

# Knowing when to stop.

## Letters for teachers to share.

### Fred Allen to Everett Ratray

The following is a letter from Fred Allen to Everett Ratray. As a little background Fred Allen started out in vaudeville in the early 1920s. He became a star of radio comedy in the 1930s and 1940s. Mr. Allen was a constant writer of letters, sending several each day to family and friends, as well as writing, revising, editing and performing in his own radio show. Mr. Allen was famous for his lower-case writing style. Mr. Ratray was the son of family friends.

february  
7th  
1944

dear everett . . .

“. . .at the end of your letter you say “i guess i will stop writing. i am coming to the bottom of the page.” it is always best to stop a letter when you arrive at the bottom of the page. i know a boy who never stopped his letters in time. he would keep on writing past the bottom of the page and write down one leg of the table until he finished. then when he mailed his letter he had to say a piece out of the table and cut off the leg of the table, too, and send it along in a large paper bag instead of an envelope. another time, this by was writing on a desk he didn't stop again but wrote down the front of the desk along the floor for nearly two feet. when he mailed that letter he had to tear off the front of the desk and pry up two feet of the floor. this left a big hole in the floor. his father and mother both fell through the hole and since the boy lived on a houseboat and his father and mother couldn't swim the boy became and orphan. this is why is is always better to finish a letter when you come to the bottom of the page. . . . best wishes

fred allen

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### E. B. White to the ASPCA

12 April 1951  
The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals  
York Avenue and East 92nd Street  
New York, 28, NY

Dear Sirs:

“. . . You asked about Minnie's name, sex, breed, and phone number. She doesn't answer the phone. She is a dachshund and can't reach it, but she wouldn't answer it even if she could, as she has no interest in outside calls. I did have a dachshund once, a male, who was interested in the telephone, and who got a great many calls, but Fred was an exceptional dog (his name was Fred) and I can't think of anything off hand that he wasn't interested in. The telephone was only one of a thousand things. He loved life - that is, he loved life if by “life” you mean “trouble,” and of course the phone is almost synonymous with trouble. Minnie loves life, too, but her idea of life is a warm bed, preferably with an electric pad, and a friend in bed with her; and plenty of shut-eye, night and days. She's almost twelve. I guess I've already mentioned that. . . .

Sincerely yours,

E. B. White