The following extracts are from Alex Johnston's booklet "Understanding Your Beagle" A hard copy of the booklet (in it's entirety) is available to purchase from Beagle Welfare.

Destructive behaviour when left and separation anxiety

Often it is hard to tell whether your dog is destroying the house while you are out because he is bored and lonely or whether there is an underlying problem caused by severe stress and anxiety about being left on his own

Separation anxiety is rare but very distressing for the dog and owner. Symptoms include whining and pacing as you prepare to leave, dilated pupils, panting and drooling, house soiling, howling and barking once you've left and the destruction of door and window frames.
On the other hand if the symptoms include barking, destruction of furniture, cushions and dog beds and stealing food items from bins or worktops then it's more likely to be boredom - coupled with an incomplete house training if you come home to find little 'gifts'.
As you can see, it isn't always clear! If your dog seems unconcerned as you prepare to leave and shows interest in a small amount of food scattered on the floor then it's probably boredom. If your dog is obviously under severe stress that visibly increases as you get closer to leaving then it's more likely to be separation anxiety. Separation anxiety will need to be diagnosed and treated with an individual treatment plan by a behaviourist, via your vet.

Fortunately, loneliness and boredom can be dealt with more easily and there's a lot you can do to alleviate it, even if you're regularly away from the house. If your hound is also eliminating in the house then you'll need to re-address his house training and confine him to a small non-carpeted area, such as the kitchen, while you sort it out.

It may be that your hound isn't getting enough stimulation during the day which means he has extra energy to burn off and so he'll entertain himself by chewing the cushions and barking at passers by out of the window. This is especially likely if your hound is under three years old.
Increasing the amount of exercise he's getting on a daily basis will normally help and finding an agility or other training club will give you an evening of bonding and entertainment for you both. Another great way to fill in some time is by providing hollow food-filled toys which you may like to give when you're leaving him alone in the house. If you can entertain a dog for the first 20 minutes after you leave then he has a much greater chance of settling quietly.

Kongs

These are odd shaped hollow rubber toys that can be stuffed with food and, with a bit of practice, can provide good quality entertainment for a dog on his own for half an hour or more. Be careful if you've more than one hound, as disputes could arise over ownership! Kongs come in a range of sizes and are available at most pet shops. You should make sure any food you do use is taken off your Beagle's daily calorie allowance, since Beagles are very prone to putting on weight. When first introducing a Kong toy to a dog, you should make it fairly easy for the dog to get at the food. Once he's hooked then the trickier you can make it to empty, the more entertainment it will provide.

Ideas for Kong fillings

Iced biscuits
Fill a Kong with dried food then place it in a bowl of warm water until the biscuit has gone soft. Next, simply pop it in the freezer overnight to provide a long lasting, cooling summer snack.

Tasty wedge
First snap a long hard dog biscuit in half. Next put a cube of cheese in the bottom of the Kong and then push the half biscuit all the way in, broken end first. (You may have to use a bit of force.) Serve!

Cheese sandwich
Alternate a squirt from a tube of low fat cheese spread with a small hard dog biscuit until you can't force any more into the Kong.

Buster cube
Other toys, such as a Buster Cube, dispense dried food as they’re pushed around the floor and can also provide lots of entertainment. Do make sure that you're not over feeding by taking the dried food equivalent from your hound's daily allowance.

Finally, remember that however entertaining these toys can be, they're still no substitute for company. If you're leaving your Beagle alone for more than four hours at a time then you'll need to arrange a dog walker or a sitter to make sure his welfare is not compromised.

Attention seeking

Some hounds will also chew, dig or destroy items - even when you are there and they definitely aren't feeling lonely. Sometimes it seems as if they will go to great lengths to invent new and annoying ways to get you up from your chair

Attention seeking is as good a description as any, but it does have quite negative associations.
All normal people and dogs need and enjoy attention. Owning a dog is a big responsibility and shouldn't be entered into lightly. Expecting a young dog to be satisfied with two half hour walks round the block on the lead and then settle quietly for the rest of the day is not reasonable and you should be prepared to spend a great deal more time than this to keep him entertained. For centuries, Beagles have been selectively bred to follow a hare at a flat out run for up to five hours, singing as they go, several times a week. It's not surprising, then, that a fit and healthy hound can't sit still in his basket for 23 hours a day!

Having said that, some hounds do take attention seeking to new heights by taking objects and running away with them, but it's often the owners that are encouraging them without realising it. Even if the attention you give your Beagle seems to be quite negative to you, for instance firmly telling him 'no', can be far better to many dogs than being ignored and they will work hard to gain your eye contact. If every time a Beagle picks up the TV remote control you jump to your feet and chase him to get it back, he quickly learns that picking up the remote is the fastest way to start a game and get attention. If you then swap the remote for a dog toy and play with him, he's doubly rewarded for picking up the 'forbidden item' and it will be the TV remote as his first choice next time. On the few occasions he picks up the dog toy first you may look at him and say 'good boy' then return to watching the TV. You have swiftly taught him that dog toys really aren't as much fun as remote controls!

If you know your hound is likely to start a game an hour after he's eaten, then why not bite the bullet and choose a toy to start the game ten minutes earlier. That way you'll be rewarding his quiet behaviour with lots of fun and the remote control will avoid gaining extra teeth marks. In fact, you should start to think a lot more about the type of behaviour you're accidentally rewarding on a day to day basis.

As an example, if your hound is jumping around as you prepare his food then you'll be rewarding jumping around with a very large food reward! Next time he's hungry he'll jump more. However, if you teach him 'sit' and he sits for 30 seconds before you feed him then you're rewarding the still behaviour instead. He's a little more likely to sit when he wants something in the future. In the same way, if he's jumping around and barking as you put on his lead and you open the door to be dragged out for a walk, then jumping and barking are being rewarded. If you wait for him to sit before opening the door, then you're rewarding sitting and he'll do it more often. If you're really smart you'll put the lead on ten minutes before you leave and go and watch a bit more TV or do the washing up. That way he'll have calmed right down and you can grab his lead and instantly reward calm, quiet, half asleep behaviour.

Everything that your Beagle likes doing can be used as a reward for a bit of good behaviour. A sit before you let him run and sniff in the park, a short recall with the lead on before he greets his doggy friends, another sit before you fuss him when you come

back from the supermarket - the list is endless! His day is probably full of rewarding experiences and all you need to do is help him pause a while before he gets them.

Puppy Biting

Using their teeth during play with other dogs is normal for puppies, but they need to learn that it's wrong to use their teeth when playing with people

An adult dog that's cornered, injured or frightened may bite, but if he's learned as a puppy to inhibit this bite then he's much less likely to do any damage. This is especially important if your dog will ever come in contact with children. To avoid confusion and frustration it's best to teach a puppy to stop biting in 3 stages, each stage taking about a week.

Week 1
Every time your puppy bites your hands hard enough for it to hurt, you should yelp or shout 'ouch' and turn away as if you're nursing your wounds. Ignore him for at least 20 seconds before restarting the game or interaction.

Week 2
Continue as before, but this time yelp even if he bites you gently or if he tugs at clothing.

Week 3
Yelp and stop the game if he even brushes your skin or clothing with his mouth. If he touches your hand or clothing with his teeth whilst playing with a toy, then end the game immediately and put the toy away for that session.

Still having problems?
This process doesn't work for all puppies. If he has learned to bite to get your attention or if he's well over 14 weeks old then he may get more excited when you yelp. If you've tried yelping for a week or two and things aren't getting any better then you'll need to change your approach. Instead of yelping, give a calm and clear 'no' when he bites and then immediately pick him up and isolate him in another room, or behind a baby gate for two minutes.

If he gets more excited when picked up, then just leave the room quickly and close the door behind you. After two minutes he can join you again, but don't immediately start playing. Ignore him until he's sitting or lying down quietly before you reward him by restarting the game. If you've an adult dog who is over enthusiastic with his teeth, then the second approach is the most useful. Older dogs are perfectly capable of learning that using their teeth recklessly when playing with toys or taking treats will end the fun stuff. If your fingers or hands are nipped when playing with 'tug' toys then the easiest approach is to say 'no' as you drop the toy and just walk away immediately. This only works of you're playing with your dog and you need a different approach if you're trying to get stolen items back. (See the next section for more

information about this.) If you don't take the time to let dogs know that you're unhappy then they can't be expected to realize they need to be careful. The easiest way to do this is to stop playing with careless dogs the moment they get too rough.

In the same way, if your fingers are bitten when you give him a treat, you should let him try to take it but instantly say 'no' and take your hand away without giving up the treat if you feel any tooth pressure at all. If he's very rough then you may need to wear gloves at the beginning.
Praise lavishly when he starts to take the food more gently and gradually build up to the point where you don't feel any teeth at all. This is an exercise you need to work on when you aren't training other things (such as sit or down) at the same time. If you want to use food rewards for other exercises then keep your fingers well away by dropping them on the floor until the grabbing is under control.

Possessiveness

One form of behaviour that isn't necessarily attention seeking is stealing food items, wrappers or other items that can be seen by your hound as being valuable

I use the word 'steal', but it's important to remember that theft is a very human concept. Beagles tend to see it as having the opportunity to possess items or eat food that others have carelessly overlooked. After all, if you really wanted it you wouldn't have left it lying around on the coffee table! This has nothing to do with concepts of 'dominance' or status in the household - in fact, it's often the lowest of individuals that guards the most vigorously.
Once a Beagle has a food item, it's probably a lost cause - though if it's a roast chicken, you may have a chance of getting some of it back if he tries to swallow it whole, so prevention is more realistic than a cure. If your hound is stealing food from the bin, then move it out of his reach behind a cupboard door or at the back of a worktop and never leave food close to the edge of kitchen worktops when you leave the room or turn your back! Removing temptation is the simplest way of avoiding problems.

Expensive repercussions
What’s more of a problem is when a hound picks up an object that isn't edible, but could have expensive repercussions. This may be in value of the object (yes, the TV remote control again as well as mobile phones, wallets and so on) or from the vet's bill incurred by needing such items as peach stones, socks, gravel and so on surgically removed. Picking up this type of article can often start as attention seeking, but often things can escalate quite quickly and the hound ends up frightened by your reaction. You might think that a sensible dog will then avoid picking something up the next time.

Unfortunately dogs' brains don't work this way and they often just learn to grab it faster, run under the dining room table and brace themselves for a confrontation.

Fear
In these situations, aggression from your Beagle when confronted usually stems from two sources.
a) The fear of losing the object
b) The fear of you taking it by using threats or force and the dog's fear of getting hurt
The first fear, that of losing the object, is often made worse by our reactions when the object is first investigated. If we leap up and lunge for the mobile phone the first time it's sniffed, then we're teaching the dog how valuable it's and if we're willing to fight for it then it really must be worth having! Instead, try to approach calmly and gently say 'thank you' as you remove it - and then remember to keep it on a shelf in future! Reward him with attention or a game and treats when he chooses to play with a dog toy instead. Dogs learn quickly if they get a rewarding reaction when forbidden objects are picked up and no reaction when they play with their toys. Without knowing it, we've accidentally taught them to behave in exactly the opposite way to the one we'd like. More toy play, toys that dispense food (stuffed Kongs, Buster Cubes and so on, loads of exercise and plenty of fun training sessions will help by giving more acceptable outlets for a hound's energy.

You may have inherited a Beagle that already has a problem and has started guarding stolen objects and this is when the second fear of getting hurt comes in. If you haven't trained him to ignore inappropriate objects, then it's very easy for confrontations to escalate and the dog to feel the need to defend himself. In bad cases, just the presence of an object near the dog can trigger defence reactions and sometimes something as simple as staring at the dog whilst saying his name could have meant the start of a confrontation in the past and may trigger growling or snapping.

So what can you do
Initially the dog's perception needs to be changed from 'my owner will use force to take things from me' to one of 'good things happen when I give up an object'. It goes without saying that you must be very careful with a dog that may bite. If you have a dog that has already bitten, or if you feel he could do so, then you must look for professional help. Under no circumstances should you ever allow young children near a dog with this kind of problem, even when supervised.

Troubleshooting
Let’s now look at a few common difficulties such as:
a) a dog that doesn't have a guarding problem and you want to keep it that way - perhaps if you're expecting a baby or young visitors?
b) a dog that’s starting to growl more as he or she hits adolescence?
c) a rescue or welfare hound and are noticing signs that he or she is unhappy about giving up objects but he hasn't bitten anyone?
The first step is to teach a reliable command you can use to distract him when you catch the dog with something and 'sit' is probably the most effective. From now on you should hand feed the dog its meals; it's easier with dried food and use a spoon if you feed tinned. Ask for a sit before each piece is given until your hound sits automatically when

you are holding food. Don't teach him to sit by pushing down on the hound's bottom. Instead, hold the food just above his nose and then slowly move it back so he has to look up and back and then feed and praise when his bum goes down. In case he lies over objects, also teach him to sit up from a lying position by using the same action.

The next stage
Alternate throwing the reward behind him for sitting, with rewarding from your hand. Throw the food far enough away from him to take at least ten seconds to find it and come back for more. As he starts his return you can call his name and get in some recall practice at the same time! Going away from you to get thrown food will give you a chance to pick up the object safely when his back is turned later on.

You may also need to make your hound more comfortable with hands near his head and mouth. Once he's sitting happily (with his mouth empty!) gently touch his head and face before giving the treat. Don't go too fast, he needs to be happy with slight, gentle touches before you try longer strokes. Only when he's totally happy and has an 'expectant' look that says he knows the treat is following can you gently touch his lips and teeth.

You must wait until his sit is immediate and reliable and he's happy about his face being touched before you start to work with an object near the dog. I really do mean happy - just putting up with it isn't good enough! If he freezes, growls or shows the whites of his eyes, then he may have more of a problem about being touched and you should seek professional help.

On guard
Give him an article he can investigate, but not one that he's likely to scoot off with and guard. Drop it in front of him then let him take it or investigate before asking calmly for the sit. Confine him to one room so he can't disappear, but never chase him if he tries to take the object elsewhere. Most dogs can't sit and hold something at the same time unless specifically trained to do so and with any luck he'll drop the object. If he doesn't then just stand still and wait. His jaws will get tired eventually! When he sits and drops the object you should throw the reward behind him and pick up the object before he comes back.
Now immediately give it back to him and repeat, repeat, repeat until he doesn't even look at the object but comes and sits for the reward instead! After ten minutes of this he'll be tired, happy and probably not want the object any more!

You'll need to do this same exercise over and over before you start to try it with more interesting objects. With loads of repetition this will teach him that running away from objects equals 'good thing happening'. Until you can do this with any object anywhere, you shouldn't even think about putting your hand near his mouth while he has something in it.
Gradually build up the type of object until you can do this with anything he has guarded in the past and only then you can go on to gently taking something from his mouth. Start with a low value object again, one he is happy to pick up but not one he has guarded in the past. You may have to wiggle it around to encourage him to play and hold it in his

mouth. Give it to the dog and then (if it's safe) put a really yummy treat such as liver, chicken or cheese, by his nose and catch the object as he drops it to eat the treat saying 'thank you' as his mouth opens and then give the article back! Do it all again! Take it slowly and build up to more interesting objects before going back to easy items and saying 'thank you' without the treat in your hand. When he drops it without having been shown the treat first, you should get a treat immediately from a nearby pot or your pocket to reward him.

How long will it take?
Well, it depends on a number of things such as how long he's been guarding and the strength of his reaction. You realistically need to think about hundreds of toy and food swaps in all areas by lots of different (carefully coached) people to make a reasonable impact. Mum swapping for socks in the kitchen will not mean the hound won't guard a chocolate wrapper from Uncle Fred in the garden. The good news is, although you'll have to start from scratch for each new person in each new place, progress gets faster and faster once the hound has learnt the 'game'. Once things are running smoothly you can stop him forgetting what he's learned.

Tricks of the trade
a) Keep up the hand feeding for sits and remember a dog that sits reliably on cue can't jump up or run off either!
b) Reward him with treats and attention for sitting and giving you his toys, then give the toys back and play!
c) Ignore him if he picks up inappropriate articles (see the section on **Attention Seeking** for more ideas) or gently take expensive and dangerous objects and put them out of reach. If it's a really lovely object (such as a food wrapper) then reward heavily (with better food!) for giving it up.
Don't be tempted to test him by taking away his food bowl while he's eating. Instead, approach it occasionally (if he is happy to let you) with a few extra tasty treats and pop them in the bowl as he eats. He will soon start to welcome your hands near his bowl!

Guarding furniture

Beagles that show aggression over toys or stolen items often demonstrate it when owners try to move them from the furniture

People often assume that dogs instinctively know that they should get down from furniture when told to 'get off' without having any training of what 'off' means. An owner staring and speaking harshly is often seen by the dog as a totally unprovoked threat of aggression, since dogs never move each other around in this way. Some dogs can get very growly if they think you're likely to wander up and 'start something'. It's so much easier to simply call your dog from the furniture for a food treat when you want to move him. If he has a comfy bed of his own, then the sofa will become much less appealing. Make sure that his own bed is warm and cosy and out of the way of banging doors and clumsy feet, but still close enough to family activity. Reward him for using it by feeding, praising and giving attention when he's in it but don't touch him if he's tired, sleeping or

has reacted badly to approaches in the past. If you're worried he'll react badly when disturbed, simply stick to dropping food treats to him as you pass by and he'll soon start to look forward to you coming near.

New baby? A common sense approach

Probably the most important thing to do before your new baby arrives is to deal with any behaviour problems your hound may have now, rather than trusting to luck and leaving it until the last minute

Get your Beagle used to being confined behind a child gate, so you can separate him easily when you can't supervise. Teach him to go and settle on his bed for a food treat while you pretend to change a nappy and sort out any lead pulling problems before you start to walk him beside the pram.

When you bring the baby home, it can get things off to a smooth start if you can ask Grandma or a friend to carry in the new baby while you greet the dog. He'll be excited to see you and you risk the baby being scratched if you're holding him while trying to get through the door. A good idea is to have a food stuffed Kong toy ready to keep him busy while you get yourselves settled in.

Few dogs have any problems settling in to their new routine, as long as you make sure they're still getting enough exercise and you set aside some time each day for 'dog time'. Once the child starts moving around, things can become more fraught and it doesn't hurt to be reminded that you should never leave a small child alone with a dog, however friendly the dog may have been to a non-mobile child. It's important that a toddler is prevented from chasing the dog because the dog may be forced to warn the child off by growling or snapping if his exit routes are blocked. Young children are unable to read dogs' moods and back off themselves, so total supervision is essential. Children can also be bitten by falling on sleeping dogs, poking fingers in the dog's eyes and ears or by shouting or blowing in dogs' faces. The best way to prevent accidents is to keep everyone separated by using a child gate.

Children learn by copying those around them. Be careful about how you interact with the dog. If you shoo him away from the table by slapping his face and shouting then this is what your child will do if the dog sniffs his toys. Maybe your hound won't react if you do this - but if your child does the same can you be absolutely sure that the dog won't challenge him? Children and dogs learn best when they're rewarded for the right behaviour so give treats and praise for the dog for behaving gently with the child and the same for the child behaving gently with the dog. Intervene and separate them calmly if one or the other starts to get silly or over-excited.