

Ten commandments for non-economists

1. Economics is a collection of models with no predetermined conclusions; do not let anyone tell you otherwise.
2. Do not criticize an economist's model because of its assumptions; ask how the results would be changed if the assumptions that seem problematic were more realistic.
3. Analysis requires simplicity; beware of incoherence that passes itself off as complexity.
4. Do not be put off by the math; remember economists use math not because they are smart, but because they are not smart enough.
5. When an economist makes a recommendation, ask what makes him/her sure the underlying model applies to the case at hand.
6. When an economist uses the term "economic welfare," ask what s/he means by it.
7. Do not assume what an economist says in public is the same as what he says in the seminar room.
8. Economists don't (all) worship markets; if they seem like they do, it's probably because they know better how they work than you do.
9. If you think all economists think alike, do attend one of their seminars.
10. If you think economists are especially rude to non-economists, do attend one of their seminars.