

Dear Teacher, Dear Boss

By Dennis Knight

- Dear School, Please excuse Cecil being absent on June 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, and also 33.
- Johnny was late for class because the bell rang before he got here.
- Please excuse Eddie for being. It was his father's fault.

If the foregoing examples are representative, then they are lousy excuses for excuses. What has happened to this fine craft? Today's teachers are getting notes like these:

- My child's locker is jammed and she can't get her homework out of it.
- Al was not in school yesterday because he didn't feel like going.
- My daughter couldn't turn in her homework because her dad used it to start a fire in the wood stove.
- Sally won't be in school a week from Friday. We have to attend her funeral.

Here's a hip new one, quite up to date: "Joe don't have his homework because our family just got a new paper shredder, and I just had to test it out, and I accidentally shredded Joe's homework."

My intention in digging these examples out of the archives up was to come up with a collection of templates of plausible pretexts around which I can build a new iPhone or Droid application. I've told you some of the notes teachers get, but employers get some doozies too. "There was a spider in my bathroom so I couldn't get dressed," "I fell into a cactus," "my apartment is quarantined," "my car was stolen," or even "I had a super glue accident."

I suppose the difference between making excuses to get out of school and creating them to get out of work, is that a teacher, without resources, is likely to simply file the note away, whereas an employer may well check it out. With that in mind, I believe the twin virtues of plausibility and non-verifiability should be the standards for my new app.

Explanations that rely on animals will fit that requirement nicely. Dogs having puppies, your dog biting you, the dog biting someone else, and your dog running away are all good excuses, especially if you keep some cute pet pictures on hand for gravitas. You don't actually need a pet, because you can get compelling photos on line from any animal shelter.

Not just pets, but animals in nature can be handy too. If you live in Evergreen or Boulder you may claim there's a bear waiting outside to maul you for your lunch bucket, or the neighborhood skunk can render you and your Armani unacceptable at the office for days.

As the centerpiece of the new app I have selected a dandy. It's from my school collection, but with algorithms I can make it cover anything from skipping biology to getting out of a board meeting. It goes, "Please excuse Jennifer for missing school yesterday. We forgot to get the Sunday paper off the porch, and when we found it Monday, we thought it was Sunday."