



What is a Cocker Spaniel?

Cockers are the most in-your-face, loving, brilliant, manipulative, sensitive, demanding, conniving, versatile, enthusiastic dogs you'll ever know - my Doxie, Snoopy, runs a close second.

These are not your lay-down-in-the-corner quietly dogs. Cockers demand to be with you. They must be with you in order to live, to breathe, to survive. *You are their God.* Are you worthy of such devotion?

No one in this world will every be as overjoyed to see you as your Cocker. Their tails will be a blur they'll wag so fast. Now I ask you, "Who else would ever wiggle so hard when they see you that they'll pee all over the floor?"

And oh, those expressive eyes - you won't have a prayer against them. Just give in and give them whatever they want now, you will anyway.

If you bring a Cocker into your life, prepare to never be alone again. You will share everything with them, including your bed and favorite chair. This can and most likely will have a serious impact on your personal life. Cockers are masters at using their bodies as wedges between you and anyone else in *their* bed. Oops, I mean your bed. Before I forget I should mention that you really need to have some kind of soft rug on the floor by your side of the bed, just in case you should slide out. As small as they are, when a Cocker stiff legs you while you're sleeping, they can move you over, and in no time at all you'll find your butt hanging off of the bed without any covers. If this technique isn't successful, they'll sleep across the bed, forcing you to hug the edge for dear life. Don't worry, it won't take long until you'll learn to hold onto the covers in your sleep.

Boy will you be astounded at how long a Cocker can make themselves when they stretch full out, and how they are as heavy as concrete when you try and move them over. But, not to worry, you'll adjust. You will sleep in the same position all night so that you don't have to disturb them. If you ever find out how they can snore so loudly (Did I forget to mention that?) yet wake up at the sound of a pin drop and bark with pitches that will curl your hair, please enlighten us. They're such great multitaskers, even in their sleep!

One thing that you will truly appreciate about sleeping with your Cocker is that you'll never be late for work. Cockers stomachs work like alarm clocks. If you forget to set your alarm, expect a complete Cocker face washing to wake you up. Unfortunately, this can be problematic on days off. If that doesn't get you up, standing on your chest or using your bladder as a pillow will definitely do it.

Did you know that Cockers are psychic? They'll know everything you're thinking. In fact, they'll know everything you're going to do before you do it. Cockers will even know you better than you know yourself, and they'll have your routines down pat. Forget about sneaking out of the house or trying to hide something from them, instead you'll have to try and outwit them (ya right). One of the funniest sights in my house is Connor, my black Cocker, slinking out of my bedroom with a white sock hanging out of his mouth. I can hear his brain working, "If I just get a little lower to the ground she'll never see me."

Did you ever see a periscope in action? A Cocker's nose is a living periscope. Up goes the head, nose in the air, a sniff, and they know. The nose knows everything. One sniff and they know what something is, where it is, and how much of it there is. Then they're off to get it. A Cocker's nose

rules them. Since, a Cocker Spaniel is a helper, and a pack animal. You are their leader and they are your servants, and they will have this nose in everything you do.

If you don't want their help, which will devastate them, you will need to learn the art of distraction. Treats work for the time they last, minutes maybe. Keep in mind that Cockers are chow hounds and, unless you have a heart made of steel, you'll give into their begging eyes, which is why many tend to get chunky.

A Cocker is a thinking dog, and very sensitive emotionally. Tactful, positive discipline and motivational training (again with food please) is the only way to go with them. Just keep in mind that if your Cocker isn't listening to you or you think they have hearing problems, do this test. Go into another room and whisper the word, *cookie*. More than likely they'll come running. This is what is known in the Cocker world as *selective deafness*. Did I forget to mention that Cockers are also opportunists who live by the motto *What's Mine is Mine and What's Yours is Mine*. Use this to your advantage and life will be good.

You will be very proud of your Guard Cocker. No food will ever be stolen from your house. They will gladly stand guard over all food cooking or laid out on the table. Please don't turn your back on a table full of food and a Cocker Spaniel — that's a recipe for disaster.

If cooking was included in obedience competitions, Cockers would win hands down. You may not think they're learning when you cook but they are. When that food timer goes off and the food is done, just watch them run around the house to find you so you can serve it *to them*. My guys are so conditioned that when the timer goes off for any reason, they all run to the stove and line up like toy soldiers whether there's food on it or not.

And here comes a fun part of sharing life with a Cocker — the bathroom. If you tend to forget to close the door tightly behind you, it'll only be moments before you find a pair of eyeballs staring up from between your knees while you sit on *your* throne doing *your* business. Haven't you learned yet that *your* business is *their* business?

Isn't it great never being alone? And for all the time you spend grooming yourself, you'll need double that time to groom your Cocker everyday. It takes lots of work to stay as beautiful as they are.

I don't think anyone truly appreciates the Cocker's preoccupation with the bathroom. Cockers are famous for their love affair with toilet paper — they play in it, eat it, and run through the house wrapped in it. It doesn't matter if you give them filet mignon for dinner, there's just something irresistible about this stuff. Just like they savor eating used, snotty tissues - oh jeeze. Toilet paper orgies will become a welcome part of your everyday routine if you learn to appreciate them. You can skip the gym with the workout you'll get picking up the 1000 sheets that Scott's really does have. I should know, I've counted a roll or two or a hundred.

You might also want to get rid of the garbage pails in your bathroom (and around the house for that matter) and pick up your clothes off the bathroom floor. There's nothing more embarrassing than having your Cocker prance through the house holding your unmentionables in their mouth and with such pride I might add. Hopefully, you won't have company at the time.

You will be living in a state of awe at how fast these little sweeties will accomplish their damage. They're such intelligent and creative buggers.

Don't let their size fool you. Thirty pounds of Cocker is a lot of dog. Just ask my chiropractor when my neck goes out from being pulled behind them after they take *me* for a walk, or after a night of sleeping in contorted positions so I don't disturb them.

Until you see it with your own eyes, you just can't imagine how they can hurl over a four foot fence or jump on the countertops or track an entire kitchen with muddy paw prints in a few steps. I never could figure out how mine could cover an entire kitchen with mud, table included, when they never left my sight. How do they do it? Its amazing I tell ya.

Cockers are such an enigma. Of all the Cockers I know, and that's quite a few, they'll run full out into the mud, bury themselves in the snow, and rub dead stinky worms all over them, yet they'll stop on a dime at the doorway when you want them to do their business and it's raining. Go figure? Forget about pushing them out, they'll plant themselves like a stone statute.

How do I love them, let me count the ways!

Getting the picture? Having a cocker is a full-time job and a marriage of souls. Cockers will steal your heart and change your life.

Is a Cocker for you? Only you can decide. Cockers are soulful dogs. They need to be loved, cherished and adored with the same depth of emotions that they give. So, if you truly want one, do your homework well and learn all you can about them and then love them with all you have in you. Cockers deserve nothing less.

Gina Ruggiero von Eiff

[written under the watchful eyes of sixteen paws]