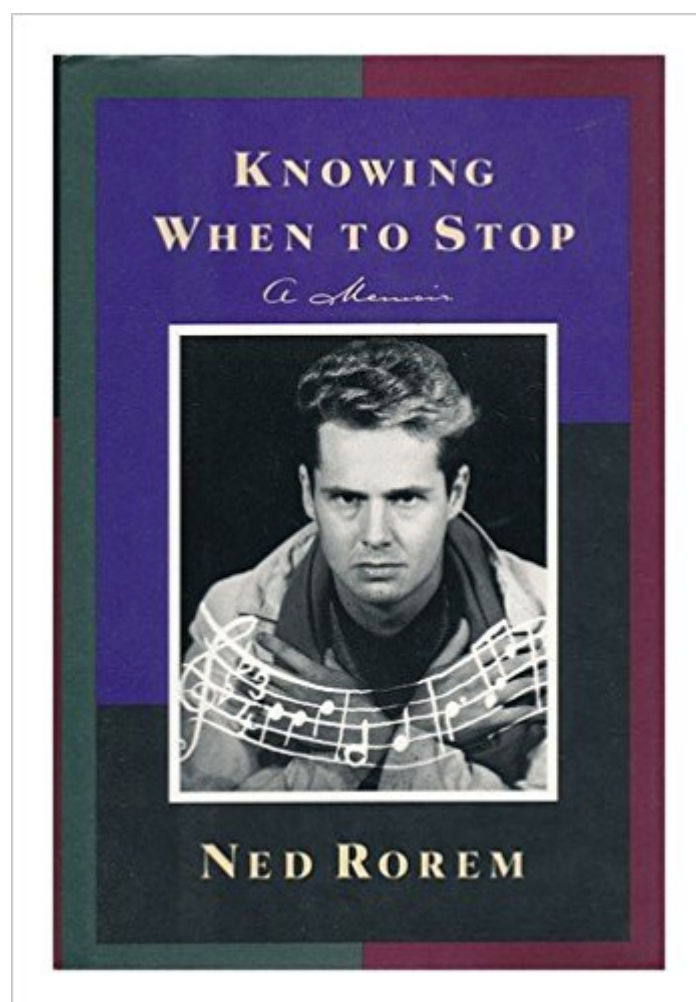


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# Knowing When To Stop: A Memoir



## Synopsis

This is a portrait of the artist as a young man, remembered by one who shadowed youth all his life. It is filled with tales and anecdotes of personalities such as Leonard Bernstein, Tennessee Williams and Billie Holliday.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 608 pages

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Average Customer Review: 3.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (5 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #866,272 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #298 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Biographies > Classical](#) #8736 in [Books > Self-Help > Motivational](#) #16608 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Arts & Literature](#)

## Customer Reviews

Most people who would be interested in reading "Knowing When to Stop" are probably familiar with Rorem's diaries. His memoir ends the year he first started the journals contained in "The Paris Diaries," and "Knowing When to Stop" not only fills the autobiographical, pre-diary gap, but also stands as one of most extraordinary self-portraits ever written. Rorem recounts, in his graceful, inimitable style, his childhood, musical training, early sex life (of course), his first years in Europe and, most absorbingly, his friendships with some of the most famous artists, both musical and otherwise, of the century. Bernstein, Cage, Katchen, Thomson, Copland, Boulez, Capote, Paul and Jane Bowles--Rorem describes them with sympathy and insight. Rorem's own mortality hangs shadowlike over every page of "Knowing," and his assessments of his work and life are penetrating and brutally honest. All in all, one of the best books I've ever read and a poignant, profound meditation of life and art.

The beginning of this book is fantastic. Mr Rorem has decided that there are but two esthetics in this world, and that everything can be applied to either one or the other. When he writes, as he did there, in the present, speaking of himself in the present, Mr Rorem is at his best, but when he

begins to delve into his youth the reader is forced to wade through a trough of self-pity and self-hatred. There is very little to like about the younger Ned Rorem, and had there not been the occasional spurt of wisdom and humor I doubt I would have finished this mammoth tome. The most enjoyable sections were Mr Rorem's recollections of his associations with other stars in the twentieth-century musical firmament, most especially Leonard Bernstein and Aaron Copland, as well as Martha Graham. I have the feeling that I would both like and enjoy Mr Rorem as he lives today, but I would have avoided him had he and I been young contemporaries.

Astonishing autobiography that also serves as a cultural history of the post-war literary and musical worlds of New York and Paris.

I love it!

I still remember the day I passed by the bookstore window and saw Ned Rorem's new book "Knowing When to Stop" in the window. I literally doubled over with laughter right there on the street, and immediately ran into the store to buy it, thinking that Rorem had finally developed a sense of irony. Imagine my disappointment...

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