

FRAME DETECTED. THERE IS ALWAYS ONE.

THE UNFRAMED METHOD

Language does not describe reality. It proposes one. This is a repeatable method for seeing how those realities are built, and for answering deliberately instead of reactively.

A working document for people whose decisions depend on language:
leaders, editors, analysts, policymakers, teachers, and anyone who reads
the news and wants to stay the author of their own conclusions.

METHOD	Six stages, one core question, applied in sequence to any message
MATERIAL	Headlines, speeches, policy documents, advertisements, AI responses, conversations
POSTURE	Analytical, not cynical. The goal is precision, not suspicion
ORIGIN	Developed by Oded Levy. Taught in workshops and classrooms, from eighth-grade media units to executive teams
EDITION	First edition · 2026 · theunframedmethod.com

THE CORE QUESTION

WHAT REALITY IS THIS LANGUAGE TRYING TO CREATE?

Every stage in this manual is a different way of asking this one question. If you retain nothing else, retain the question. It converts passive reading into active analysis on contact.

THE SIXTY-SECOND PASS • ONE QUESTION PER STAGE

01 WHY HERE? • 02 WHAT'S MISSING? • 03 WHOSE MATH? • 04 WHOSE WORDS? • 05 HOW HOT? • 06 WHY ME, WHY NOW?

THE METHOD, IN READING ORDER

P . 05	Introduction	Language as a construction site. Why description is never the whole job.
P . 09	The method at a glance	Six stages in sequence, and how each one narrows the field.
P . 10	Stage 01 · Architecture	Understand the platform before the message. Incentives, business models, algorithms, audiences.
P . 14	Stage 02 · Filter	Three questions that expose missing context: compared to what, at what cost, and what hard evidence there is.
P . 18	Stage 03 · Numbers	Statistics are never neutral. Baselines, denominators, timeframes, and the realities they invite.
P . 22	Stage 04 · Frame	Word choice engineers the boundaries of thought. Loaded terms, euphemisms, metaphors, omissions.
P . 26	Stage 05 · Map	The Spectrum of Influence: locating a message from neutral to weaponized.
P . 30	Stage 06 · Machine	Language technologies as reality-creation machines, from the printing press to language models.
P . 34	Part two · Reconstruction	The method in reverse: rewriting headlines, auditing your own drafts, and writing for the machine without weaponizing.
P . 39	The protocol	The full method on one page, ready for use.
P . 40	Applications	Where the method earns its keep, from governance to AI literacy.
P . 41	Failure modes	Five ways practitioners misuse the method, and the corrections.
P . 42	About the method	Provenance, practice, and contact.

EVERY MESSAGE PROPOSES A VERSION OF REALITY

A headline is not a window. It is an argument about what happened, what matters about it, and what you should feel next. The same is true of a policy brief, a quarterly earnings call, an advertisement, an AI response, and the message a friend sends about the news. None of them merely describe. All of them propose.

This is not an accusation. Proposing a version of reality is what language does. There is no view from nowhere, no sentence without a vantage point. Someone chose the subject of the sentence, and by choosing it, chose what receded into the background. Someone chose the verb, and with it, who acts and who is acted upon. Someone decided which number to lead with, which quote to include, which context would have complicated things.

The problem is not that these choices exist. The problem is asymmetry. The people who construct messages for a living understand these mechanics with professional precision. Most audiences do not. They experience the finished surface, the headline or the chart or the speech, as if it were the event itself. The construction disappears into the product, the way scaffolding disappears from a finished building.

The Unframed Method exists to make the scaffolding visible again. It is not a debunking tool and not a lie detector. Plenty of perfectly true messages construct misleading realities, and the method treats accuracy and framing as separate questions. A statistic can be correct and still be doing something to you.

The method is a sequence of six stages. Each stage isolates one layer of construction: the platform that carries the message, the context it omits, the numbers it deploys, the words it selects, the emotional register it operates in, and the machine that amplifies it. Run in order, the stages turn a finished message back into a set of decisions, each of which could have been made differently.

Once a message is decomposed into decisions, a second question becomes available: who benefits from each decision having been made this way? That question sounds cynical and is not. Often the answer is banal. An editor benefits from a headline you click. A platform benefits from a post you share. A politician benefits from a frame that makes their preferred policy sound like common sense. Naming the benefit does not prove bad faith. It restores the transaction to view, which is all the method asks.

The alternative to analysis is not neutrality. It is outsourcing. A reader who does not examine how a message was built still forms a conclusion; they simply let the message's builder form it for them. Reactivity feels like independence because it happens fast and feels like your own. It rarely is. The reactions a message produces are usually the reactions it was engineered to produce.

Deliberateness is slower and less comfortable. It requires holding a message at arm's length long

enough to see it as an artifact, made by people, under incentives, for purposes. That distance is the entire discipline. Everything in the following pages is a technique for creating it on demand.

Three commitments run through the method. The first is symmetry: it applies with equal force to messages you agree with, because framing you happen to like is still framing. The second is source-independence: the message outranks the messenger. The same sentence gets agreement when John says it and rejection when Bob says it, on brand, bias, and media framing alone, and the method refuses that trade. Stage 1 examines the speaker to explain why a message exists, never to decide whether it is true. The third is construction: the method ends in writing, not just reading. Once you can see how realities are assembled, you are responsible for the ones you assemble yourself.

The reactions a message produces are usually the reactions it was engineered to produce.

06

STAGES, RUN IN SEQUENCE

01

CORE QUESTION BEHIND ALL OF THEM

00

MESSAGES EXEMPT FROM ANALYSIS

PREMISE

LANGUAGE DOES NOT MERELY DESCRIBE REALITY. IT CREATES IT.

Every headline, speech, policy document, advertisement, AI response, and conversation proposes a version of reality. The method that follows is a repeatable process for recognizing how those realities are constructed, and for responding deliberately rather than reactively.

SIX STAGES, ONE DISCIPLINE

Each stage in the method occupies one chapter, and each chapter has the same anatomy: the concept, a working model you can draw from memory, and a case file that applies the stage to a real, documented situation. The case files are chosen for what they teach, not for whose side they flatter. Where a case touches contested politics, the method is applied to the language on both sides, because that is the only honest way to use it.

The stages are ordered deliberately. Architecture comes first because the platform shapes everything

that appears on it, and analyzing a message without its platform is like reviewing a fish without mentioning water. Filter, Numbers, and Frame move from context to data to diction, each a finer grain than the last. Map places the message on an emotional spectrum once you understand its construction. Machine zooms back out to the amplification system that decides which constructions you encounter at all. The sequence runs from structure to sentence and back to structure.

STAGE	OPERATION	THE QUESTION IT ISOLATES
01	Architecture	Why does this message exist here, and who benefits from its existence?
02	Filter	What context, evidence, and consequences has this message left out?
03	Numbers	What reality do these statistics invite me to accept?
04	Frame	What do these exact words permit, and what do they exclude?
05	Map	Where does this message sit between information and ammunition?
06	Machine	What machine produced and carried this message, and what does that machine scale?

FROM FINISHED MESSAGE BACK TO DECISIONS

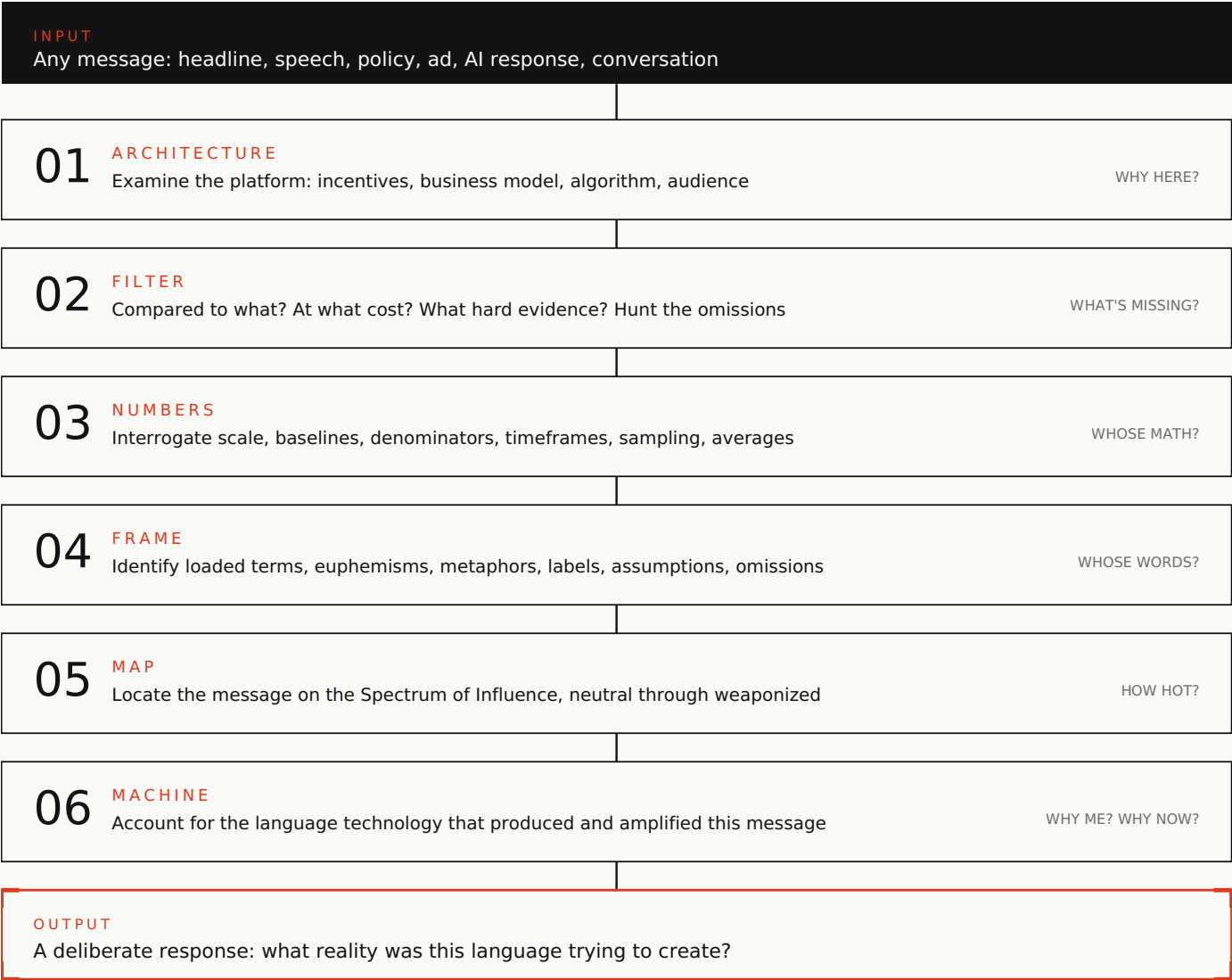


Fig. 01 · The six stages run in sequence, from the structure that carries a message down to its individual words and back out to the system that amplified it.

01 ARCHITECTURE

Understand the platform before analyzing the message. Examine incentives, institutional goals, business models, algorithms, audiences, and structural constraints. Ask why this message exists here, and who benefits.

THE PLATFORM SPEAKS BEFORE THE MESSAGE DOES

Before you read a single word of a message, its platform has already made a series of decisions for you. What length is possible. What tone survives. What gets rewarded, and what quietly disappears. Analyzing a message without its platform is like reviewing a fish without mentioning water.

Every platform is an economy. A cable news channel sells audiences to advertisers, which makes retention the master metric, which makes urgency a production value rather than a judgment about the world. A peer-reviewed journal sells credibility, which rewards hedged language and methodological caution. A social feed sells engagement, which rewards whatever produces the fastest strong reaction. The same event, moved between these platforms, becomes three different events.

Architecture analysis asks structural questions first. Who owns this platform, and what do they need to be true for the business to work? What behavior does the platform's ranking system reward? Who is the intended audience, and what does the publisher believe about them? What constraints, legal,

commercial, or technical, shaped what could be said here at all?

These questions have unglamorous answers most of the time, and that is the point. Most distortion is not conspiracy. It is incentive. A headline writer optimizing for clicks is not lying to you; they are doing their job inside an architecture that pays for attention. Once you see the architecture, the message's shape stops being mysterious. It could hardly have been otherwise.

The stage produces one deliverable: a plain-language account of why this message exists in this place, in this form, at this moment. If you cannot produce that account, you do not yet understand what you are reading, no matter how carefully you read it.

Most distortion is not conspiracy. It is incentive.

THE INCENTIVE STACK

Read any message from the bottom of the stack upward. Each layer constrains the one above it, and by the time words reach the surface, most of the important decisions have already been made.

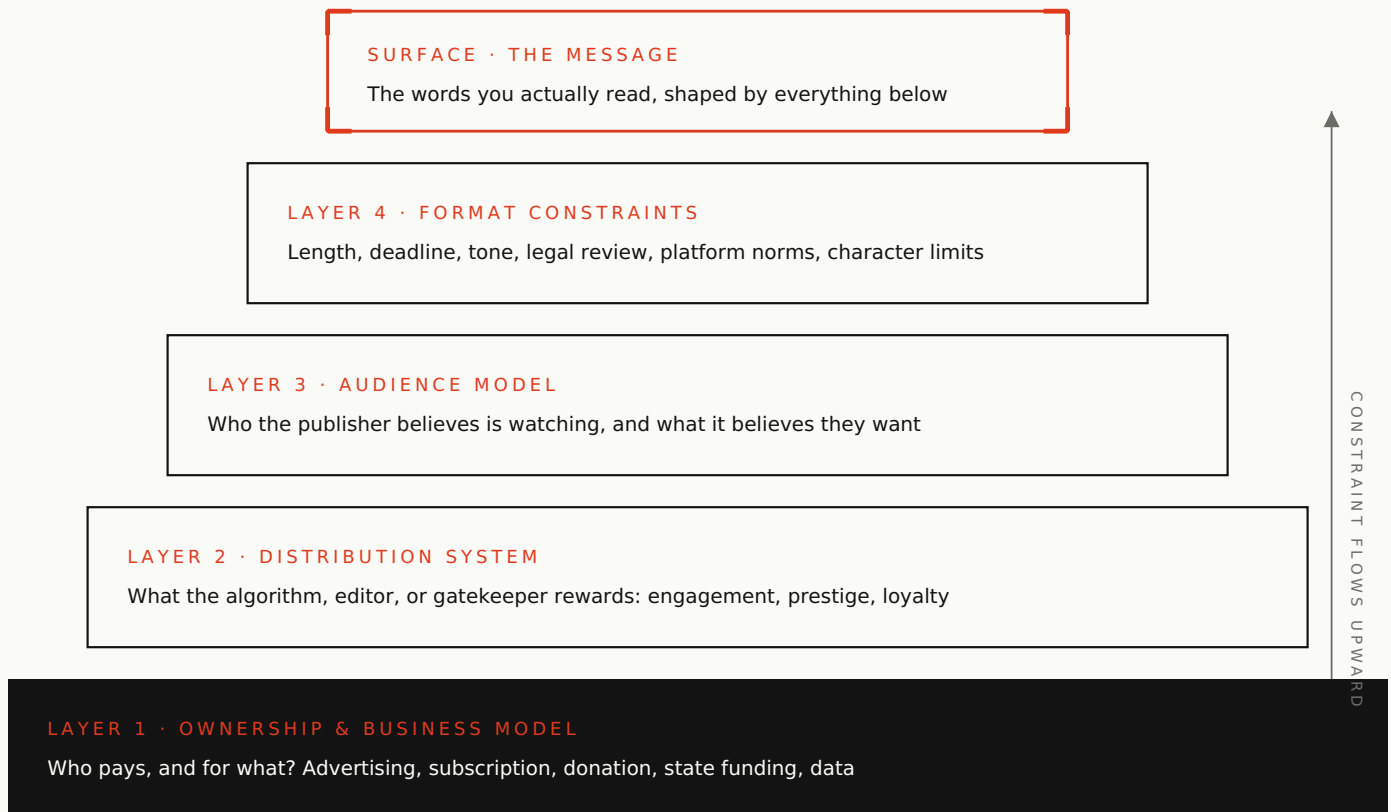


Fig. 02 · The incentive stack. The surface message is the smallest layer, and the last one decided. Architecture analysis reads the stack from the bottom up.

Field exercise: take today's most shared news story and write one sentence per layer. If any layer's sentence is a guess, that is where your analysis is thinnest, and where the message has the most room to work on you.

CASE FILE 01

"ASK YOUR DOCTOR": THE AD THAT EXISTS IN ONLY TWO COUNTRIES

Prescription drug advertisements aimed directly at patients, complete with brand names and product claims, are a normal feature of television in exactly two countries: the United States and New Zealand. Nearly everywhere else, regulators prohibit them. American pharmaceutical companies spend on the order of eight billion US dollars a year on this advertising, and the format is instantly recognizable: soft lighting, an actor reclaiming their life, a rapid recitation of side effects, and the closing instruction to ask your doctor about the product.

Notice what a content-level analysis misses. The ad's claims are legally vetted and broadly accurate. The side effects are disclosed, as required. Fact-checking the surface finds little. Architecture analysis asks a different question: why does this message exist at all?

WHY HERE	Because regulation permits it here. The message's very existence is a product of one structural fact about two jurisdictions, not of anything universal about medicine or patients.
BUSINESS MODEL	The ad does not sell a product the viewer can buy. It manufactures demand the viewer must relay: the patient is recruited as an unpaid sales channel into the exam room.
FORMAT CONSTRAINT	The hurried side-effect voiceover is not a stylistic quirk. It is the audible shape of a legal requirement called fair balance, compressed to protect the emotional arc the ad paid for.
WHO BENEFITS	Manufacturers gain demand, networks gain a major revenue category, and the arrangement's defenders argue patients gain awareness. The architecture question does not settle the policy debate. It reveals that there is one.

The lesson generalizes. When a message format feels natural, ask where it does not exist. The comparison instantly exposes the structure that makes it possible.

02 FILTER

Apply three questions in the tradition of the economist Thomas Sowell: Compared to what? At what cost? What hard evidence do you have? Look deliberately for missing context, unstated assumptions, and absent perspectives.

THREE QUESTIONS THAT REFUSE TO BE FLATTERED

A message persuades as much by what it omits as by what it says. The omissions are invisible by definition, so you cannot find them by reading harder. You need questions that generate the missing material on demand. Three of them, associated with the economist Thomas Sowell, do most of the work.

Compared to what? Every evaluation smuggles in a baseline. A policy is called a failure: compared to the alternative that was actually available, or to a perfect world that was never on offer? A product is called dangerous: compared to the product it replaces, or to not needing the product at all? Until the comparison is explicit, the judgment is unfalsifiable, which is precisely why persuasive writing prefers to leave it out.

At what cost? Benefits travel alone in persuasive language. Costs are someone else's paragraph. This question forces the full ledger onto the table: what is being given up, by whom, and who is doing the accounting? The ledger includes round two, the costs and benefits that arrive only after people respond to the change. And the question cuts in every direction: costs of acting and of not acting are

both real, and a message that mentions only one set is filtering, whichever set it picks.

What hard evidence do you have? Claims arrive dressed as facts, and the costume is usually confidence. This question asks for the receipts: what was actually measured, by whom, with what method, and does it show what the sentence claims? An anecdote is not a trend, a projection is not a result, and repetition is not confirmation. Most persuasive claims survive the first two questions in weakened form and do not survive this one at all.

The three questions share a property that makes them safe to carry: they are not partisan. They embarrass weak arguments on every side, including yours. That is the test of a genuine analytical tool as opposed to a rhetorical one. A tool that only ever damages the other side is a weapon wearing a lab coat.

A tool that only damages the other side is a weapon wearing a **lab coat.**

THE FILTER GATE

Run every consequential claim through three gates in order. A claim that clears all three with explicit answers is rare. Most claims stall at the first gate, which tells you where the persuasion is happening.



Fig. 03 · The filter gate. Where a claim stalls is diagnostic: it marks the exact location of the omission doing the persuasive work.

CASE FILE 02

ONE SLOGAN, THREE GATES: THE MINIMUM WAGE

Take a sentence that appears, in some form, in every minimum wage debate: "Raising the minimum wage lifts workers out of poverty." The sentence is not false. It is filtered. Running it through the three gates shows what the filtering removes, without telling you what to conclude.

COMPARED TO WHAT

Compared to the current wage? To wage subsidies such as earned-income tax credits? To sectoral bargaining? The slogan's virtue is measured against doing nothing, the one alternative almost no one proposes.

AT WHAT COST

The ledger the slogan omits: adjusted hours, automation, price pass-through, and regional divergence between high-cost cities and low-cost towns, with someone carrying each item. Costs of raising and costs of not raising are both real, and the slogan acknowledges neither set.

HARD EVIDENCE

The slogan cites none, but evidence exists. When the US Congressional Budget Office analyzed a proposed 15-dollar federal minimum in 2019, its median estimate was that roughly 1.3 million workers would be lifted out of poverty and roughly 1.3 million fewer workers would be employed. Both numbers came from the same report. Each side of the debate cited one of them.

SYMMETRY CHECK

The opposing slogan, "minimum wage hikes kill jobs," stalls at the same gates in mirror image. It ignores the poverty reduction in the same report and treats a contested median estimate as a certainty. The gates embarrass both bumper stickers.

The filter does not deliver a verdict on wage policy. It delivers the debate that the slogans on both sides were built to prevent, which is the only debate worth having.

03 NUMBERS

Statistics are never neutral. Examine scale, baselines, denominators, timeframes, sampling, averages, distributions, and omissions. Ask what reality the numbers encourage you to accept.

A STATISTIC IS A SENTENCE WEARING A NUMBER

Numbers feel like the opposite of rhetoric. That feeling is the vulnerability. A statistic arrives with the authority of mathematics, but every one of them is the output of choices: what to count, what to divide it by, when to start the clock, and which summary to report. Change any choice and the same reality produces a different number.

Start with the **denominator**, the most powerful and least visible choice. Forty airline incidents sounds alarming; forty incidents across twelve million flights is a safety record. Any count without a denominator is a mood, not a measurement, and messages that want you alarmed will reliably give you the count alone.

Then the **baseline**. "Crime is up 30 percent" means one thing from a historic low and another from a historic high. Percentage changes are parasitic on their starting point, which is why the starting point is so often left out. The question "since when?" defuses more statistical manipulation than any formula.

Then **relative versus absolute**. A risk that doubles from one in a million to two in a million has increased

100 percent and also barely at all. Relative figures are dramatic; absolute figures are informative. Persuasive messages choose accordingly, and switch between the two as the argument requires.

Then the **average**, which is a family of numbers pretending to be one. Means are dragged by outliers; medians ignore them. A country where most wages stagnate while top incomes surge will show a rising mean and a flat median. Whichever average a message picked, ask what the other one says.

None of this requires distrusting numbers. It requires treating them as authored. Someone composed each statistic the way someone composes a sentence, and the composition can be read.

Any count without a denominator is a mood, not a measurement.

ANATOMY OF A PUBLISHED STATISTIC

Eight decisions separate reality from the number that reaches you. Each is a legitimate methodological choice, and each is also an opportunity to steer. The audit runs through all eight.



Fig. 04 · Eight authored decisions stand between reality and a published statistic. The audit asks how each was made, and how the number changes if it is made differently.

CASE FILE 03

THE 18 PERCENT SCARE: BACON, HEADLINES, AND THE MISSING BASELINE

In October 2015, the WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer classified processed meat as a Group 1 carcinogen, reporting that each daily 50-gram portion was associated with an increase of about 18 percent in the risk of colorectal cancer. Headlines around the world placed bacon alongside cigarettes, a comparison the classification system invited, since tobacco also sits in Group 1.

Every individual element was defensible. The composite reality most readers received was not. Two number choices did the work.

RELATIVE VS ABSOLUTE The 18 percent figure is relative. Lifetime colorectal cancer risk is on the order of five to six in a hundred; heavy daily processed meat consumption moves it toward roughly six to seven. Stated absolutely, the finding is real and modest. Stated relatively, it is a headline.

CATEGORY VS MAGNITUDE IARC groups classify the strength of evidence that something can cause cancer, not how much cancer it causes. Group 1 contains tobacco and processed meat because the evidence is strong for both, not because the risks are comparable. The headline conflated confidence with size.

THE MISSING NUMBER Almost no coverage reported the baseline risk, the one number a reader needed to evaluate the 18 percent. The omission was not deception in any individual newsroom. It was architecture: absolute risk does not survive a headline character count.

The audit question for any risk statistic is one line: relative to what baseline, and what does the risk become in absolute terms? Messages that answer it are informing you. Messages that avoid it are moving you.

04 FRAME

Word choice engineers the boundaries of thought and action. Identify loaded terms, euphemisms, metaphors, labels, assumptions, and omissions. Every frame permits one reality while excluding others.

WORDS ARE DECISIONS ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN THINK

By the time you evaluate an argument, its vocabulary has already voted. Call a payment a "fee" and you invite one reaction; call it a "penalty" and you invite another; call it an "investment" and the reaction inverts. Nothing about the payment changed. The frame did, and the frame is where much of the persuasion actually lives.

A frame works by selection. Every noun foregrounds some features of a situation and consigns the rest to the background. "The estate" and "the family farm" can be the same asset; each phrase lights up a different set of associations and a different cast of sympathetic characters. Neither is a lie. Both are choices, and the choice was made for you before you arrived.

Euphemism softens agency: workforce reductions, enhanced interrogation, collateral damage, servicing the target. Notice that euphemisms cluster wherever institutions do things to people. The passive voice is their grammar of choice, because it deletes the actor: mistakes were made, shots were fired, the account was impacted.

Metaphor imports a ready-made logic. If immigration is a "flood," then walls and pumps are the natural policy space. If it is "new blood,"

circulation is. If crime is a "beast," you hunt it; if it is a "virus," you treat conditions. Research on framing has shown that people offered different metaphors for the same problem propose systematically different solutions, usually without noticing the metaphor at all.

Labels assign group membership before the argument starts: reform versus scheme, whistleblower versus leaker, freedom fighter versus terrorist. And **presupposition** smuggles claims inside questions: "why is the government hiding this?" installs the hiding as settled and offers you only the why.

The stage's discipline is substitution. For every loaded term, generate the alternatives the author did not choose, and ask what each would have permitted. The frame becomes visible the moment you can see its rivals.

By the time you evaluate an argument, its vocabulary has already **voted**.

THE SUBSTITUTION TABLE

The fastest framing diagnostic: place the chosen term beside its living rivals. Each column below describes the same referent. Read across, and notice your own reaction shift. That shift is the frame's payload, measured directly.

REFERENT	ONE FRAME PERMITS...	THE RIVAL FRAME PERMITS...	WHAT THE CHOICE DECIDES
A tax on inherited wealth	"estate tax"	"death tax"	Whether the payer is a fortune or a family, and the event a transfer or a bereavement
A person in a country without legal status	"undocumented immigrant"	"illegal alien"	Whether the missing thing is paperwork or legitimacy, and the person a neighbor or an intruder
Ending a pregnancy	"pro-choice"	"pro-life"	Which value the debate is officially about; each side names itself after its strongest ground
Rising global temperatures	"climate change"	"climate crisis"	The urgency dial, set inside the noun before any evidence is discussed
Short-contract work platforms	"gig economy"	"precarious work"	Whether flexibility or insecurity is the defining feature of the same job
Workplace diversity programs	"inclusion and belonging"	"DEI bureaucracy"	Whether the program is culture or overhead, decided before any outcome data appears
Government spending	"investment"	"spending spree"	Whether money is planted or burned, before a single line item appears

Both columns are frames. There is no neutral row, and the table is not a guide to the correct term. It is an instrument for feeling the steering, which operates identically whether or not you agree with the destination.

CASE FILE 04

TWO NAMES, ONE TAX: THE MOST DOCUMENTED RENAME IN POLITICS

The United States has taxed large inheritances since 1916. For most of that time the levy was called the estate tax, a term that centers the asset. In the 1990s, Republican strategists, most visibly the pollster Frank Luntz, systematically promoted an existing alternative: the death tax. Luntz later described the reasoning openly in his writing on political language. An estate is something few voters believe they have. Death is something every voter knows is coming.

The rename changed no rates, thresholds, or exemptions. It changed the imagined payer, from a fortune to a family, and the imagined event, from a transfer of wealth to a bereavement with a bill attached. Polling through the 2000s repeatedly found majorities opposing the tax under either name even as it applied to a small fraction of estates, a gap between perception and incidence that the framing helped sustain.

MECHANISM	A label substitution that swaps the foregrounded noun. The tax's actual base, thresholds, and incidence never appear inside either term, so the term does the arguing.
SYMMETRY CHECK	Advocates of the tax reach for their own load-bearing labels, from "billionaire giveaway" for repeal efforts to naming the tax after fairness itself. Framing contests are symmetrical even when their budgets are not.
WHY IT WORKED	The rename did not ask anyone to change their mind. It changed the question their existing mind was answering. That is what distinguishes framing from argument, and why it is cheaper.

The generalizable test: when a political term feels self-evidently right, find who introduced it and what they said it was for. The answer is documented more often than you would expect.

05

MAP

Locate the message on the Spectrum of Influence: Neutral, Framed, Emotional, Moralized, Polarized, or Weaponized. Position is diagnosis. It tells you what the message wants from you, and how to answer it.

EVERY MESSAGE HAS A TEMPERATURE

The first four stages examine a message's construction. This stage locates its intent. Messages about the same facts occupy positions on a spectrum that runs from informing you to conscripting you, and reading position is a skill of its own. Most costly misreadings are position errors: answering a weaponized message as if it were information, or dismissing information because it arrived warm.

The Spectrum of Influence has six positions. **Neutral** messages foreground verifiable content and expose their own uncertainty. **Framed** messages select and arrange honestly held emphasis; nearly all professional communication lives here, and there is nothing wrong with that. **Emotional** messages lead with feeling and recruit facts as support. **Moralized** messages convert the topic into a referendum on character: agreeing becomes goodness, disagreeing becomes a flaw.

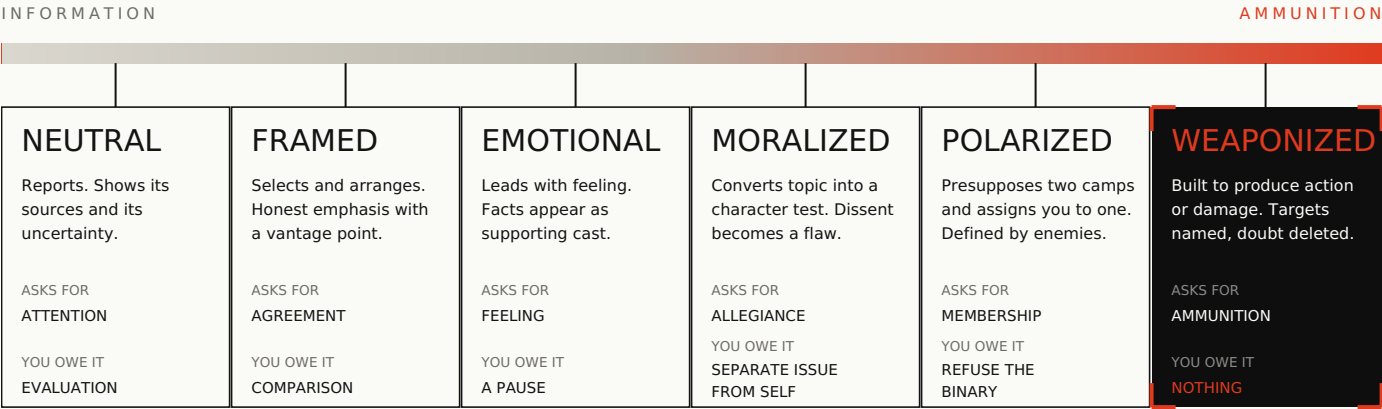
Polarized messages presuppose two camps and assign you to one, defining positions by their enemies. **Weaponized** messages are built to produce action or damage: outrage on demand, targets identified, ambiguity removed. The positions differ in what they ask of you. Neutral asks for attention. Framed asks for agreement on emphasis. Emotional asks for feeling, moralized for allegiance, polarized for membership, weaponized for ammunition or aim.

Two cautions govern the map. First, heat is not falsehood. A weaponized message can be factually accurate, and a neutral one can be wrong; the spectrum measures intent and register, not truth, which is why it comes after the accuracy-oriented stages rather than replacing them. Second, position drift is normal. A message born neutral at a wire service is framed by an outlet's headline desk, moralized by a columnist, and weaponized by the time a stranger posts it with commentary. The map is therefore a question you ask about a specific artifact in a specific place, not a verdict about a story.

The practical payoff is response calibration. You owe a neutral message evaluation, a framed message comparison, an emotional message a pause, and a weaponized message nothing at all. Knowing when you owe nothing is the most valuable reading on the dial.

Heat is not falsehood. The spectrum measures **intent**, not truth.

THE SPECTRUM OF INFLUENCE



POSITION DRIFT · THE NORMAL LIFE OF A STORY



The same underlying facts heat up as they travel. Map the artifact in front of you, not the story in general.

CALIBRATION RULE

Heat is not falsehood, and coolness is not truth. The spectrum reads what a message wants from you.
Verify accuracy with Stages 02 and 03. Then let position decide how much of yourself to spend in response.

Fig. 05 · The Spectrum of Influence. Six positions, what each asks of you, and what you owe each in return.

CASE FILE 05 · CONSTRUCTED DEMONSTRATION

ONE STREET, SIX REALITIES

The following six sentences describe the same underlying fact: a city council votes to close one downtown street to cars for a one-year pilot. The sentences are composed for this manual to hold the facts constant while the position moves, which no single real story does on demand. Read them in order and track what each version asks of you.

NEUTRAL	"Council voted 7 to 4 to close King Street to private vehicles for a twelve-month pilot; staff will report quarterly on transit times, retail receipts, and emergency response."
FRAMED	"Council approves a year-long trial of a car-free King Street, joining a growing list of cities rethinking downtown space."
EMOTIONAL	"Imagine your kids cycling down the middle of King Street. Next spring, they finally can."
MORALIZED	"The vote showed who on council actually cares about the people who live downtown, and who answers to parking lots."
POLARIZED	"The war on drivers comes to King Street. The anti-car council got its wish, and commuters will pay for it."
WEAPONIZED	"Councillor R. just killed your commute to fund her bike-lobby friends. Her office number is below. Make it ring."

Notice what remains constant: the vote, the street, the pilot. Notice what changes: the cast of characters, the verbs, and the action requested of the reader, from nothing at all to a phone call. Position is not decoration on the facts. It is a second message riding on them.

06 MACHINE

Recognize language technologies as reality-creation machines. Print scaled reproduction, broadcast scaled simultaneity, social media scaled attention, and language models scale construction itself. Understand the machine of your era to protect your attention and communicate deliberately.

LANGUAGE TECHNOLOGIES ARE REALITY-CREATION MACHINES

The first five stages analyze messages. The sixth analyzes the machinery that produces and distributes them, and the machinery keeps changing. The governing observation is simple to state and large in consequence: every technology that changes how language is produced changes how reality is produced. The attention economy is only the current machine. It is not the last one.

The history reads as a ladder, and each rung scaled a different variable. The printing press scaled reproduction: one fixed text, unlimited identical copies, realities that could outlive their authors and cross borders without them. Broadcast scaled simultaneity: one voice in every living room at the same moment, which is where the shared national reality came from. The internet scaled publication: everyone a publisher, realities multiplied past any gatekeeper's reach. Social media scaled selection: once supply became infinite, machines began deciding which realities travel, and they decide by engagement.

The current machine's transaction is simple. Platforms sell attention, so they rank language by its predicted ability to hold you, in a continuous loop: publish, rank, react, learn. Truth is not scored, because truth is not the product. What reaches you is not a sample of what happened. It is a portfolio of what performed. Two working rules follow: virality is evidence of engineering, not importance, and your reaction is the machine's raw material, a training signal that purchases more of the same.

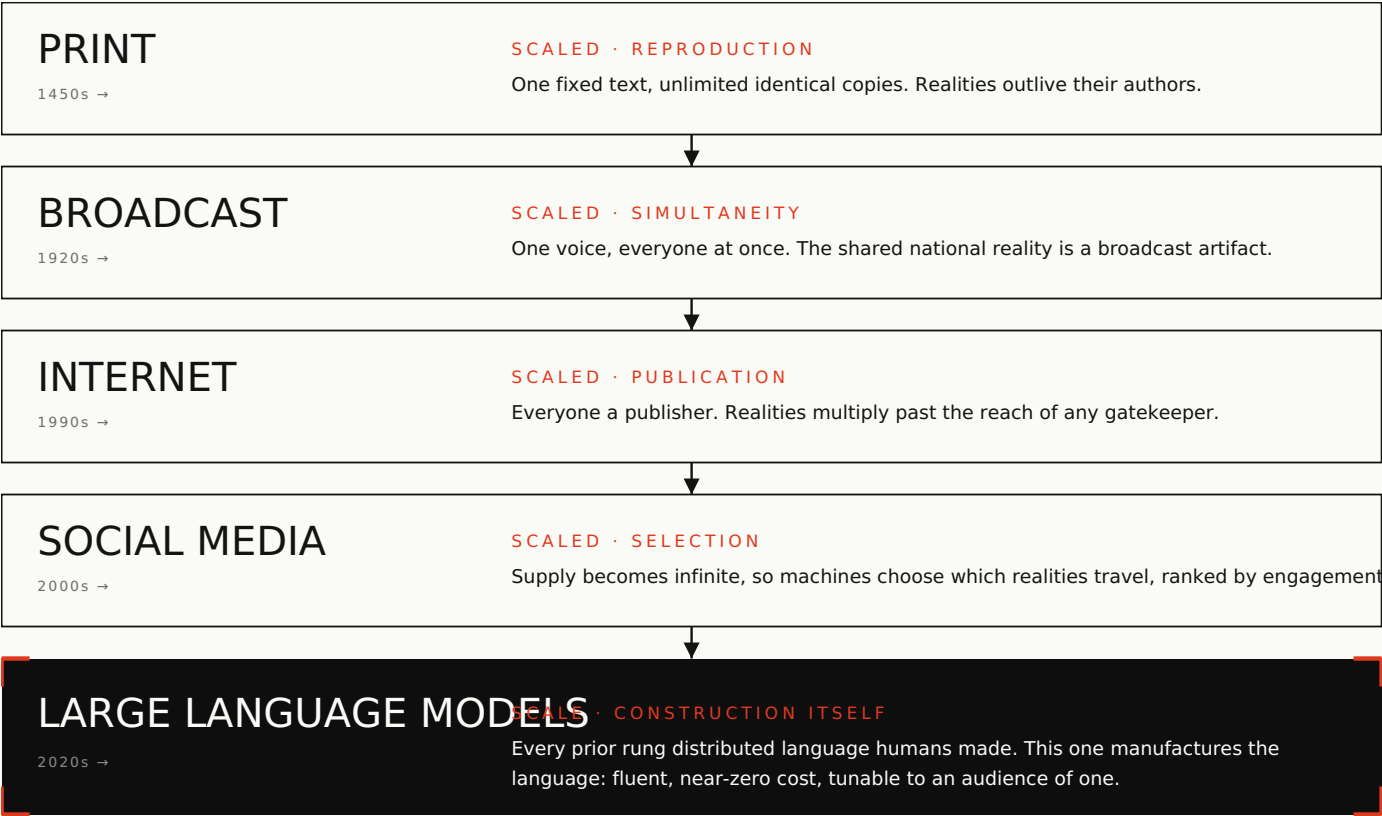
Language models are the next rung, and they scale the one variable every previous machine left alone: construction itself. Print, broadcast, feeds, all of them distributed language that humans had produced. A model manufactures the language, fluent and confident, at near-zero cost, tunable to a single reader. Two things change when construction becomes free. Fluency stops being evidence of human effort or intent. And a proposed reality can now be built for an audience of one, which no printing press could afford to do.

What does not change is the method. A model's answer has an architecture, filters, numbers, frames, and a position on the spectrum, exactly as a columnist's does. Machine analysis asks the same questions of every rung: which machine produced this, what does that machine scale, and what did it make cheap? Cost was once a quiet signal of commitment behind any published sentence. On the newest rung it is gone, and the reader's methods have to replace it.

Every technology that changes how language is produced changes how reality is **produced**.

THE SCALING LADDER

Five machines, one direction. Each rung increased humanity's capacity to construct and distribute shared realities, and each scaled a different variable. Nothing on the ladder has ever left it: every rung still runs, underneath the ones above.



THE CONSTANT

Every technology that changes how language is produced changes how reality is produced.

Fig. 06 · The scaling ladder. Each rung increases the capacity to construct and distribute shared realities; the method applies unchanged on every rung. Field diagnostic: name the rung that produced a message before analyzing it. The rung sets the cost of production, and cost sets how much fluency and volume are worth as evidence.

CASE FILE 06

THE ANGER DIVIDEND: WHEN A RANKING CHANGE REWROTE POLITICAL SPEECH

In 2018, Facebook reworked its news feed ranking around a metric it called Meaningful Social Interactions, weighting content by the conversations and reactions it produced. The stated goal was healthier time on the platform: more interaction between people, less passive consumption of video.

In 2021, internal documents reported by the Wall Street Journal showed what the company's own researchers had found in the years between: the reweighted system disproportionately amplified provocative and anger-inducing content, because reshares and heated comment threads scored as meaningful interaction. The documents also recorded something rarer than a leak: producers describing their own adaptation. Political parties in Europe told the company that the change had pushed them toward more negative, attack-oriented messaging, because positive policy content had stopped traveling. Some said they disliked what they were posting and posted it anyway. Publishers reported the same drift.

MACHINE READING	No one at any desk chose angrier politics. A metric definition did, one cycle of the loop at a time. The parties' complaint is the ranking loop's learning step described from inside: creators adapting to what the system buys.
FULL-METHOD READING	Architecture explains the metric's existence (attention is the product). Numbers explains its blindness (interaction counted, valence originally not). Map explains the output drift (heated positions travel farther than cool ones). The stages compose.
WHAT IT IS NOT	Not evidence that platforms uniquely corrupt discourse, or that the pre-feed media economy was neutral. Cable and tabloids ran their own engagement loops at lower speed. The case documents the mechanism, unusually well, in the machine's own files.

When your feed feels angrier than the people you actually know, this case is the reason to check the machine before diagnosing the species. And the case sits one rung down the ladder from the present: the machine documented here selected language. The current one also writes it.

THE METHOD IN REVERSE

RECONSTRUCTION

Analysis is half the discipline. Once you can see how realities are assembled, you are responsible for the ones you assemble yourself. This part turns the six stages around, from reading messages to building them: a full teardown of one weaponized post, its reconstruction in four passes, a playbook for answering messages by position, and the audit to run on your own drafts before they ship.

ALL SIX STAGES, ONE POST

Before rebuilding a message, take one apart completely. The specimen is the weaponized rendering from Case File O5, exactly as a reader would meet it in a feed. Total analysis time with practice: about two minutes.

SPECIMEN

"Councillor R. just killed your commute to fund her bike-lobby friends. Her office number is below. Make it ring."

01 · ARCHITECTURE	Anonymous account, engagement economics. The post exists because outrage converts to shares and calls, and the phone number is the conversion funnel. No institution stands behind it, which is a structural fact, not an insult.
02 · FILTER	Compared to what: no alternative is discussed. At what cost: none acknowledged on any side. Hard evidence: none offered for any claim in the post. Omitted entirely: the vote count, the pilot's duration, and the scheduled quarterly reviews.
03 · NUMBERS	Zero figures in a claim about traffic. "Killed your commute" quantifies nothing. The complete absence of a number in an empirical claim is itself the finding, and a reliable weaponization marker.
04 · FRAME	"Killed": violence metaphor. "Your commute": manufactured personal possession. "Bike-lobby friends": corruption insinuated through a label, never stated, so it cannot be rebutted. Motive is presupposed rather than argued.
05 · MAP	Weaponized, by every marker: a named target, a requested action, deleted doubt. What it asks for is ammunition. What you owe it, from the spectrum model, is nothing.
06 · MACHINE	Engineered for ranking: second-person address, a nameable enemy, and a call to action. The post is a prompt aimed at the reader, built to harvest replies, and every angry response it receives is payment.

The reality it is trying to create: a neighbor as an enemy, and a phone call as **self-defense**.

FOUR PASSES FROM AMMUNITION TO SOMETHING WORTH POSTING

Now rebuild the specimen. The passes run in order, and each produces a publishable message with a different, deliberately chosen position. Not because neutral is always the goal, but because you cannot choose a position until you can reach more than one.

PASS 1 · STRIP

Delete everything that is not verifiable. The metaphor goes ("killed"), the label goes ("bike-lobby friends"), the presupposed motive goes, the prediction goes. Survivors: council voted 7 to 4; one street; twelve-month pilot; Councillor R. voted yes; quarterly reviews scheduled. When almost nothing survives the strip, that is the teardown confirmed.

PASS 2 · NEUTRAL

"Council voted 7 to 4 to close King Street to private vehicles for a twelve-month pilot. Effects on commutes, retail, and emergency response will be reported quarterly."

Every claim checkable, every unknown named, no reader assigned a side.

PASS 3 · FRAMED, HONESTLY

"King Street goes car-free for a year. I think the pilot is worth running, and here is what would change my mind: transit times up more than ten minutes at the first review."

Position: framed, disclosed, owned. The final clause prices your exit, which is what keeps honest framing from sliding toward the moralized end.

PASS 4 · MACHINE-READY, CLEAN

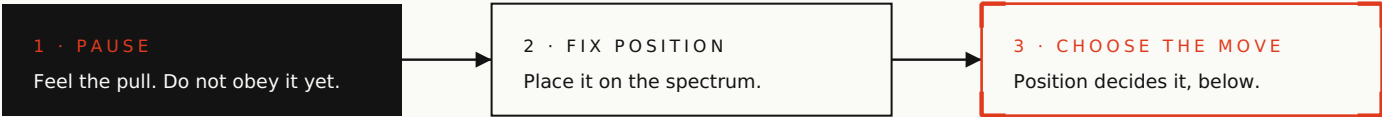
"King Street goes car-free for twelve months starting May. If your commute uses it, the detour map is below. I support the pilot, and I have posted the quarterly review dates so we can all check the results against the promises. What result would change your mind?"

Built to travel: a concrete stake in the first sentence, immediate utility, and a genuine question, which outperforms a verdict over time. Built to stay clean: no enemy, disagreement invited, evidence pre-committed.

The four passes are the construction templates of the method. Strip is the discipline, Neutral is the baseline, Framed is the everyday working mode, and Machine-ready is Framed plus distribution craft. Note what has no pass: there is no template for the specimen. Reach is available without it.

HOW TO RESPOND DELIBERATELY

Most damage is done in the reply, in the first ninety seconds, at the speed the message chose. The playbook is three beats: pause, fix the position, then choose the move that position calls for. The reaction you feel first is the one that was engineered; delay is not weakness, it is the analysis happening.



POSITION	THE MOVE	THE OPENING LINE THAT EXECUTES IT
NEUTRAL	Evaluate	Engage the content on the merits. If you respond, respond with evidence.
FRAMED	Compare	Supply the rival frame without accusation: "Another way to put the same facts is..." Frames are answered with frames, not with charges of bias.
EMOTIONAL	Slow it down	Acknowledge the feeling as real, then ask for the base rate: "This is genuinely alarming. How often does this actually happen?"
MORALIZED	Separate	Refuse the character test out loud: "I can disagree with this and be a decent person. On the issue itself, here is where I land."
POLARIZED	Decline the binary	Name a third position and stand in it: "Those are not the only two options. Here is one that neither camp is offering."
WEAPONIZED	Withhold	Nothing in public. Document, report, or exit. The post is fueled by replies of every valence; the angry rebuttal pays it as well as the endorsement does.

Two openers de-escalate almost everything above the neutral line: steelman the other position in your first sentence, and name the frame rather than the person ("the word 'invasion' is doing a lot of work here"). And one honesty check before any reply: if the true goal of your reply is to be seen replying, the machine has already won the exchange.

THE PIPELINE, AND THE AUDIT BEFORE ANYTHING SHIPS

On the newest rungs of the ladder, most language passes through a model, a ranking system, or both before it reaches a reader. Responsibility concentrates at the stations where human choices remain: the prompt and the edit.

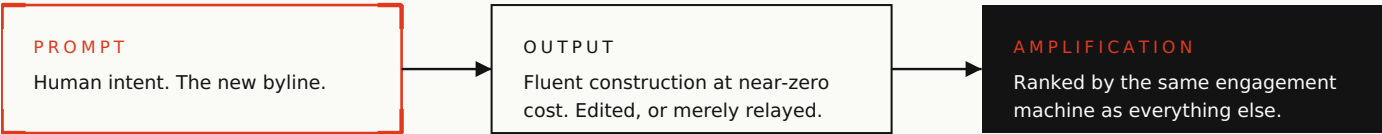


FIG. 07 · THE MIDDLE STATION HAS NO INTENT TO BORROW. SYNTHETIC STYLE TELLS ARE WEAK AND DECAYING; THE SIX STAGES NEVER NEEDED TI

RECONSTRUCTION · THE PRE-SEND AUDIT

The six stages, inverted into one question each about your own draft. They apply to everything with stakes: an email has an architecture even with an audience of one, a report lives or dies at the Numbers stage, and a post answers to the Machine. If a question stings, that is the edit.

01	ARCHITECTURE	Would I write this the same way if my incentives were printed under my name?
02	FILTER	Have I stated the comparison, the cost, and the evidence, or only the ones that help me?
03	NUMBERS	Are my figures absolute where absolute is honest, and would I defend the nearby number I omitted?
04	FRAME	Which of my terms would the other side refuse, and did I choose them for accuracy or for effect?
05	MAP	Where does this sit on the spectrum, and did I put it there on purpose?
06	MACHINE	What reaction is this built to harvest, and am I willing to own that harvest?

FIELD EXERCISE

Put one contested question to two or three AI systems, then run all six stages on each answer, architecture first: who built each system, and what does it optimize? The answers will differ, and the differences are the lesson. A model's response is a constructed message from an institution, not a reading from an instrument.

THE FULL METHOD ON ONE PAGE

Cut this page out, photograph it, or memorize it. Run the stages in order. With practice the full pass takes under two minutes, and the first three questions become reflex.

STAGE	NAME	RUN THESE QUESTIONS	DONE WHEN YOU CAN SAY
01	Architecture	Why does this message exist here? Who owns the platform? What does the ranking reward? Who is the assumed audience?	"This message exists because..."
02	Filter	Compared to what? At what cost? What hard evidence? What context or perspective is absent?	"What it leaves out is..."
03	Numbers	What is the denominator? The baseline? Relative or absolute? Mean or median? Which nearby number went unreported?	"The numbers invite me to accept..."
04	Frame	Which terms are loaded? What would the rival vocabulary be? What is presupposed? Who disappears in the passive voice?	"These words permit... and exclude..."
05	Map	Where does this sit: neutral, framed, emotional, moralized, polarized, weaponized? What is it asking of me?	"Its position is... so I owe it..."
06	Machine	Why did this reach me, now? What about its construction made the system carry it? What reaction is it harvesting?	"The machine carried it because..."

THEN ASK THE CORE QUESTION • **WHAT REALITY IS THIS LANGUAGE TRYING TO CREATE?**

WHERE THE METHOD EARNS ITS KEEP

A note on what this method is. It is not a media literacy framework, a journalism framework, or an AI literacy framework. It is a framework for analyzing, and intentionally constructing, public reality through language. The domains below are where that work currently happens. They are applications of the framework, not the framework itself.

Public policy

Reading legislation summaries, impact statements, and the gap between a bill's name and its text.

Governance

Board materials, consultant reports, and internal metrics that arrive pre-framed as conclusions.

Journalism

Editing one's own framing as deliberately as one's facts, and reading competitors structurally.

AI literacy

Language models are the newest rung of the scaling ladder, not a special case. The six stages apply to a model's answer exactly as they apply to a columnist's.

Strategic communications

Constructing messages with full knowledge of what construction is, and the accountability that follows from it.

Leadership

Hearing how a problem was framed before deciding it, since most decisions are lost at the framing stage.

Education

Teachable from middle school upward. Students who can name a loaded question stop being moved by them.

Media analysis

Comparing outlets by architecture and position rather than by team, which is where the real differences live.

Executive decisions

Auditing the numbers and frames in a deck before they become the numbers and frames in a strategy.

Most decisions are lost at the **framing** stage, before anyone knows a decision is being made.

FIVE WAYS TO MISUSE THIS METHOD

A method for analyzing influence is itself an influence on its user. These are the five documented failure modes among practitioners, with corrections. Read this page twice a year.

NO.	FAILURE MODE	DESCRIPTION AND CORRECTION
F1	The cynicism collapse	"Everything is framed, so nothing is true." This inverts the method. That all messages are constructed does not make them equally accurate or equally honest; the stages exist precisely to tell better constructions from worse ones. Correction: the method's output is a graded judgment, never a shrug.
F2	The one-way scope	Applying the stages only to the other side's messages. This is the most common failure and the most flattering one, since it feels like rigor. Correction: for every opposing message you analyze, analyze one you agreed with before reading. If the method never costs you a belief, you are not using it.
F3	The infinite regress	Analyzing every message at full depth until reading becomes impossible. Correction: the method is proportional. A weather report gets the core question; a policy you will vote on gets all six stages. Depth follows stakes.
F4	The unframed illusion	Believing that knowing the method exempts you from framing, in what you read or in what you write. It does not. Your own messages construct reality like everyone else's. Correction: run the six stages on your next important email before sending it.
F5	The weaponized method	Using the vocabulary of analysis as ammunition: "that's just framing" deployed to dismiss an argument without engaging it. This moves your own message to the hot end of the spectrum while borrowing the credibility of the cool end. Correction: naming a frame begins an analysis. It never concludes one.

PROVENANCE

The Unframed Method was developed by Oded Levy, a brand and creative director who spent more than a decade building persuasive language professionally, across health technology, luxury fashion, pharmaceutical communications, and enterprise software, before turning the tools inside out. The method began as a private checklist for reading the news like someone who writes for a living, became a classroom unit, and grew into the six-stage protocol in this manual.

It is taught live: as workshops for teams and organizations, as classroom units from eighth grade upward, and as talks for audiences who make decisions with language. The consistent finding across every audience is the same one that motivated the method: people do not need to be told that messages are constructed. They need a repeatable way to see the construction, one they can run themselves, on any message, including this one.

WORKSHOPS & TALKS Teams, schools, and organizations · inquiries via theunframedmethod.com

LIVE TOOLS Interactive frame analysis at theunframedmethod.com: Reveal the Frame, Loaded Question, Moral Split

THIS MANUAL First edition, 2026. Composed in Bebas Neue, DM Sans, and DM Mono

A CLOSING NOTE

This manual is itself a constructed message. It has an architecture (a practice that offers workshops), frames (starting with the word "unframed"), selected numbers, and a position on its own spectrum, somewhere between framed and emotional, by design. If you finished it able to see those choices clearly, it worked. Run the stages on it. That is the graduation exercise.

THE CORE QUESTION

WHAT REALITY IS THIS LANGUAGE TRYING TO CREATE?

Six stages. One question. A repeatable way to see how realities are built from words, and to answer them on purpose.