REFERENCE
BREED GUIDE SERIES