

Where should a word look to get its meaning? — Attention

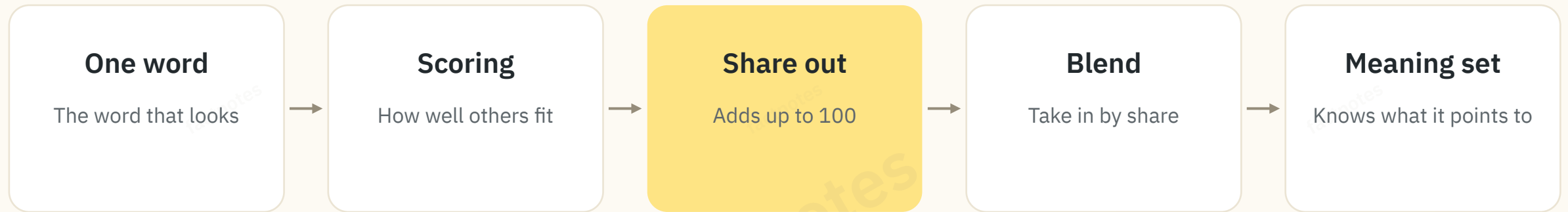
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Attention is sharing out a fixed amount of focus, and where it piles up is what the meaning becomes.

In a nutshell

- 1 Attention is the calculation that decides **how hard each word in a sentence looks at the other words.**
- 2 Attention doesn't grow without limit. **Words share out a fixed total**, so looking hard at one means looking less at the others.
- 3 That's how meaning gets settled. When attention piles onto the word that fits, **what 'it' refers to** comes into focus.

Four steps that set where attention goes



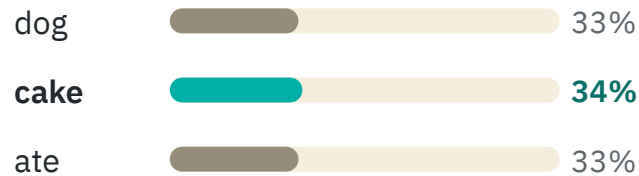
The third box matters most. The scores aren't used as they are; they're turned into shares of a fixed total, so looking hard at one word automatically makes the others weaker.

Key idea: attention is shared out — when one side gets stronger, the others get weaker

Turn the strength of attention with the handle

0 — looks at every word equally

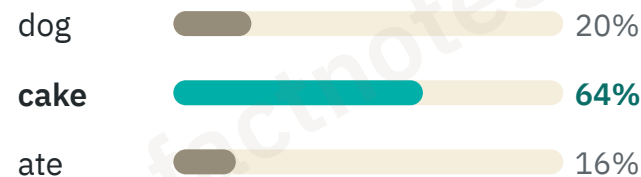
'The dog ate the cake. It was deli...



Looking evenly can't settle anything. With attention spread out, what 'it' means stays blurry.

50 — starts leaning toward the word that fits

'The dog ate the cake. It was deli...



What goes with 'delicious' isn't the dog — it's the cake. As attention tilts that way, the meaning starts to co...

100 — looks at one spot only

'The dog ate the cake. It was deli...



Here the cake is a sure thing, so piling on is fine. But remember: the more it piles on, the more the other clu...

The higher you push the handle, the more attention piles onto one word. At 0 it looks at every word equally; at...

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Just three questions

Q1

What does attention do, in one line?

- ① Looks words up in a dictionary
- ② Decides how hard one word looks at another
- ③ Shortens sentences
- ④ Fixes spelling

Q2

What happens when 'It was delicious' becomes 'It was full'?

- ① The sentence gets shorter
- ② Nothing changes
- ③ Attention moves from the cake to the dog
- ④ Attention spreads out evenly

Q3

If one word gets looked at really hard, the rest...

- ① Vanish and come back
- ② All get stronger too
- ③ Double
- ④ Get smaller shares

Know the why, too

Q1

②

It scores how well words fit together, then turns those scores into shares of attention. That share is exactly 'how hard it looks.'

Q2

③

What can be delicious is the cake; what can be full is the dog. Change one word, the fit scores change, and attention moves over completely.

Q3

④

The total is fixed, so it gets shared out. Pile it on one side and the other shares shrink automatically — which is also how clues get missed.

**Attention is sharing out a fixed amount of focus,
and where it piles up is what the meaning becomes.**



Tomorrow: Meaning as numbers — turn words into bundles of numbers and similar meanings end up close together.