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STYLE GUIDE

tone of voice – 10 steps to brilliance

1. *Create a conversational, but not too informal, tone:* imagine you are presenting an idea to someone a couple year's older than you, or a friendly colleague at work. Cut out proverbial expressions such as "if you know what I mean," "the thing is," etc. Here is an example of good conversational tone:

"Just over a year ago a group of then-students sat on the grass outside one of the largest student halls in Paris, baguette and cheese in hand, international can-do spirit in mind."

2. *Direct, accessible, succinct sentences:* try and get to the point as quickly, and as clearly, as possible. Use short sentences, avoiding too many sub-clauses. If your sentence turns into a paragraph, you've gone wrong somewhere. Never use a long word where a short word will do, and cut out unnecessary words.
3. *Let your intelligence (subtly) shine, and don't confuse the reader:* you want to convey an interesting, fresh point, but remember your reader might not be as much of an expert as you are on the subject. Think clarifying certain terms and complicated concepts.
4. *Don't be arrogant:* an example of what not to do: ~~"As a student of one of the best political studies universities in France, I have come to the unequivocal conclusion that I am right, backed by teaching from top-notch professors I have had the personal privilege of studying under. Lucky me."~~
5. *Strive for objectivity:* let balanced analysis carry your argument. Don't draw strong conclusions without first presenting both sides of the story, and clearly showing your reasoning for concluding the way you do.
6. *Try not to stereotype:* for example, ~~"All orthodox economists are stupid, because they insist on the importance of GDP as an indicator of a healthy economy."~~
7. *Try and avoid standard OR elaborate metaphors/similes:* your reader doesn't want to read something they've read one hundred times before, but neither do they want to get lost in analogy. If you do use metaphor, strike a balance. An example of a standard metaphor: ~~"the situation of young people in Europe is as black as night."~~ An example of an elaborate simile: ~~"the situation of young people in Europe is like a swirling waterfall plunging downwards."~~
8. *Be genuine:* it's ok to use the first person voice. For example, "I believe that..." Let readers hear who you are (and not what the critic thinks). Only use critics to back up your own voice. Be honest. Admit where your argument needs work, or where you are unsure.



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9. *Encourage readers to read on:* imagine your reader has given you two minutes of their time, how are you going to get them to give you four?
10. *Break any of these rules if it makes sense for your writing:* in the end, you are the one holding the pen. You are in charge. So don't let your pen (or your argument) down.

COPY-WRITING GUIDELINES

Copy-writing means writing to sell an idea, or a specific point of view. Freelance writers are often asked to sell something on behalf of someone else, or on behalf of an organisation. Whilst you are the brains behind the idea, you need to make sure your writing is consistent with the material previously produced by the person or organisation. At Econ+, we will use 'by-lines', clearly attributing the author of each article, so you will by no means be anonymous. We would still appreciate however a degree of harmony in our public pieces, as this looks more professional. First, a little outline of what it's like working with an editor, and then some basic textual rules to follow:

Spelling and grammar

1. UK spelling not US spelling. For example, colour, (not color), organisation, (not organization), co-ordinate, (not coordinate). You can change your dictionary settings to check UK English spelling.
2. Use the 'Oxford comma'. For example, when writing a list, a comma is used after each item, including before the final 'and': "*Income inequality, sluggish growth, medium unemployment rates, household debt hangovers, significant public debt, and fractious politics, are some of the problems facing the US economy today.*" No need to use the comma if you are referring to two things that belong together, or when using 'and' not in a list. For example: "*Youth unemployment boils down to economic recovery and political will.*"
3. Use a comma/full stop after single quotation marks, and before double quotation marks. Use single quotation marks – not double – when referring to a new concept, example, or term your readers might not know. For example: '*Gini co-efficient*', and "*The 'Gini co-efficient' is a good way to measure inequality among values of a frequency distribution, for example, income inequality.*"
4. Single space after a full stop.
5. Full stops should only be used at the end of a sentence. No need to use for the following, unless it is at the end of a sentence: *Mr, Dr, etc.*
6. Please use '*for example*' rather than '*eg*'.



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7. Parentheses are ok, but only one per paragraph, and where possible use them in pairs. For example: *“The OECD – a club of largely rich, developed economies – is dedicated to promoting better economic and social policy.”*
8. If you use brackets, and the parenthesis is within the sentence put the punctuation outside of the bracket. For example: *“Policy-making at the European level is a lengthy process (sometimes it seems like they are moving backwards).* If the parenthesis is the whole sentence put the punctuation inside the brackets. For example *(It sometimes feels like they’re moving backwards.)*

Numbers and dates

1. For numbers one to nine, always use words. For 10 upwards, use figures. For example: *“I ate nine baguettes at the Econ+ picnic.”* *“18 people came to the Econ+ picnic.”* But, if there is a mixture of the two in the same sentence, use only figures, *“I ate 9 baguettes at the Econ+ picnic with my 18 friends.”*
2. Use dates like this: *21 March, 19 December* etc. You can include the year, if necessary. No need to write out centuries in full, instead write them as follows: *21st century, 19th century* etc.
3. If you need to refer to the time, use a 24-hour clock. For example: *“The Econ+ picnic started at 14:00 and finished four hours later.”*
4. Use percent, not %.

Abbreviations and acronyms

1. The first time you use an acronym, write it out in full, followed by the abbreviation in brackets. For example: *“The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), is an intergovernmental organisation working on socio-economic policy analysis.”*
2. If you abbreviate something, make sure it is clear to the reader what you are referring to. An example of what **not** to do: *“DG ENV is working on a White Paper for 2030 environmental goals, which will later be sent to ministers and the EP.”* This would be **much better**: *“The environment arm of the European Commission is working to produce a draft paper on 2030 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions targets, for consideration by European environmental ministers and the European Parliament.”*
3. It’s ok to use apostrophes as contractions (shorten your words). For example: *can’t, won’t, shouldn’t*, etc.

Titles and headings

1. Be creative with your titles! This is perhaps the one place where you can be a bit controversial, as it will attract the attention of the reader.



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2. Use caps for titles (this is how they will be published). Never put a full stop at the end of a title. For example: *A SERIOUS EXAMINATION OF SILLY ECONOMIC MODELS*
3. If you need to use subtitles, use *italics*, and lower case, except for the first letter. No need to use a colon, and align the subtitles to the left, not the centre. For example: *A background to silly models*
4. Give any graphs and charts titles, formatting according to the above subtitle instructions. If you use several in one piece, it will also be useful to use the following methodology: *Figure 1: Title, Figure 2: Title, Figure 3: Title*, etc.

Paragraphs, spacing and fonts

1. In the paragraph setting, use 0pt spacing between lines. Between paragraphs, use the same setting, but leave a blank line. It's the model used throughout this style guide.
2. Don't indent the beginning of your paragraph.
3. The font will automatically be adjusted to fit our WordPress style when we upload it, so use whatever you like to draft in. Same deal for font size.
4. If you really want to emphasise something, you can use **bold**. Use sparingly.