DAY 50 · Part 5 · Looking Inside

What happens when you ask AI something it doesn't know? — Open-book answers

Five-Minute AI Lessons · Oct 26, 2026

Answer from memory and it's easy to make stuff up, but find it, lay it open and answer, and the evidence stays.

In a nutshell

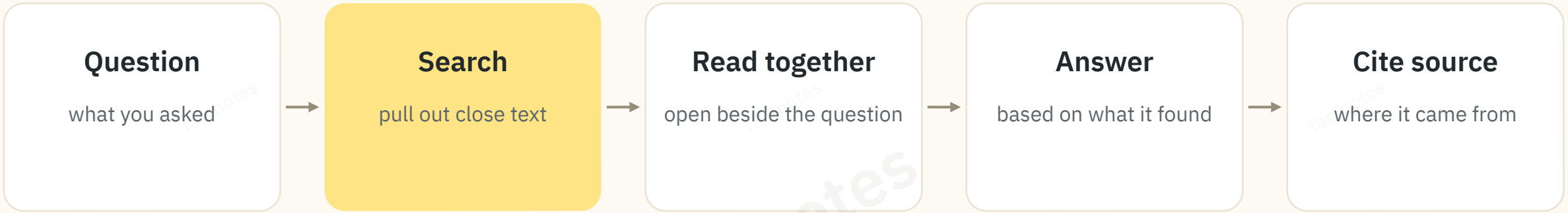
1. If it answers only from what it memorized, it's easy for it to make up something that sounds right. So before answering, it **goes and finds related text first** and keeps it open next to it.

2. The way it finds that text is exactly what you learned yesterday. It turns your question into a list of numbers and pulls out **the pieces of text sitting closest to it**.

3. That turns a closed-book test into an open-book one. Because it answers **while reading the text it found**, it can handle brand-new info, and it can tell you where each claim came from.

In one picture

From question to source



The good part: you don't have to retrain the model. Just swap in newer text to lay open, and the answers get newer too. The catch: if the text it found is wrong, the answer is wrong too.

Key idea: instead of answering from memory, find the text, lay it open, and answer

Experiment · Put it in order

The steps of an open-book answer

The big steps

1. Get the question
2. Find related text
3. Read text with question
4. Write the answer

The key is that finding comes before answering. First it finds the text and lay...

How the search works

1. Chop the text into pieces
2. Turn pieces into numbers
3. Turn question into numbers
4. Pull out the closest pieces

Shove in a whole book and it's way too long to read. So you chop it into small...

Adding the source

1. Pick a sentence it used
2. See which piece it came from
3. Attach that text's name

The pieces it used to build the answer are still there, so it can trace where e...

Tap the mixed-up pieces in the right order. There are three sets: the big steps of answering, how the search wo...

Try it yourself in the web lesson · next-token.net/en/learn/day-50/

Quick check

Just three questions

Q1

Which is the right order for an 'open-book answer'?

① Write the answer first, then find text
② Get the question, find text, answer using it
③ Memorize all the text, then answer
④ Shorten the question, then answer

Q2

How does it find the pieces of text that fit your question?

① The one that comes first alphabetically
② The longest piece
③ The piece closest to the question in numbers
④ The most recently made piece

Q3

Which one is NOT a good thing about this method?

① Can keep up with new info
② Can show its sources
③ No retraining needed
④ Always gets it right

Know the why, too

Q1

② Finding comes before answering. First it pulls out related text and lays it open, then it builds the answer while reading it.

Q2

③ Just like yesterday. Both the text pieces and the question get turned into lists of numbers, and it pulls out only a few pieces that are close.

Q3

④ If the text it found is wrong or off-topic, the answer is wrong too. An open-book test doesn't help if you opened the wrong book.

Answer from memory and it's easy to make stuff up.
but find it, lay it open and answer, and the evidence stays.



Tomorrow: Extra training (fine-tuning) — instead of handing it a book, what changes if you just teach it more?