

# Ten Keys to Better Business Writing

A Strategic Guide to Reader-First Communication

“Good writing is worth the work.”

Adapted from the training course by Graham Roberts-Phelps **Inter**

# The Bottom Line Up Front

Professional readers expect clarity immediately. This guide organizes ten essential keys into four strategic pillars.

## 01

### Architecture

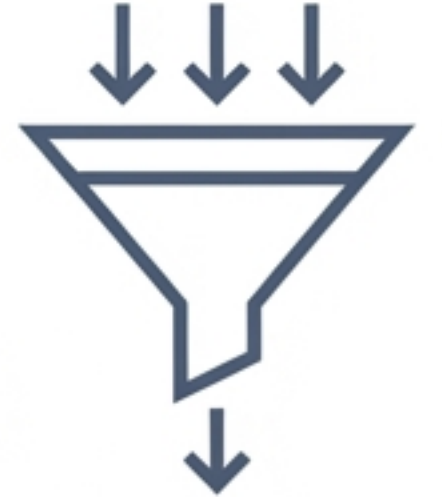
Mapping the route with logic and signposting.



## 02

### Economy

Reducing friction through brevity and filtering.



## 03

### Connection

Building trust through active voice and examples.



## 04

### Polish

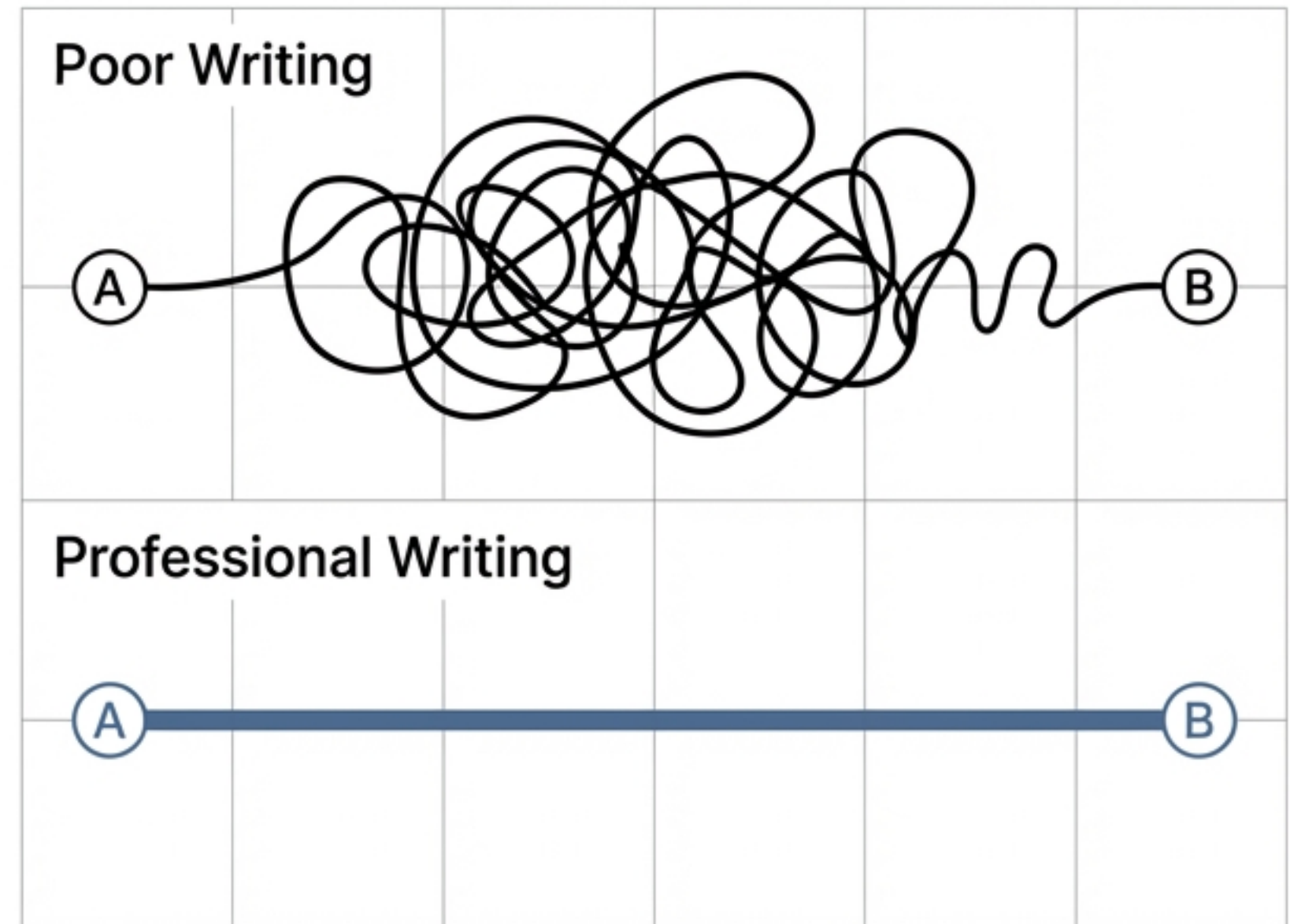
Signaling professionalism through visual design.



# Clarity builds confidence. Cleverness raises suspicion.

Poor writing is bad business because it confuses the reader. Meeting professional expectations is about distinguishing real rules from outdated preferences.

Structure is the reader's map.

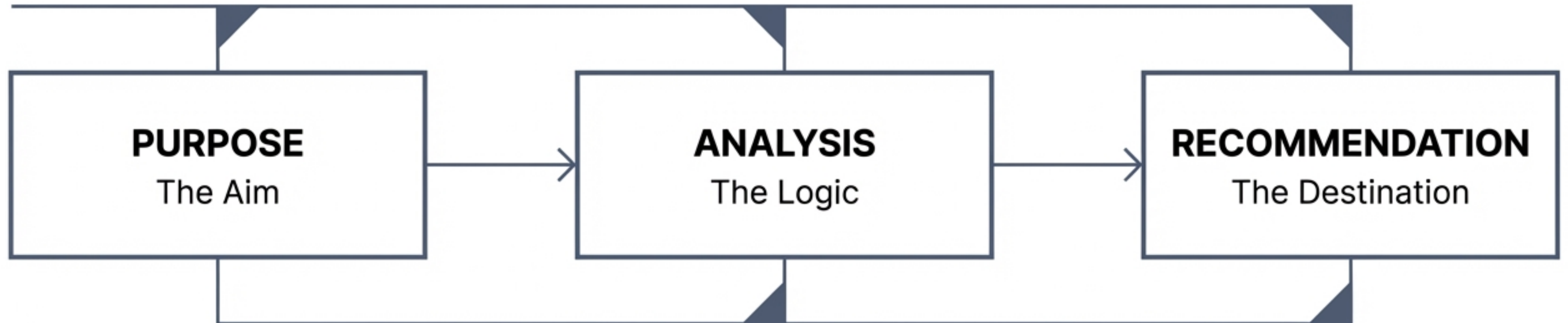


# Pillar 1: Architecture

Organize thoughts to provide a logical map

State the main aim at the start. Do not make the reader guess.  
A report following a logical sequence is easier to trust.

The Trust Flow



# Headings should tell the story on their own

Busy readers often scan headings first. Strong headings summarize the message, not just the topic.

WEAK: Label Only

2. Cost implications



STRONG: Message Driven

2. Costs will increase by 8%



The strong heading delivers the conclusion instantly.

# Pillar 2: Economy

## Write to express, not to impress

Readers want to understand quickly. Include only what is needed to make a decision. Move background details to an appendix.

It is our considered opinion that, taking all factors into account, a deferment of the launch may be advisable at this juncture.

Trying to Impress (Passive/Wordy)

The Translation

**We recommend delaying the launch.**

Trying to Express (Clear/Confident)

# Inter Tight

## Length increases effort; brevity reduces friction

The Screen Readability Rule



4 Lines: High probability of reading.



12 Lines: High probability of skipping.

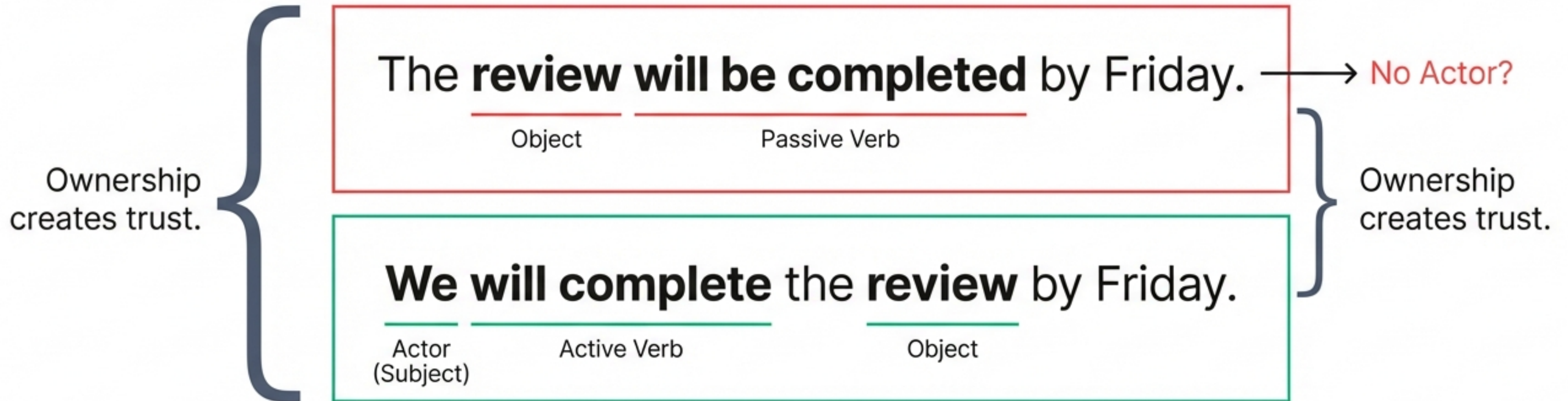
Inter

Action: Use short words, short sentences, and short paragraphs.

# Pillar 3: Connection

Active writing sounds decisive and accountable

Positive, active voice assigns responsibility.  
Passive voice obscures it.



# Examples turn theory into understanding

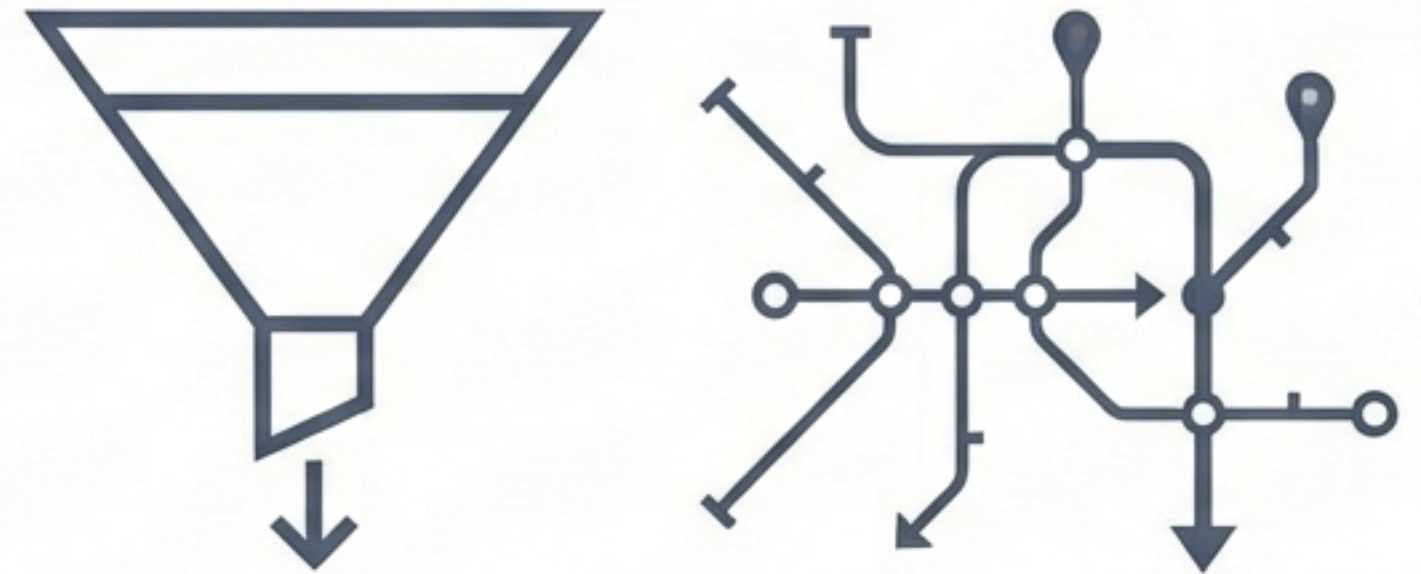
If the reader cannot picture it, they cannot act on it.

Abstract explanations slow readers down.  
Simplify complex subjects using metaphors.

The complex explanation of what  
complexity means, involving  
the use of words, leading to  
confusion in the mind, involving  
the use of words with complexity and  
complexity involved.

Abstract Theory

Metaphor



Visual Anchors

“Comparing a process to a funnel or a roadmap makes complex ideas accessible.”

# Pillar 4: Polish

White space improves comprehension

A solid wall of text discourages reading. Visual variety keeps attention.



# Accuracy and punctuality signal professionalism

Readers judge the writer before they judge the message. Errors undermine credibility regardless of content quality.



Spelling Mistakes



Incorrect Figures



Late Delivery

# Accuracy = Professionalism

# The 10 Keys at a Glance

**1. Organise correctly:**

Structure is the map.

**2. Express clearly:**

Do not try to impress.

**3. State main aim:**

Start with the purpose.

**4. Keep it short:**

Short words, sentences, paragraphs.

**5. Use active voice:**

Be positive and decisive.

**6. Simplify:**

Use examples and metaphors.

**7. Need-to-know basis:**

Filter information strictly.

**8. Clear headings:**

Summarise the message.

**9. Visual variety:**

Break up the page.

**10. Error-free:**

Check facts, figures, and spelling.

# The Reader-First Checklist: Logic & Clarity

Part 1 of 2

## Purpose and Structure

- Is the primary purpose stated clearly at the start?
- Is the document logically structured from point to point?
- Would a reader understand the message without explanation?

## Focus and Relevance

- Does the document contain only what the reader needs to know?
- Have I removed background detail that belongs elsewhere?
- Is each paragraph focused on one clear idea?

# The Reader-First Checklist: Tone & Polish

Part 2 of 2

## Tone and Authority

- Is the tone professional, confident, and constructive?
- Have I used the active voice wherever possible?
- Is responsibility and ownership clear?

## Headings and Flow

- Do headings summarise the message, not just label the topic?
- Is the layout easy to scan with white space and bullets?
- Are facts, figures, names, and dates correct?
- Is it error-free and on time?

# **Clear, Credible, and Acted Upon**

## **When you tick every box, your writing becomes an active business tool.**

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