

The Economist Writing Framework

A practical template you can use

- Below is not a theory.
- It is a production system — a repeatable structure for producing “Economist-like” prose on demand.
- Use it like a checklist while drafting, then again while editing.

Step One — Start with a Judgement (Not a Topic)

- Most writing begins with a subject.
- Economist writing begins with a **position disguised as observation**.

Weak opening	Economist opening
This article discusses AI in management	Managers are treating AI as software rather than staff
There are problems with meetings	Meetings have become a substitute for decisions

Rule

Your first sentence must contain a conclusion that the reader has not yet earned.

Step Two — The Four-Line Paragraph Engine

Every paragraph runs the same hidden pattern.

The C.E.A.I Model

- **Claim → Example → Authority → Implication**
- **Template**
- Claim
- Concrete real-world example
- Evidence, data, or expert reference
- So what does this mean in practice

Example (generic)

- Many organisations mistake activity for progress.
 - Teams produce more dashboards but fewer decisions.
 - Surveys consistently show managers spend over half their time reporting internally.
 - The result is a business that looks busy but moves slowly.
 - Write every paragraph this way.
 - Do not improvise structure.
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Step Three — The Pivot Sentence (“Gear Change”)

Insert a turn every 2–3 paragraphs.

Use one of the official Economist pivots:

- Yet
- But
- Even so
- The real problem
- The danger is
- More worrying

Purpose

You are steering the reader’s thinking path, not just adding balance.

Step Four — Controlled Wit Layer

Add intelligence signals without humour.

How

Twist familiar phrases.

Plain	Economist-style
The policy failed	The policy worked, just not for its intended purpose
Employees resist change	Employees support change provided nothing changes
The tool saves time	It saves minutes and costs hours

- Never write jokes.
- Write recognisable irony.

Step Five — Vocabulary Filter (The Discipline Pass)

- Replace emotional language with analytical language.

Remove	Replace
huge	significant
terrible	costly
amazing	notable
massive	substantial
disaster	failure

Hard rule

- If a word could appear in a speech, remove it.
- If it could appear in a report, keep it.

Step Six — Insert Credibility Anchors

- Add a number, comparison, or authority every 120–180 words.
- Not statistics for information.
- Statistics for trust.

Examples

- “twice as likely”
 - “one in three”
 - “most firms”
 - “rarely lasts beyond a year”
 - Precision beats volume.
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Step Seven — The Ending Technique (“Quiet Verdict”)

Never conclude loudly.

Avoid:

- in conclusion
- therefore
- clearly
- End with a calm statement that implies judgment.

Weak ending	Economist ending
Companies must change now	Companies that do not adapt will discover the market has already adapted for them

- The reader should feel the conclusion, not be told it.

The One-Page Writing Checklist

Before You Finish, Confirm:

Structure

- The opening sentence contains a viewpoint
- Each paragraph follows C.E.A.I
- At least two pivot turns
- Ending implies, not declares

Tone

- No rhetorical questions
- No emotional adjectives
- No exclamation marks
- No motivational language

Style Signals

- One ironic twist phrase
- One concrete example
- One credibility anchor every few paragraphs

Rapid Editing Method (Five-Minute Upgrade)

After writing, do this:

1. Delete 20% of adjectives
 2. Replace abstract nouns with physical images
 3. Add one “Yet” paragraph
 4. Replace the last paragraph with a quieter one
 5. Cut the first sentence in half
- You will immediately sound more authoritative.
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What You Need to Know

- Economist style is not elegant writing.
 - It is structured thinking written down.
 - You are not trying to impress the reader.
 - You are guiding their reasoning path while letting them believe they arrived alone.
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