

Crafting Metaphor

Cultured.Fit

A good metaphor should resonate with familiar experiences, ideally in the physical world, and capture the key insight of the unfamiliar domain. To start, choose a concept, and write down a few key properties. Then generate things in the real world with those properties. Then evaluate the ways in which this captures and fails to capture the concept. This reveals more key properties. Then repeat.

Metaphor	Properties captured	Properties missing

Concepts to explain

Convex hull
Memory cache
Generative model
Sequence alignment
Integer linear models
Network address translation
Convolutional neural network

Bezier curves
Agile development
Mechanism design
Optimizing compiler
Eventual consistency
Streaming algorithm
Markov decision process
Receding horizon control

Key properties

Familiar concepts

Food
Cooking
Dishes
Sports
Games & toys
Battle
Historical figures
Romance
Animals
People you've met
The Great Outdoors
Things you might find on a desk
Artists
Music
Children
Bars & restaurants
Celebrities
Home maintenance
Transportation & driving
Politics
Shopping
Movies & TV
Advertising
Mail
Water

Lakes, rivers, & oceans
Parties
Cities and countries
Languages
Friendships
Science fiction
Theater
Gears and springs
Books & magazines
Locks & keys
Pipes
Offices
Your boss
Farming
Doorways
Weather
The gym
Telephones
Sleeping
Beds
Bullies
Alcohol
Clothing
Furniture
Laundry

Money
Buildings
School
The government
Cars
The moon
Satellites
The internet
A garden hose
Clothing
A blanket
Traffic
Camping
Fire
Music
Dance
Exams
Computers
Paint
Cell phones
A typewriter
Lemonade
Aphorisms
Balloons
Pets