

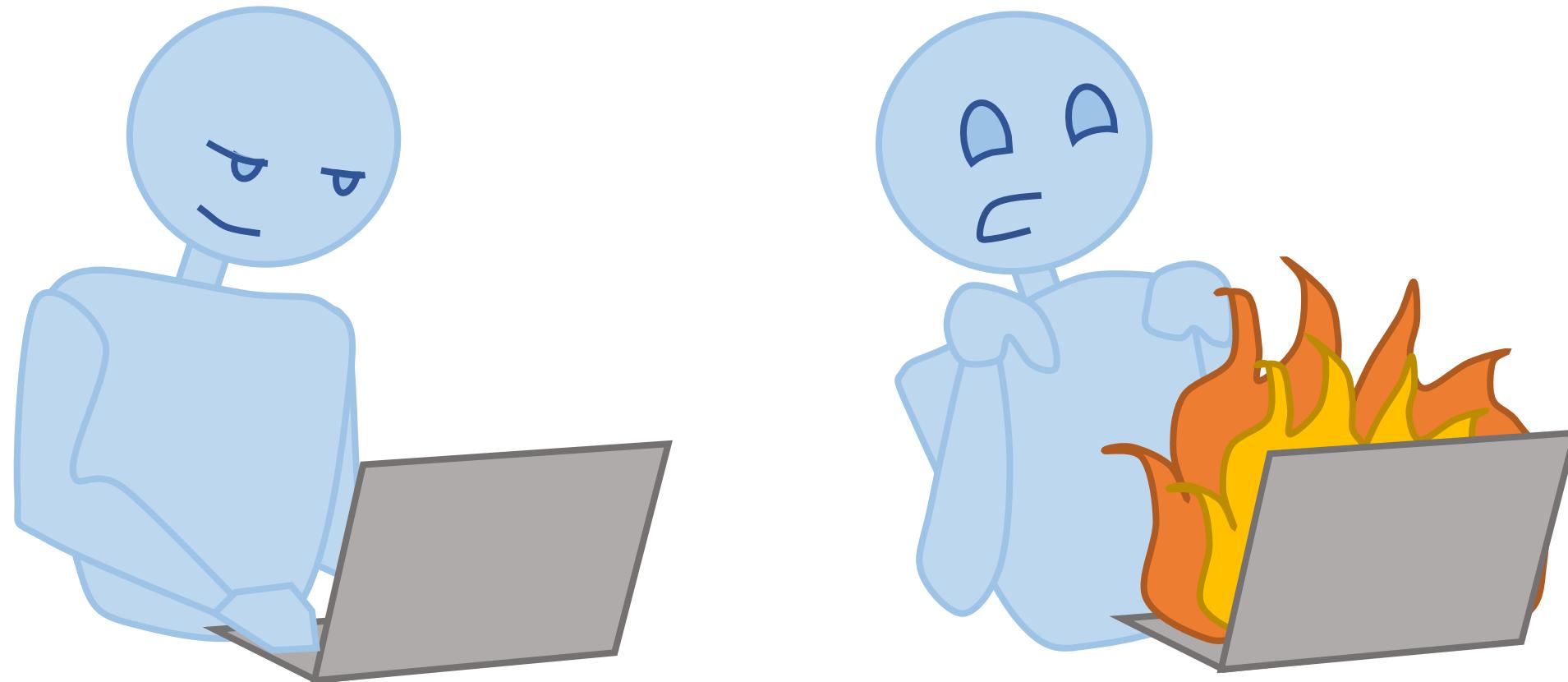


# PerfFuzz: Automatically Generating Pathological Inputs

**Caroline Lemieux, Rohan Padhye, Koushik Sen, Dawn Song**  
University of California, Berkeley

source: <https://github.com/carolemieux/perffuzz>

# Nobody Expects Performance Problems



# Performance Problems Have Consequences

**CWE** Common Weakness Enumeration  
A Community-Developed List of Software Weakness Types

Home > CWE List > CWE- Individual Dictionary Definition (3.1) ID Lookup:  Go

Home | About | CWE List | Scoring | Commun  
Search

## CWE-407: Algorithmic Complexity

Weakness ID: 407 Status: Incomplete  
Abstraction: Base  
Structure: Simple

Presentation Filter: Basic

**Description**

An algorithm in a product has an inefficient worst-case computational complexity that may be detrimental to system performance and can be triggered by an attacker, typically using crafted manipulations that ensure that the worst case is being reached.



# Performance Problems Have Consequences

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**Description**  
An algorithm in a product has an inefficient worst-case computational complexity that may be detrimental to system performance and can be triggered by an attacker, typically using crafted manipulations that ensure that the worst case is being reached.



# Performance Problems Have Consequences

The screenshot shows the CWE-407: Algorithmic Complexity page. At the top, it says "Common Weakness Enumeration" and "A Community-Developed List of Software Weakness Types". There is a badge for "TOP 25 MOST DANGEROUS SOFTWARE ERRORS". The main title is "CWE-407: Algorithmic Complexity". Below the title, it says "Weakness ID: 407", "Abstraction: Base", and "Structure: Simple". The status is listed as "Incomplete". A "Presentation Filter" dropdown is set to "Basic". Under the "Description" section, there is a detailed explanation of what algorithmic complexity is and how it can be exploited.

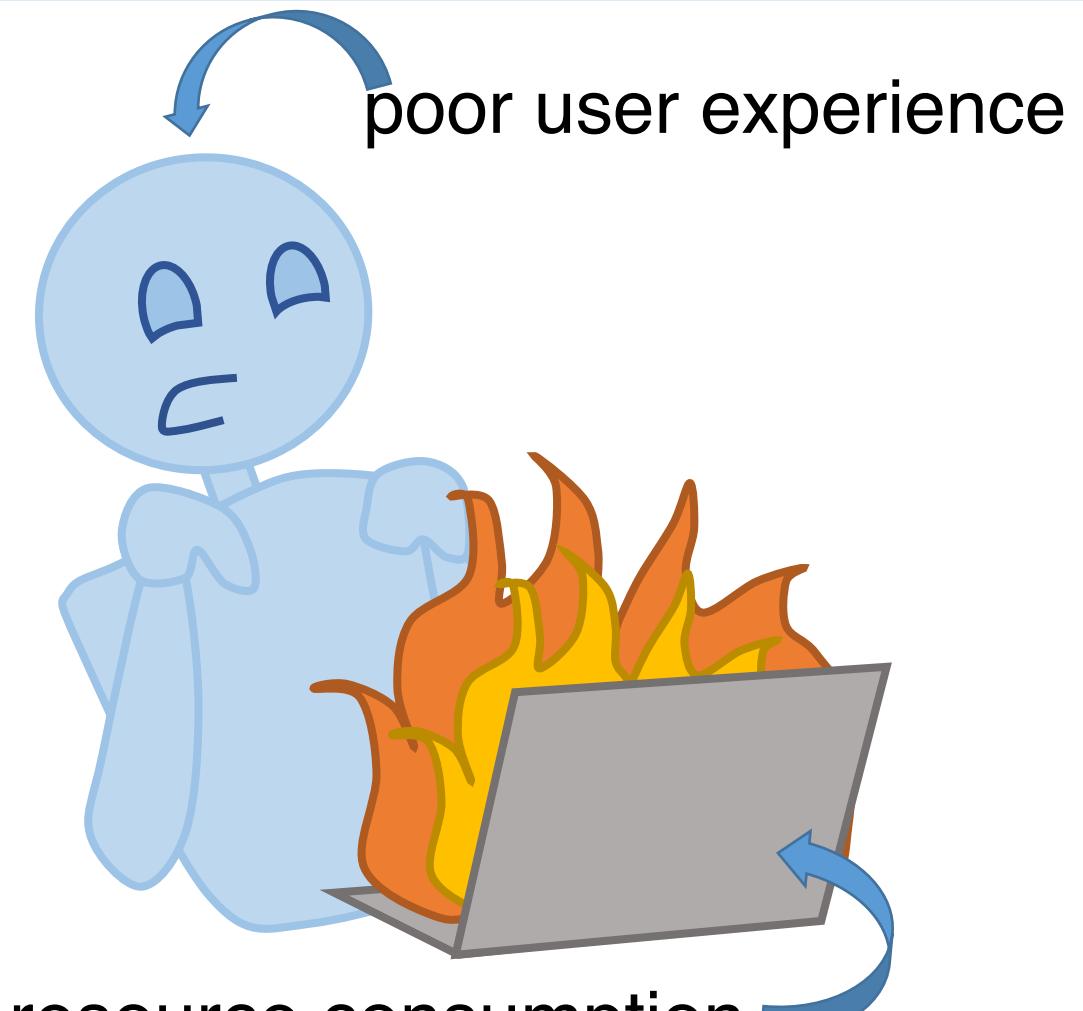


excessive resource consumption

# Performance Problems Have Consequences

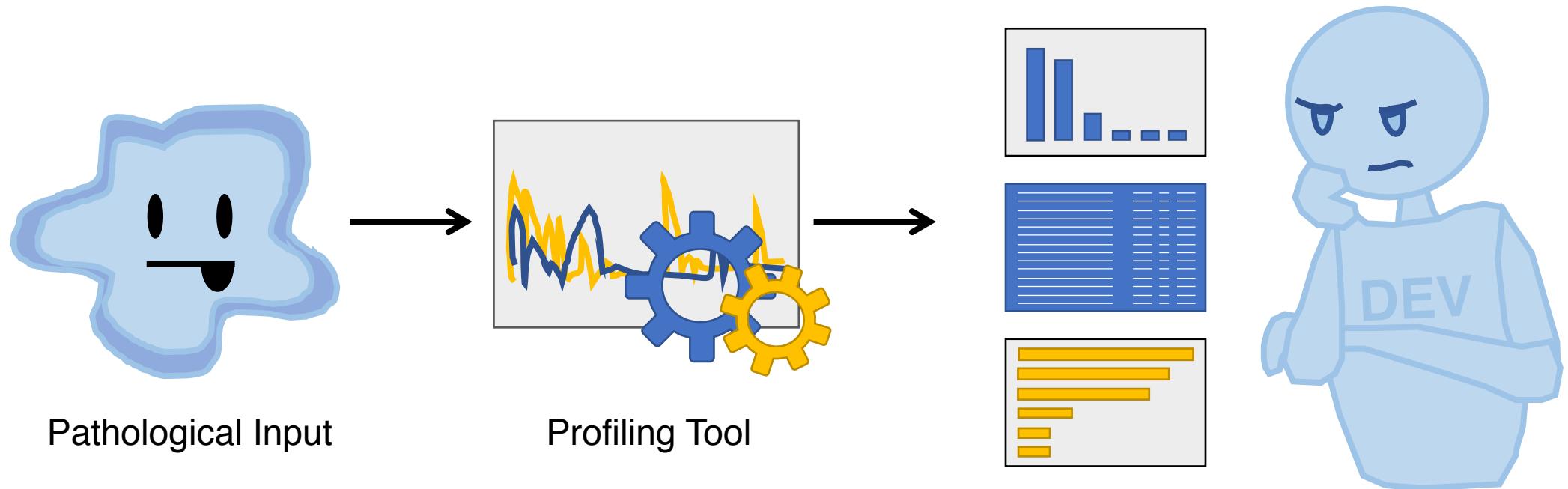
security vulnerabilities (DoS)

The screenshot shows the CWE-407: Algorithmic Complexity page. At the top, it says "Common Weakness Enumeration" and "A Community-Developed List of Software Weakness Types". There is a badge for "TOP 25 MOST DANGEROUS SOFTWARE ERRORS". The main title is "CWE-407: Algorithmic Complexity". Below the title, it says "Weakness ID: 407", "Abstraction: Base", and "Structure: Simple". The status is listed as "Incomplete". A "Presentation Filter" dropdown is set to "Basic". Under the "Description" section, there is a detailed explanation of what algorithmic complexity is and how it can lead to Denial of Service (DoS) attacks.

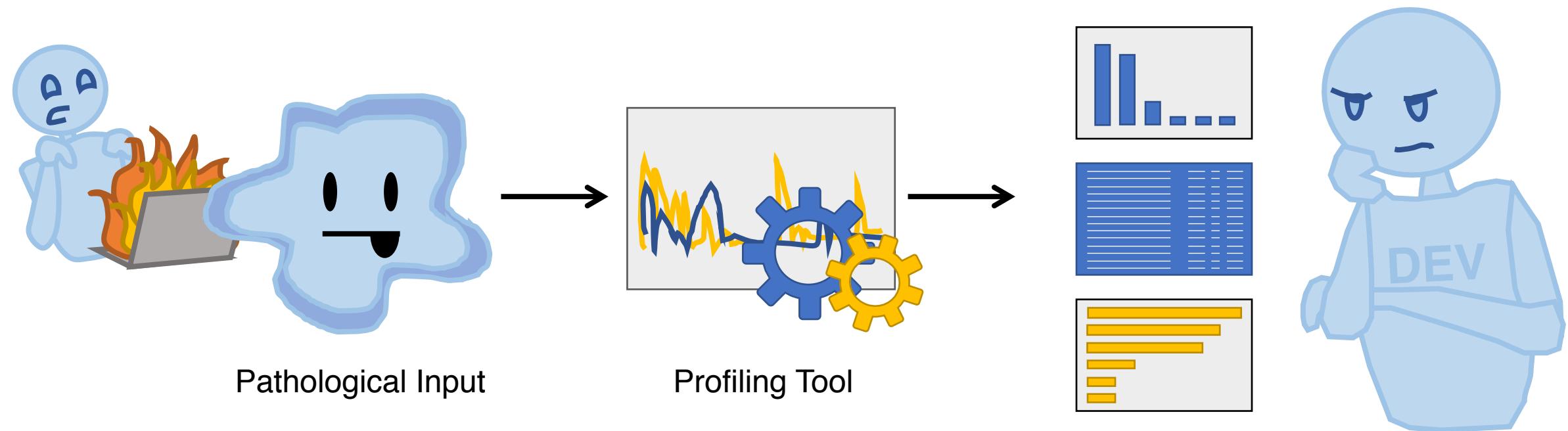


excessive resource consumption

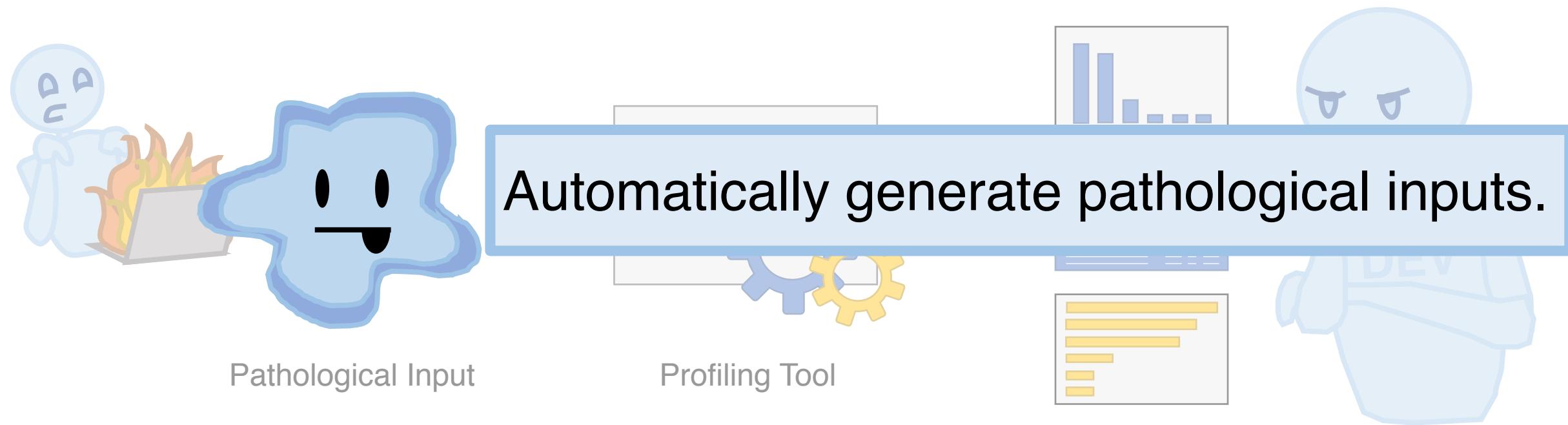
# Alleviating Performance Problems



# Alleviating Performance Problems

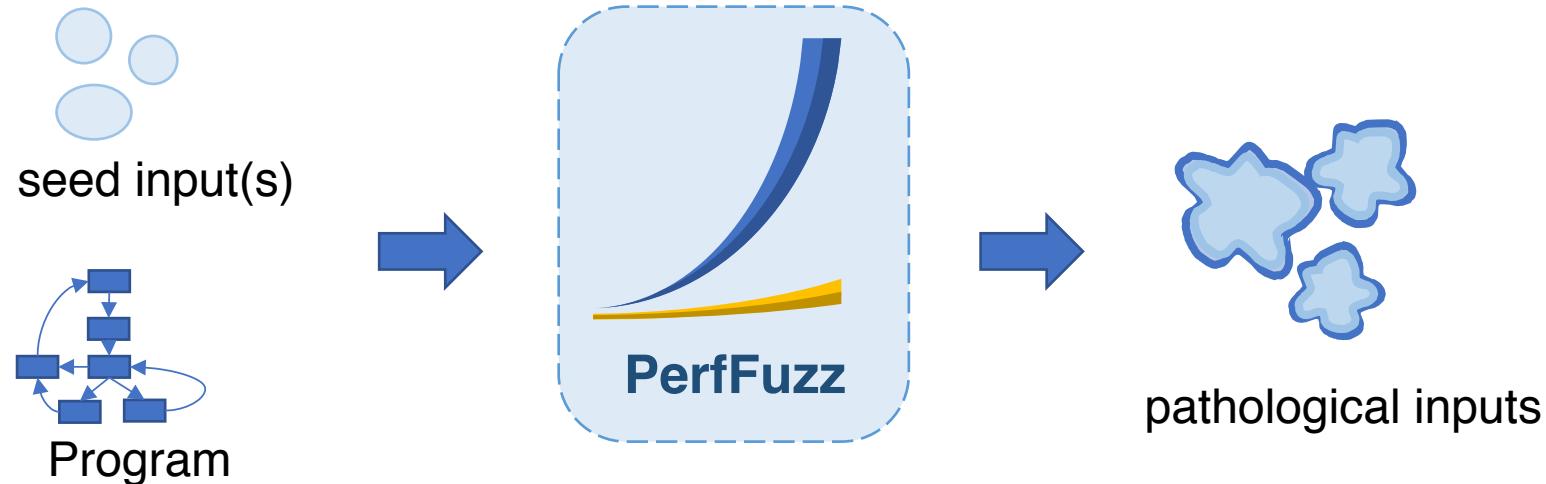


# PerfFuzz Goal



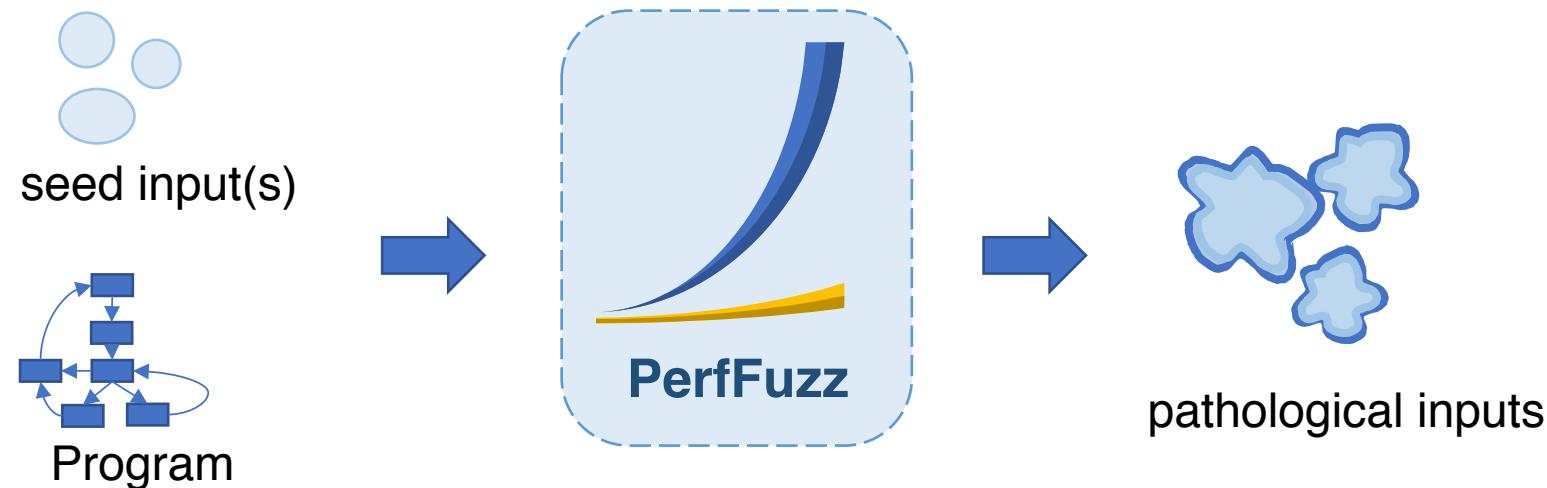
# PerfFuzz

- A **feedback-directed mutational fuzzing tool**
- Uses **performance feedback** to produce pathological inputs



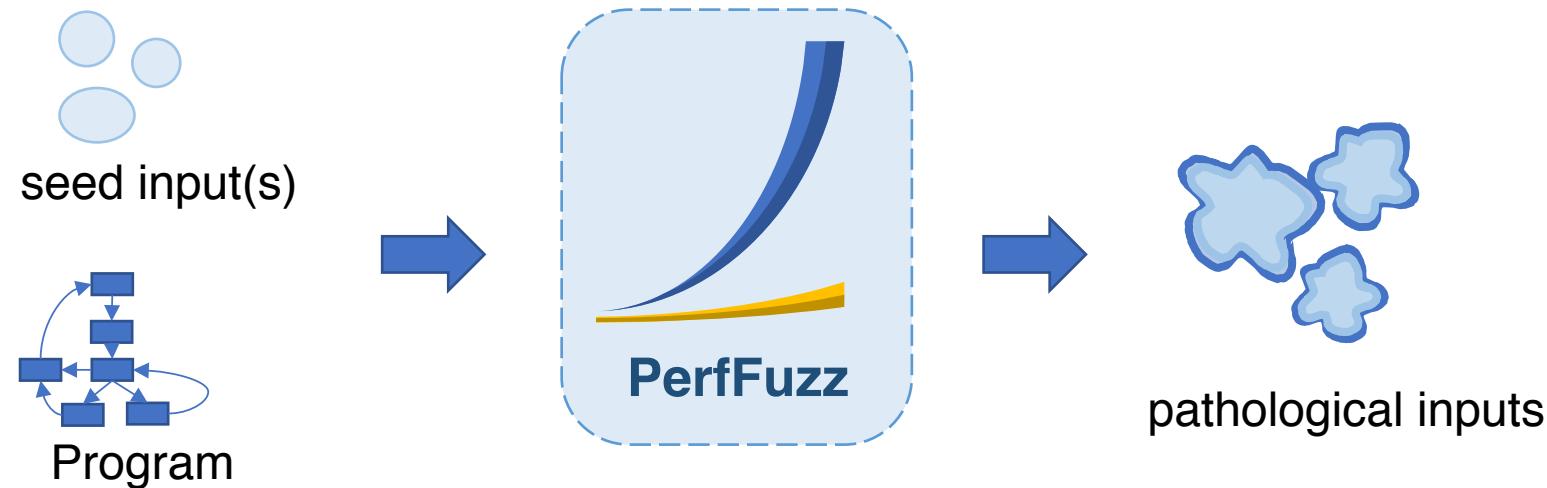
# PerfFuzz

- A **feedback-directed mutational fuzzing tool**
  - **Fuzzing**: sends inputs to program
  - **Mutational**: creates new inputs by mutating saved inputs
  - **Feedback-directed**: saves inputs if program gives *interesting* feedback



# PerfFuzz

- A **feedback-directed mutational fuzzing tool**
- Uses **performance feedback** to produce pathological inputs
  - **First idea:** interesting if longer execution time, path length [1]
  - **PerfFuzz:** interesting if higher execution count of any given CFG edge



[1] T. Petsios, J. Zhao, A. D. Keromytis, and S. Jana. 2017. SlowFuzz: Automated Domain-Independent Detection of Algorithmic Complexity Vulnerabilities. CCS '17.

# Example Program: Word Frequency (wf)

- Count # occurrences of words in a string

input:

```
the quick brown the dog
```

output:

```
brown: 1
dog: 1
quick: 1
the: 2
```

- wf shipped with Fedora Linux had real performance bugs

# Example Program: Word Frequency (wf)

- Count # occurrences of words in a string

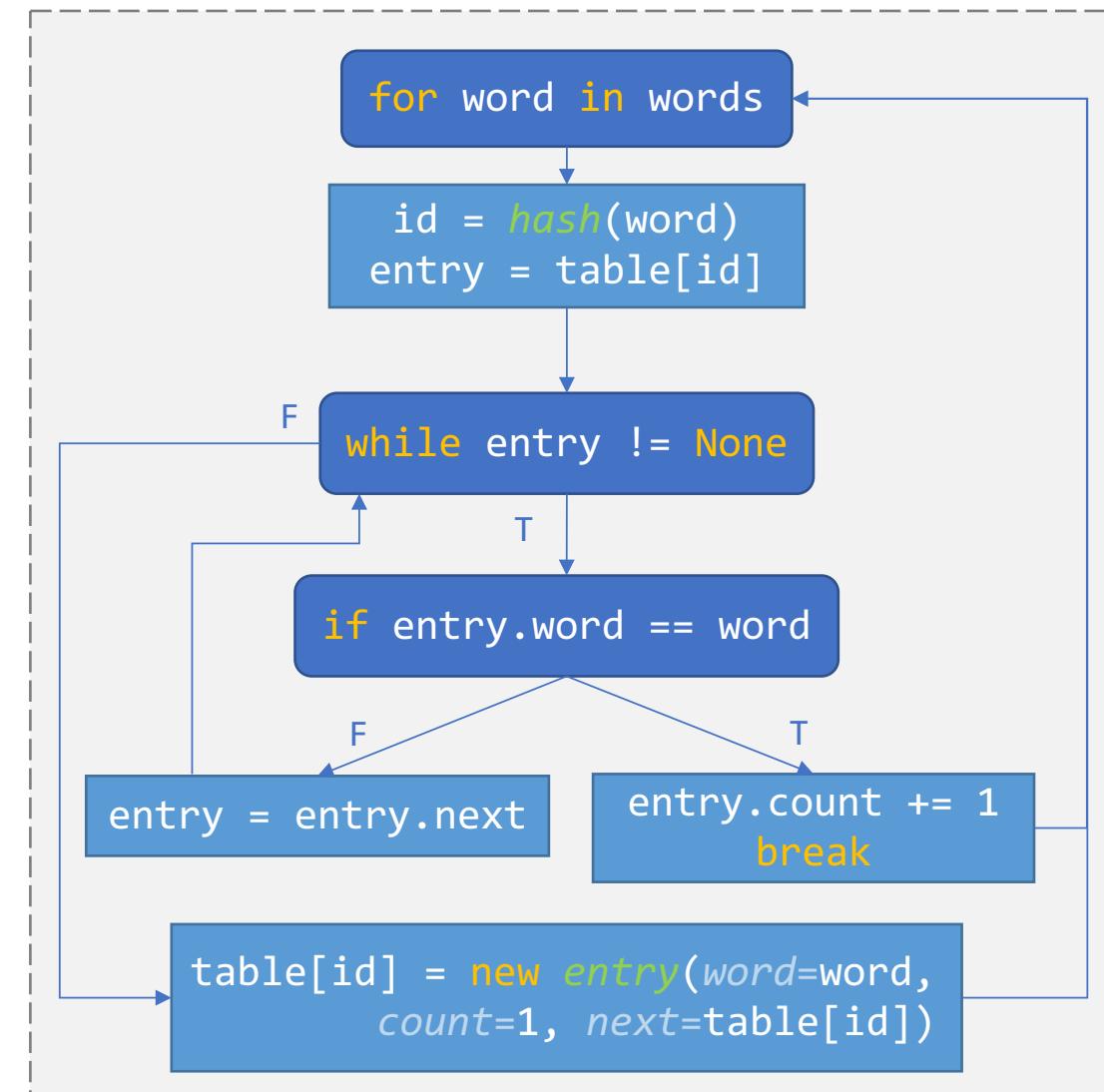
input:

```
the quick brown the dog
```

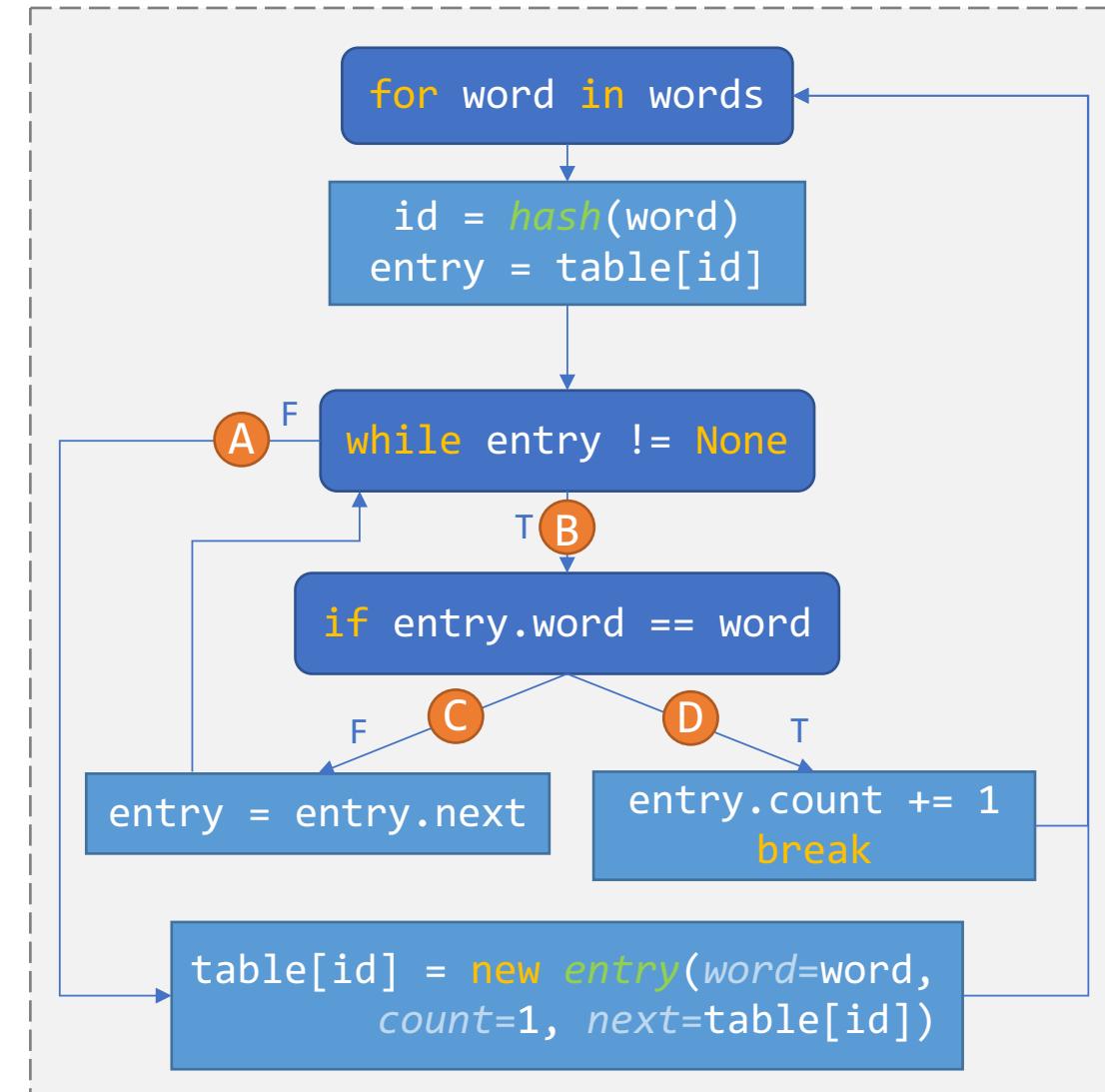
output:

```
brown: 1
dog: 1
quick: 1
the: 2
```

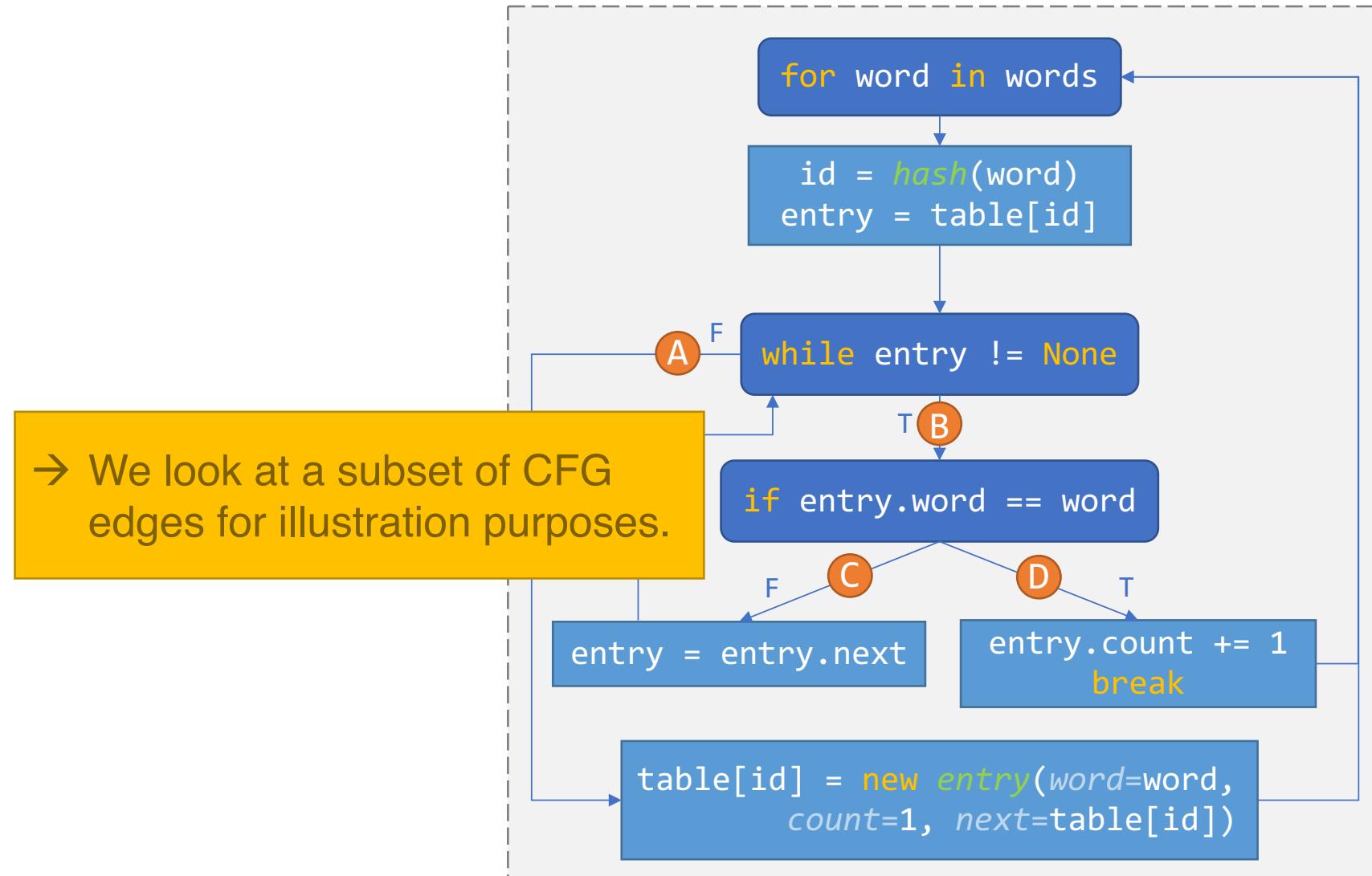
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# wf Performance Response



# wf Performance Response

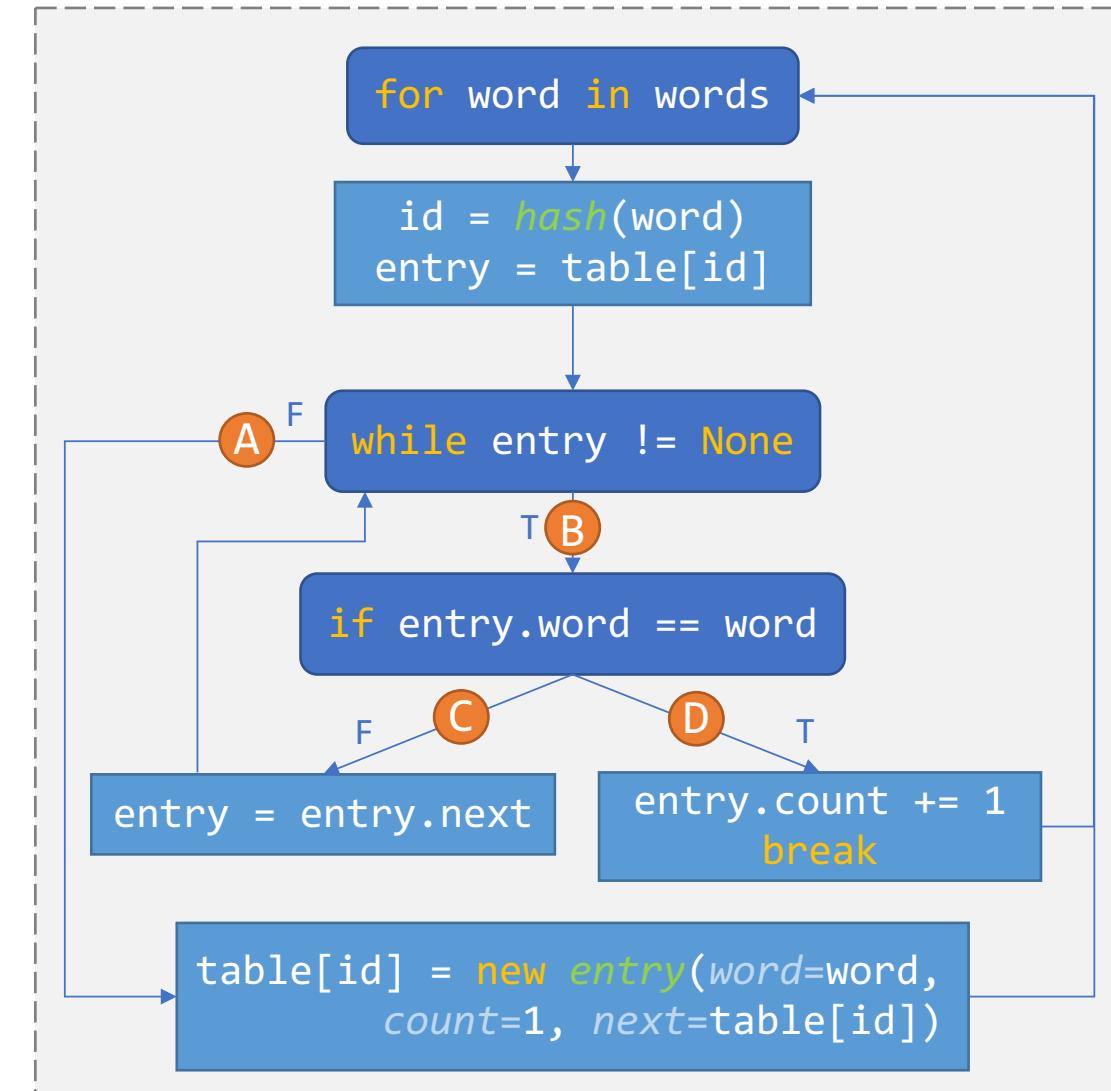


# wf Performance Response

- Usual case:

the quick brown the dog

Edge	# Hits
A	
B	
C	
D	

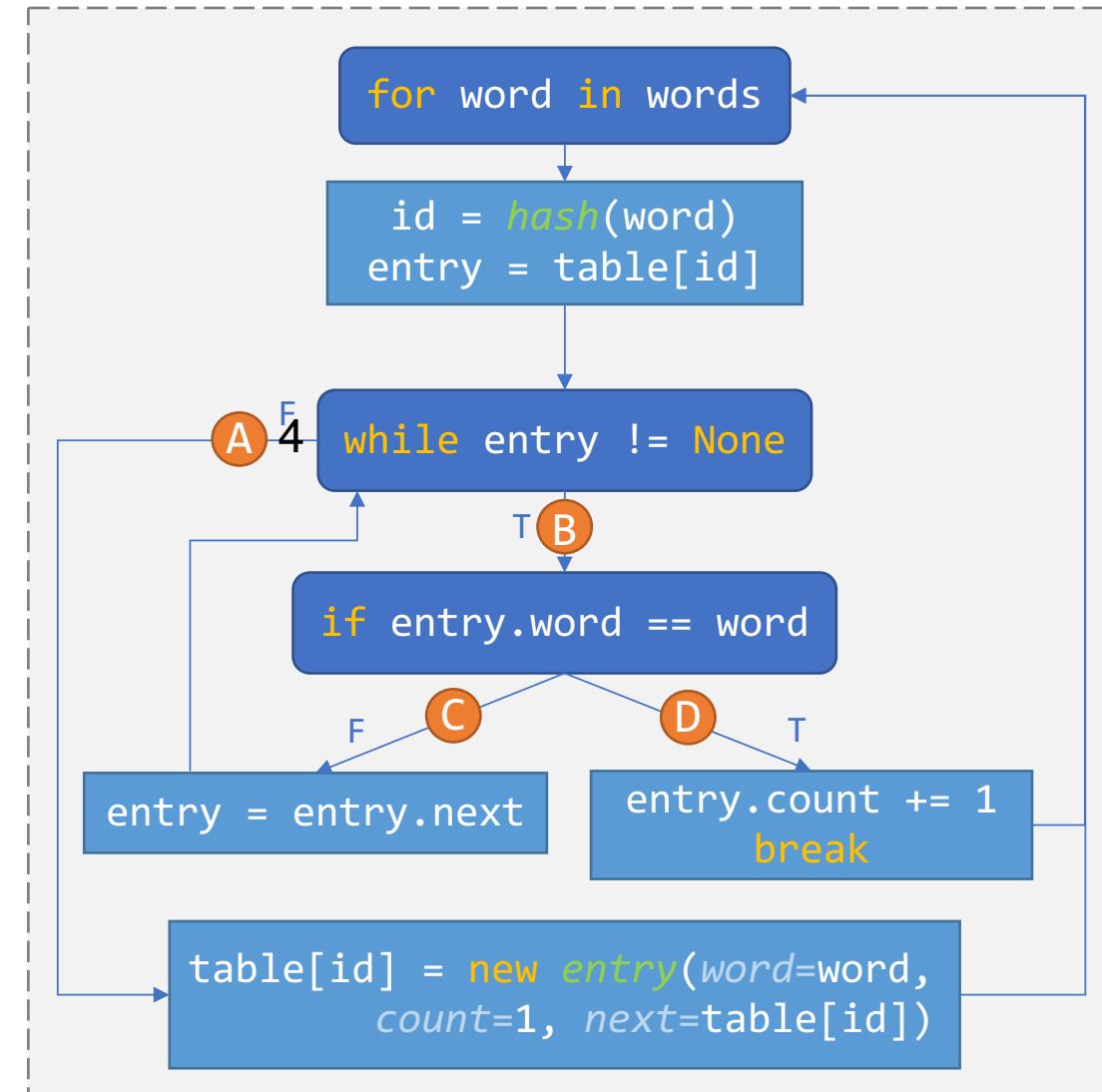


# wf Performance Response

- Usual case:

```
the quick brown the dog
```

Edge	# Hits
A	4
B	
C	
D	

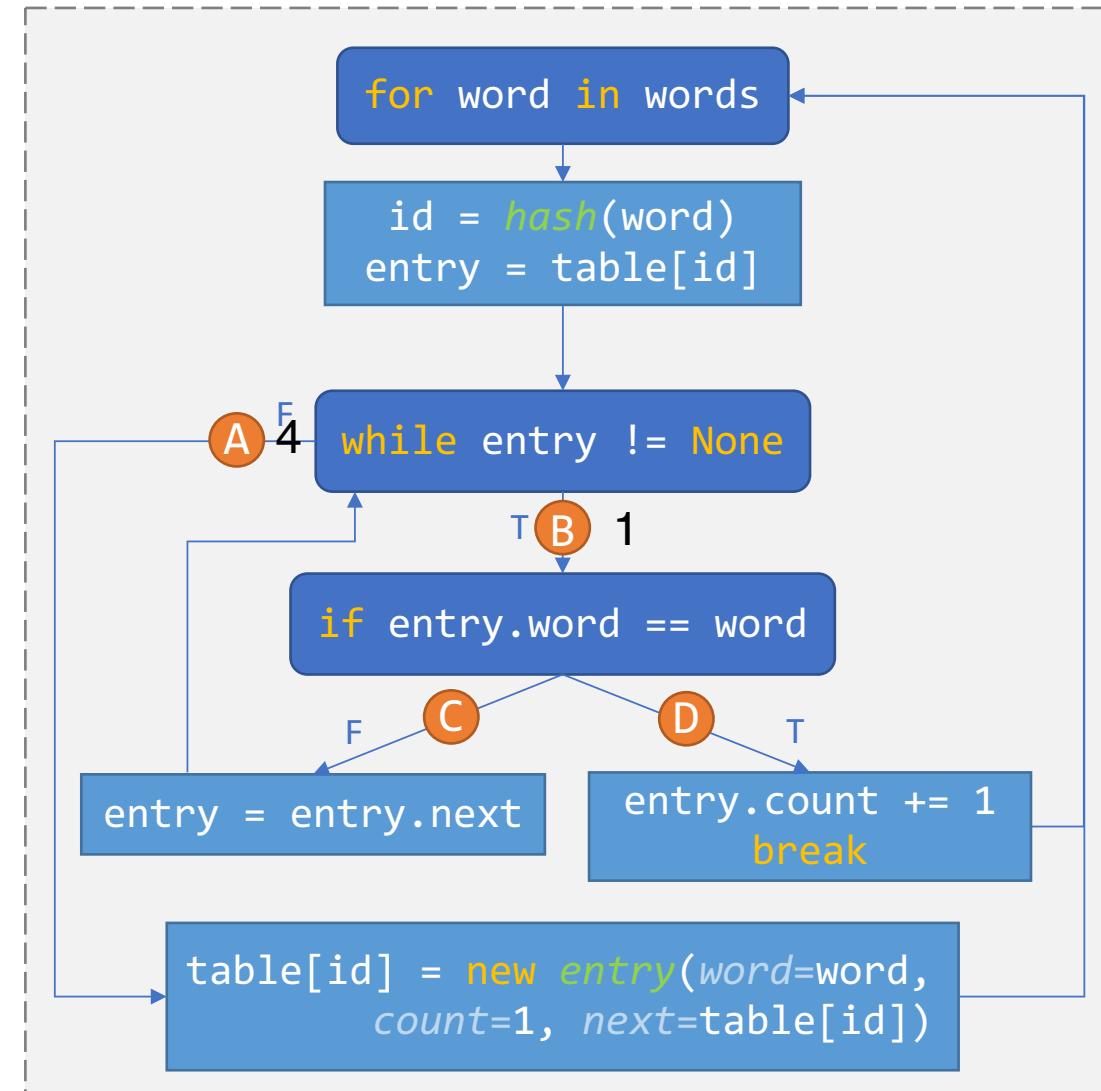


# wf Performance Response

- Usual case:

```
the quick brown the dog
```

Edge	# Hits
A	4
B	1
C	
D	

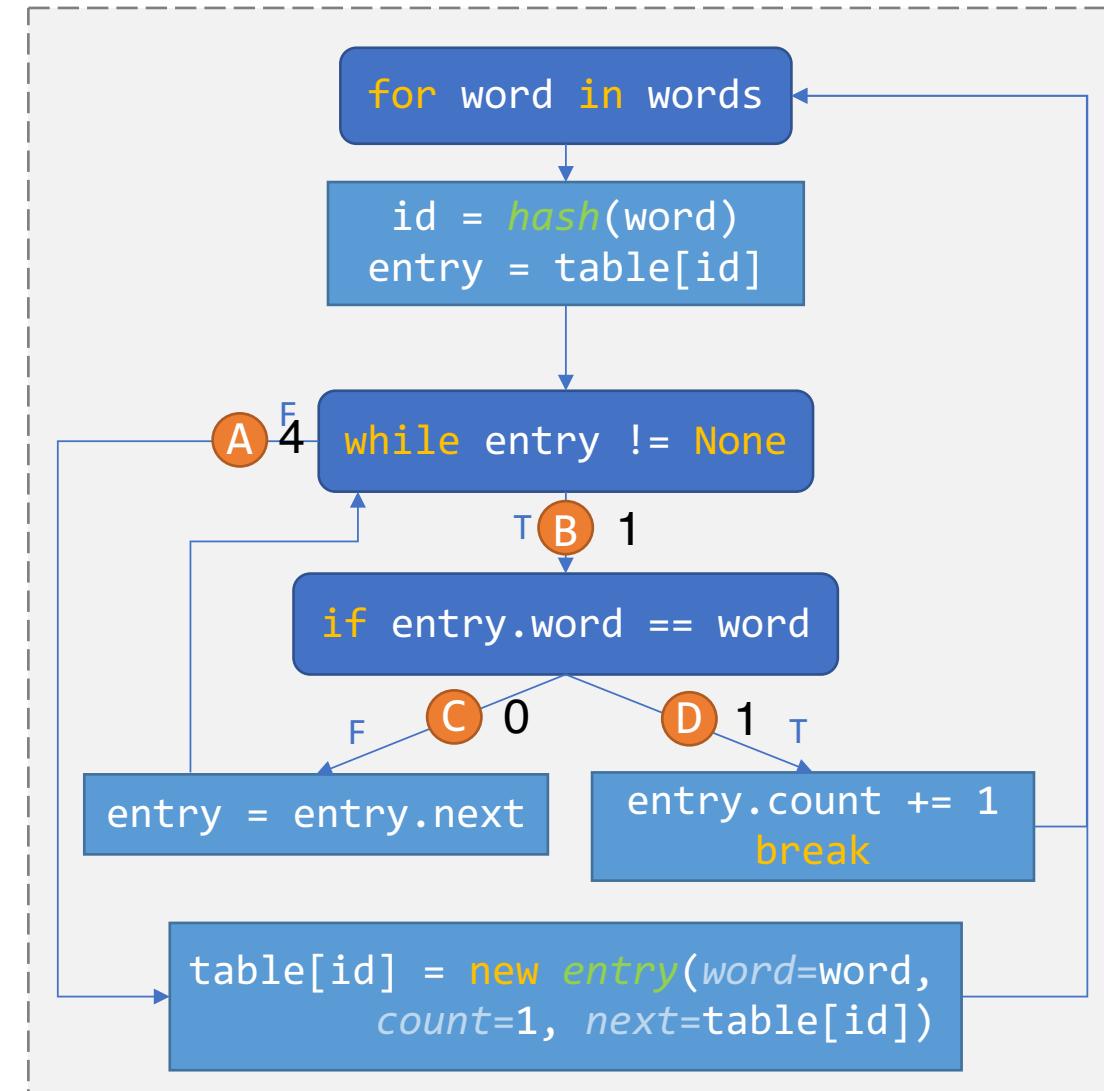


# wf Performance Response

- Usual case:

```
the quick brown the dog
```

Edge	# Hits
A	4
B	1
C	0
D	1



# wf Performance Response

- Usual case:

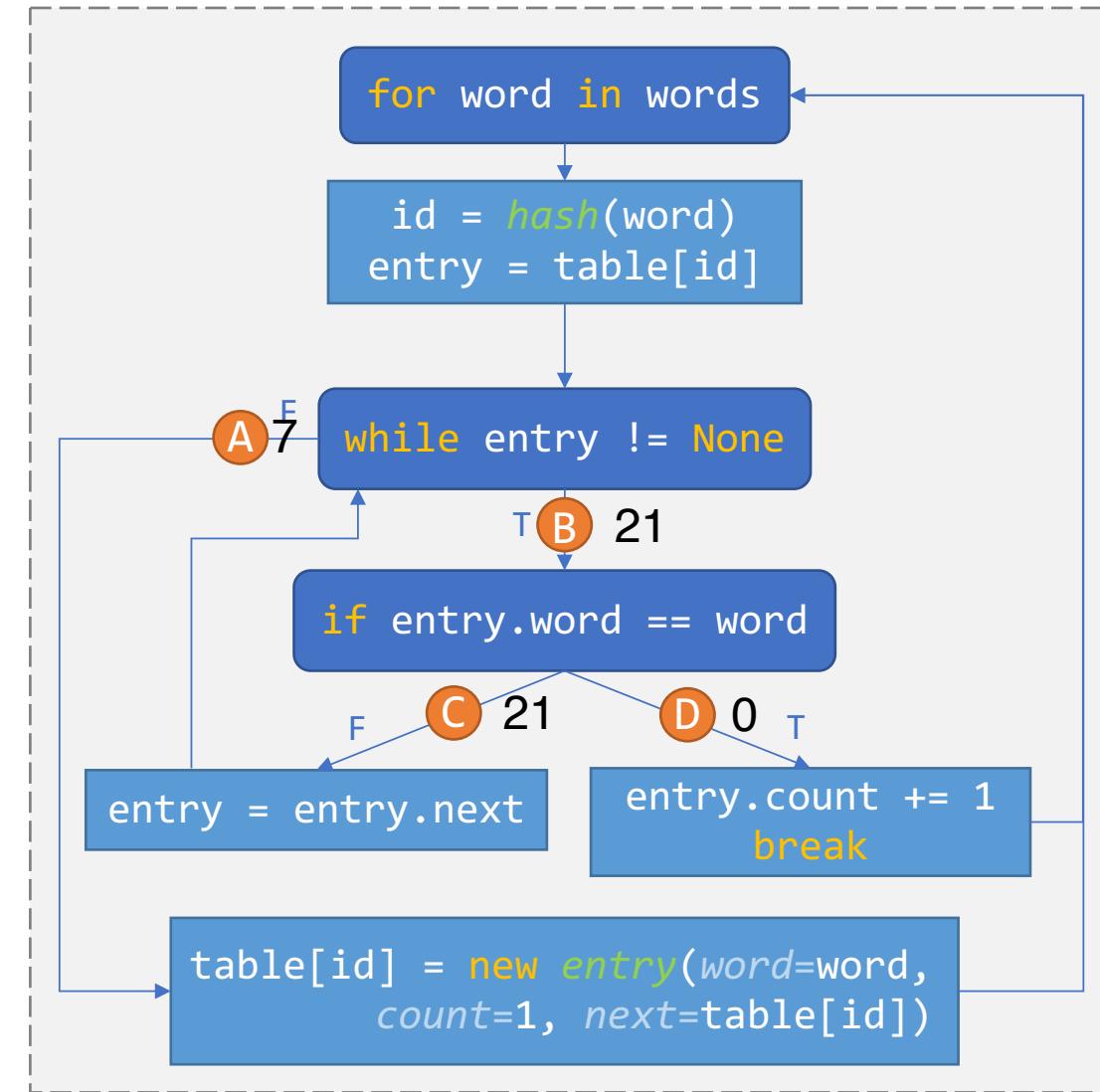
```
the quick brown the dog
```

Edge	# Hits
A	4
B	1
C	0
D	1

- Hash collisions:

```
t ?t xt at$ #a ))t Qwaa
```

Edge	# Hits
A	7
B	21
C	21
D	0



# wf Performance Response

- Usual case:

```
the quick brown the dog
```

Edge	# Hits
A	4
B	1
C	0
D	1

- Hash collisions:

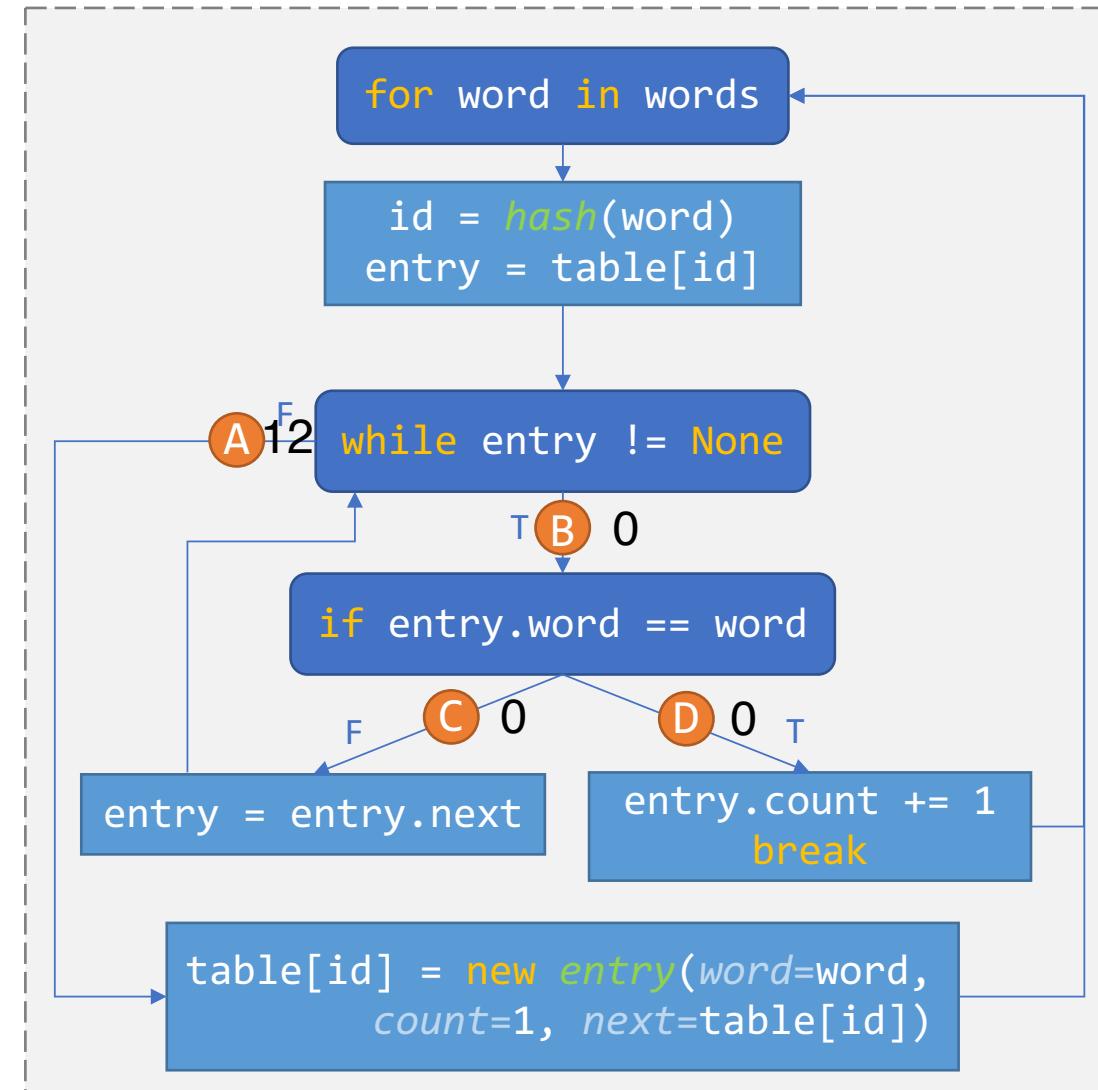
```
t ?t xt at$ #a ))t Qwaa
```

Edge	# Hits
A	7
B	21
C	21
D	0

- Small words:

```
the quick brown
```

Edge	# Hits
A	12
B	0
C	0
D	0



# wf Performance Response

- Usual case:

```
the quick brown the dog
```

Edge	# Hits
A	4
B	1
C	0
D	1

- Hash collisions:

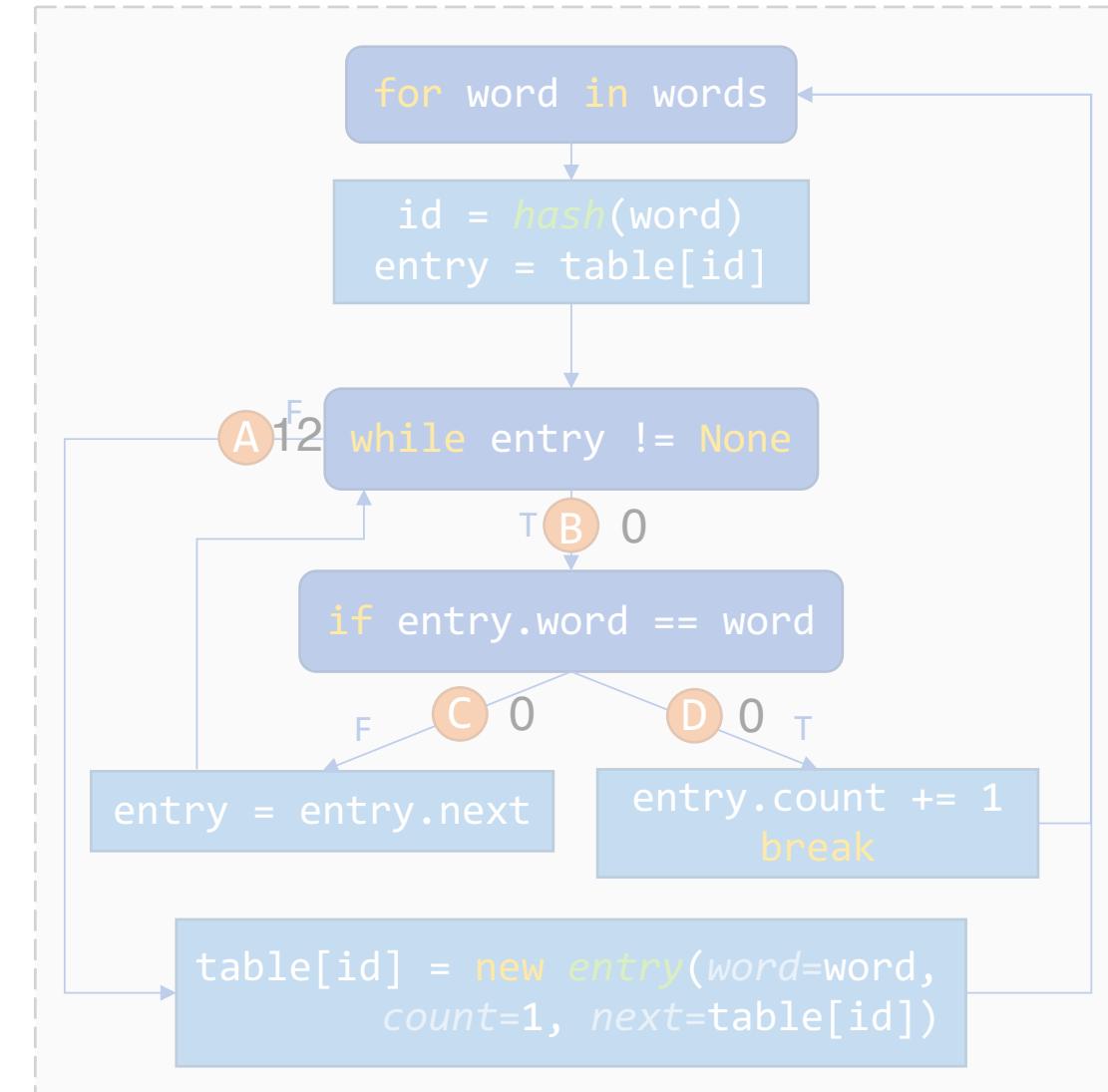
```
t ?t xt at$ #a ))t Qwaa
```

Edge	# Hits
A	7
B	21
C	21
D	0

- Small words:

```
the quick brown
```

Edge	# Hits
A	12
B	0
C	0
D	0



# wf Performance Response

- Usual case:

```
the quick brown the dog
```

Edge	# Hits
A	4
B	1
C	0
D	1

- Hash collisions:

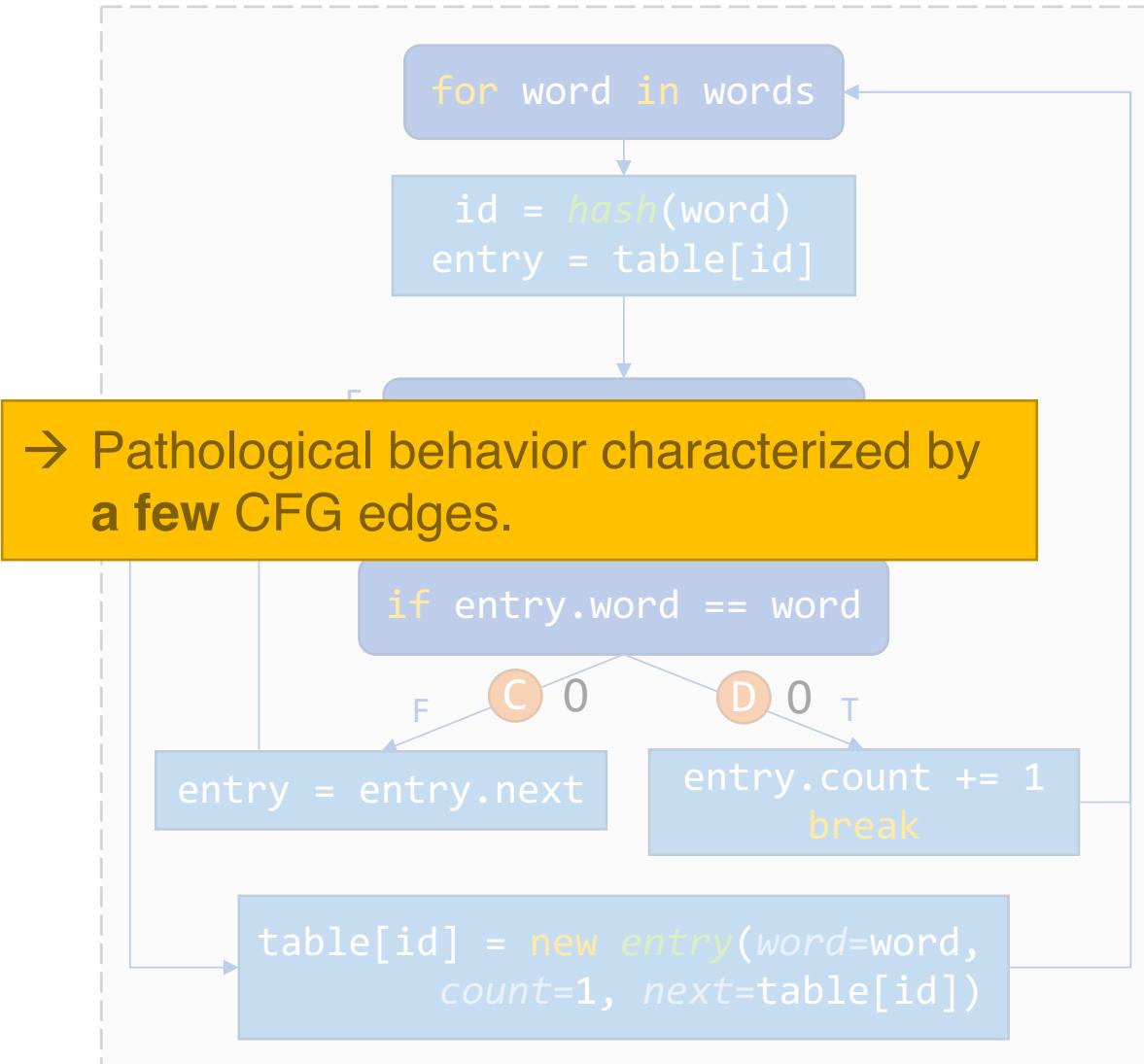
```
t ?t xt at$ #a ))t Qwaa
```

Edge	# Hits
A	7
B	21
C	21
D	0

- Small words:

```
t h e q u i c k b r o w
```

Edge	# Hits
A	12
B	0
C	0
D	0



# wf Performance Response

- Usual case:

```
the quick brown the dog
```

Edge	# Hits
A	4
B	1
C	0
D	1

- Hash collisions:

```
t ?t xt at$ #a ))t Qwaa
```

Edge	# Hits
A	7
B	21
C	21
D	0

- Small words:

```
t h e q u i c k b r o w
```

Edge	# Hits
A	12
B	0
C	0
D	0

```
for word in words
```

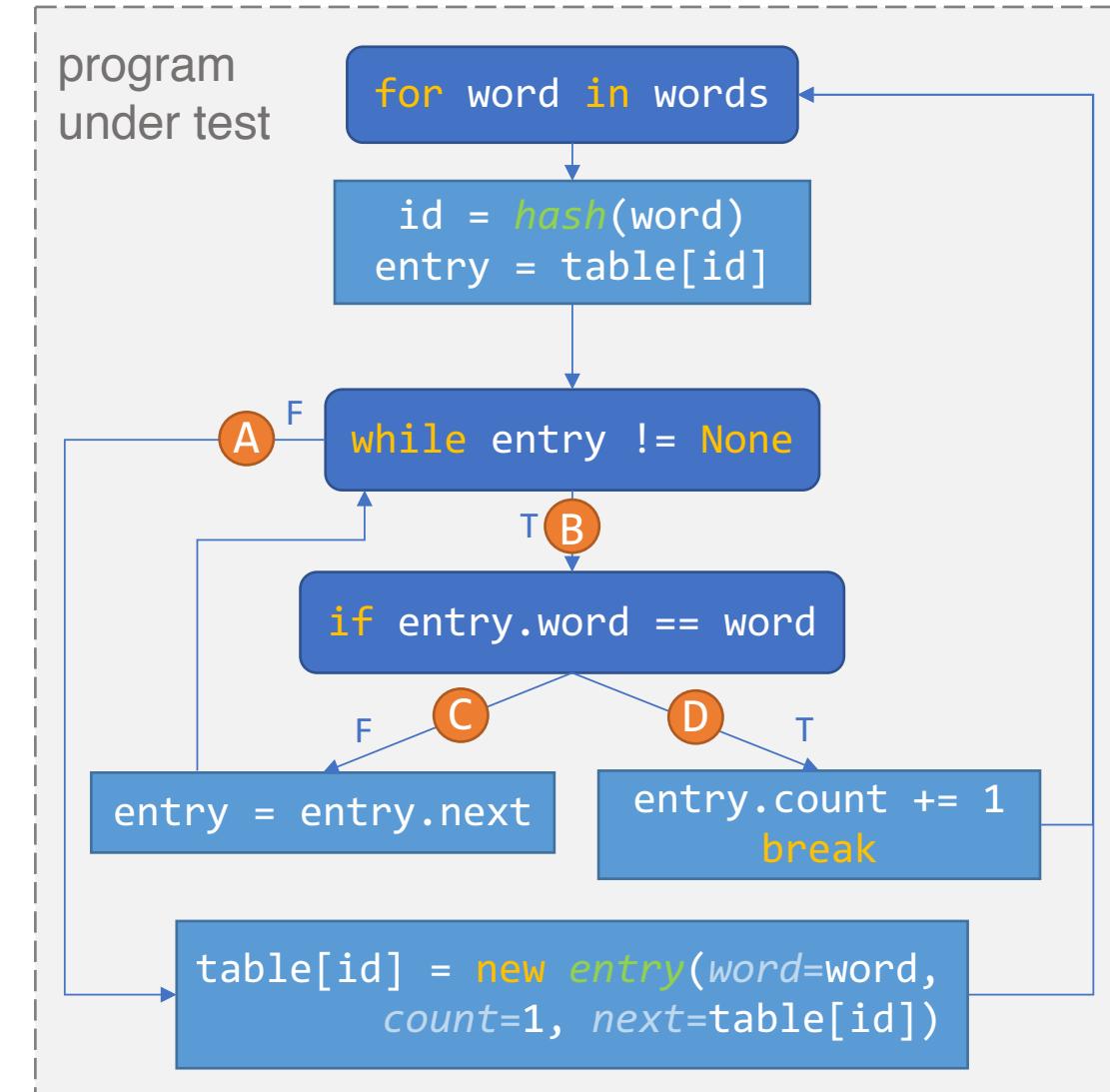
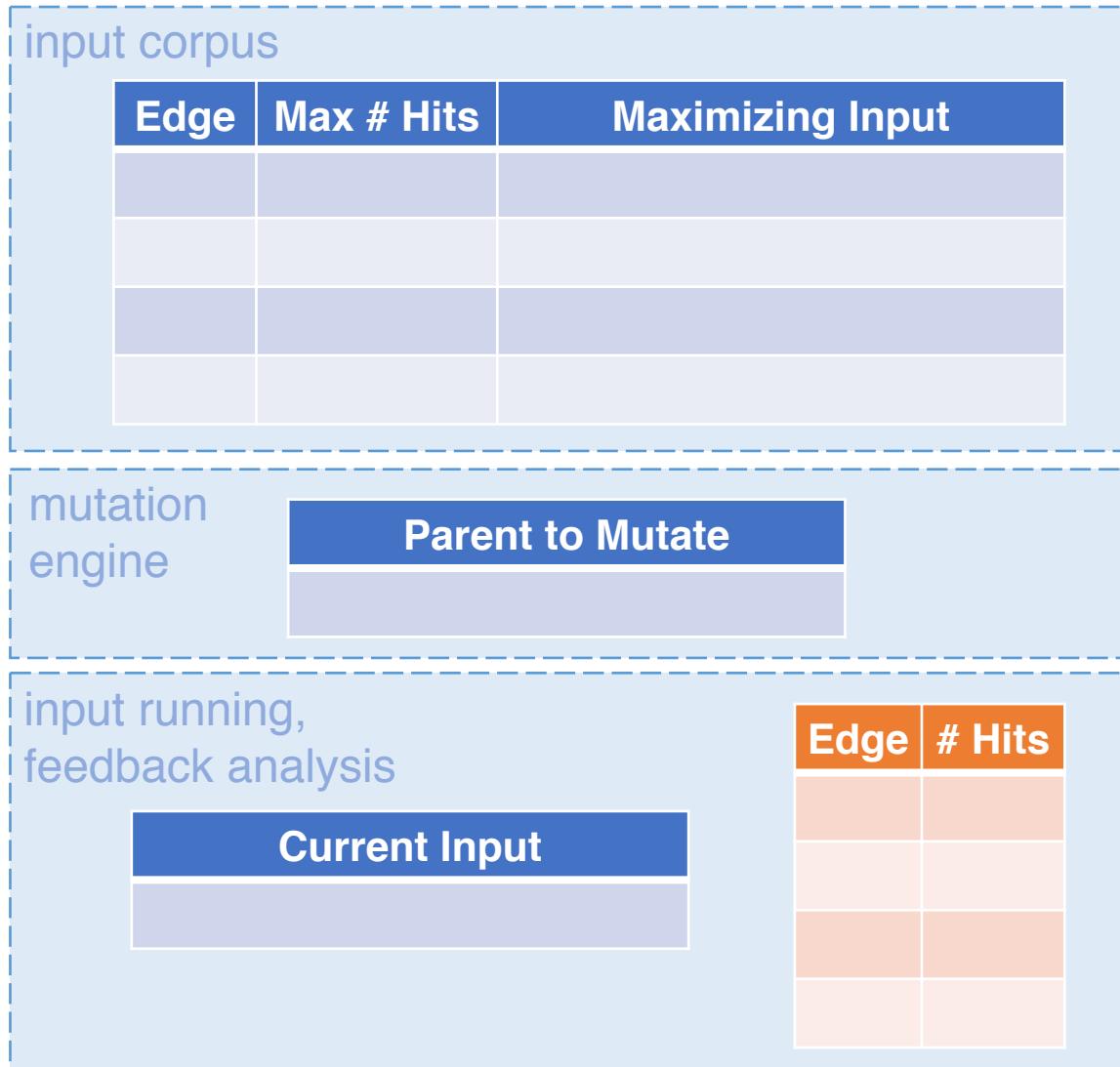
```
    id = hash(word)
    entry = table[id]
```

→ Pathological behavior characterized by a few CFG edges.

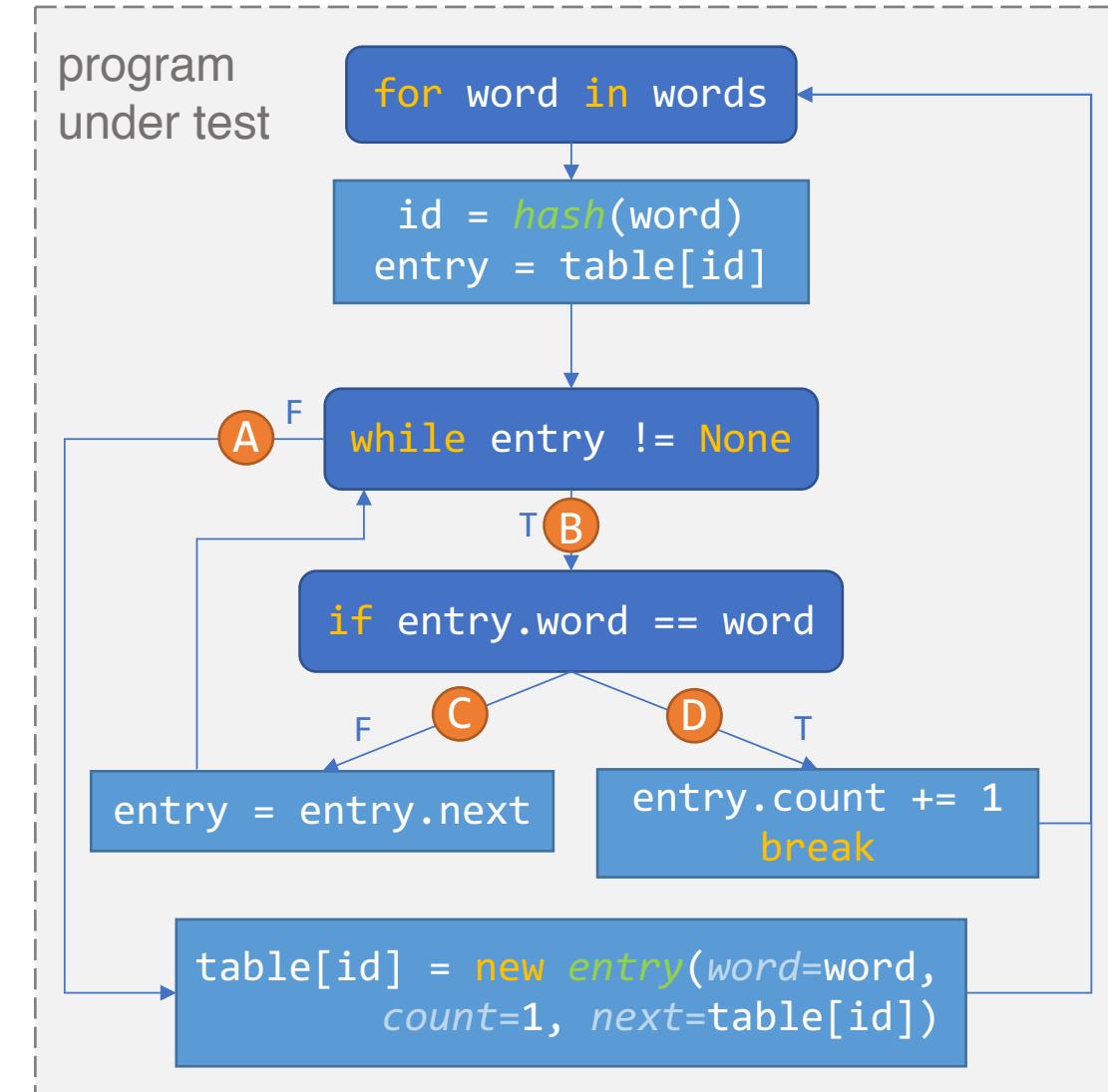
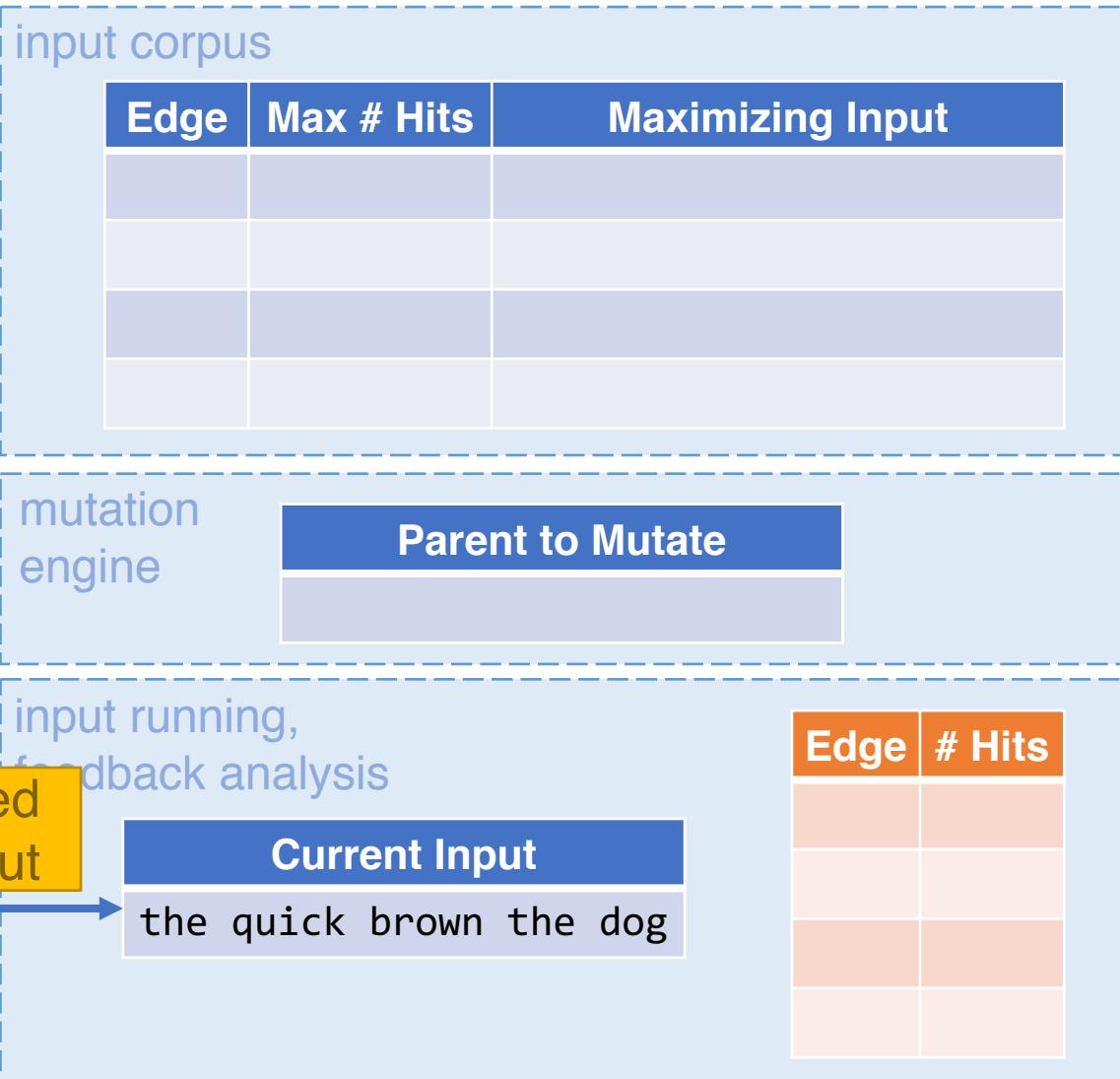
→ Increasing execution counts of edges:  
less noisy than path length.  
→ Greedy approach won't get stuck.

```
table[id] = new entry(word=word,
                      count=1, next=table[id])
```

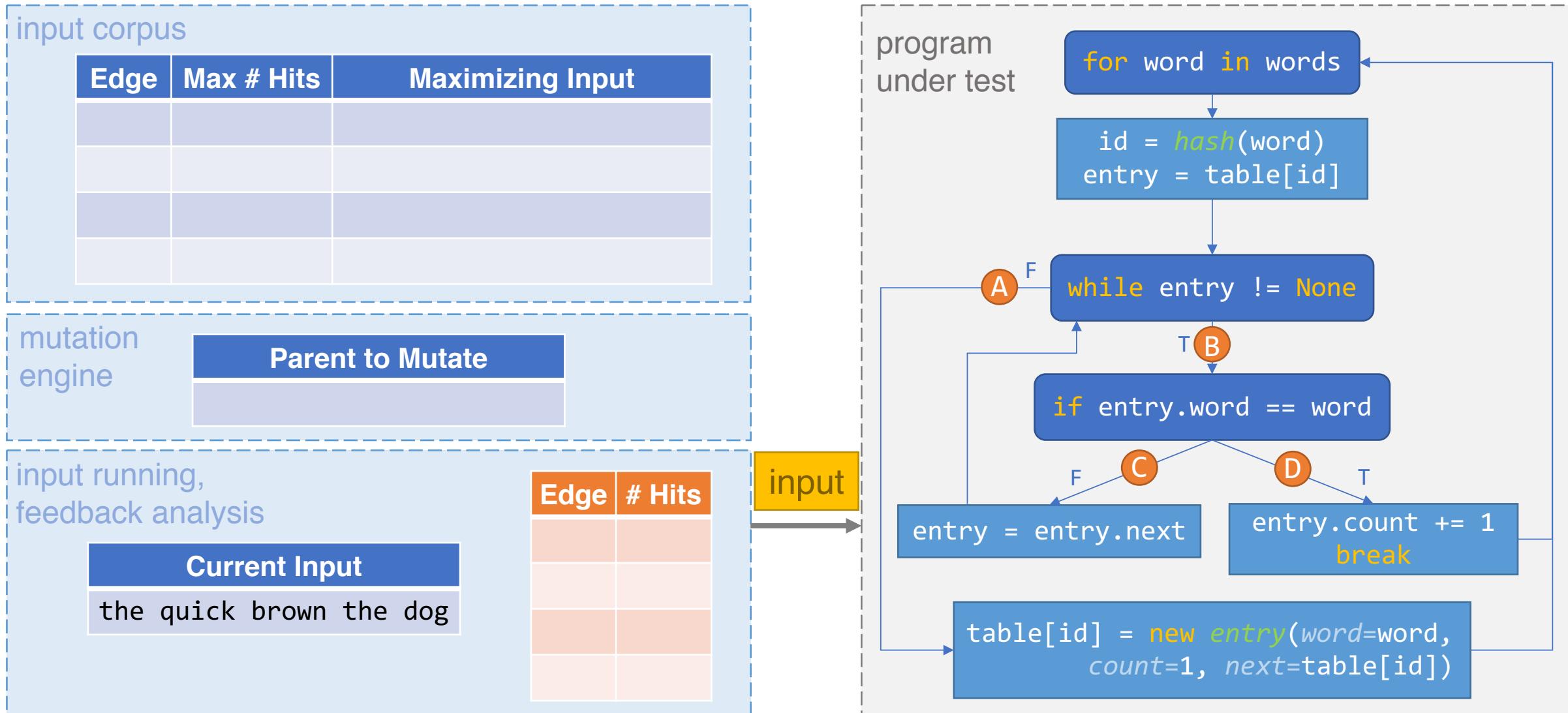
# PerfFuzz Algorithm



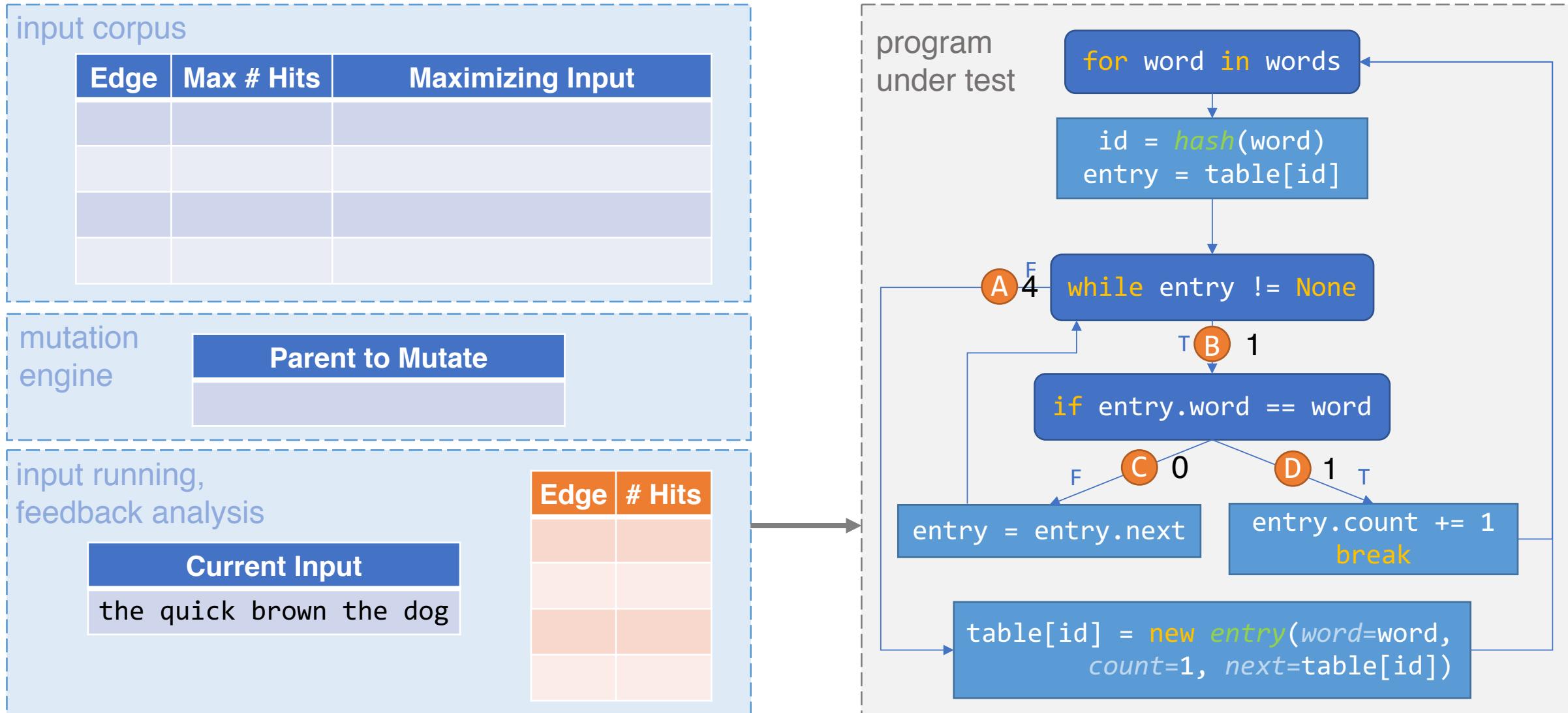
# PerfFuzz Algorithm



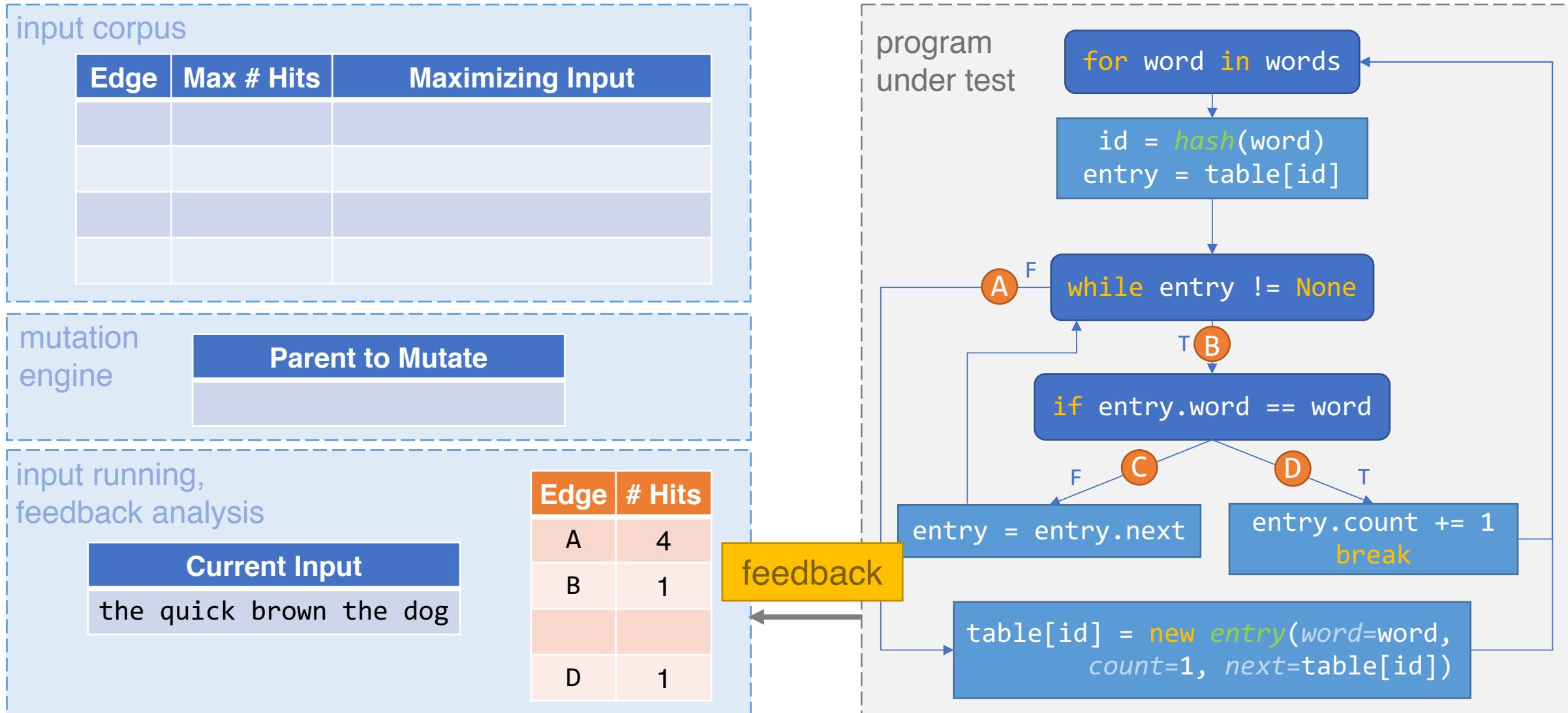
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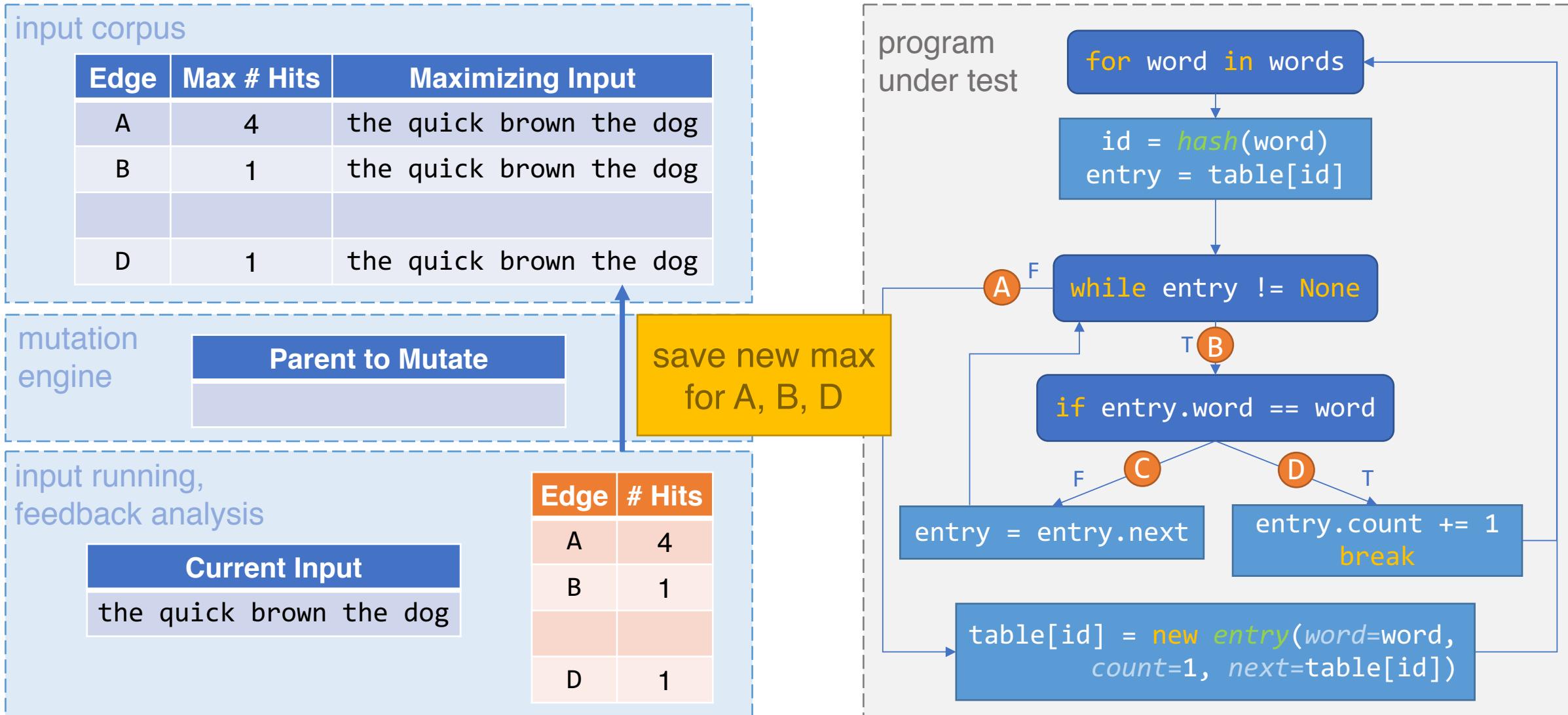
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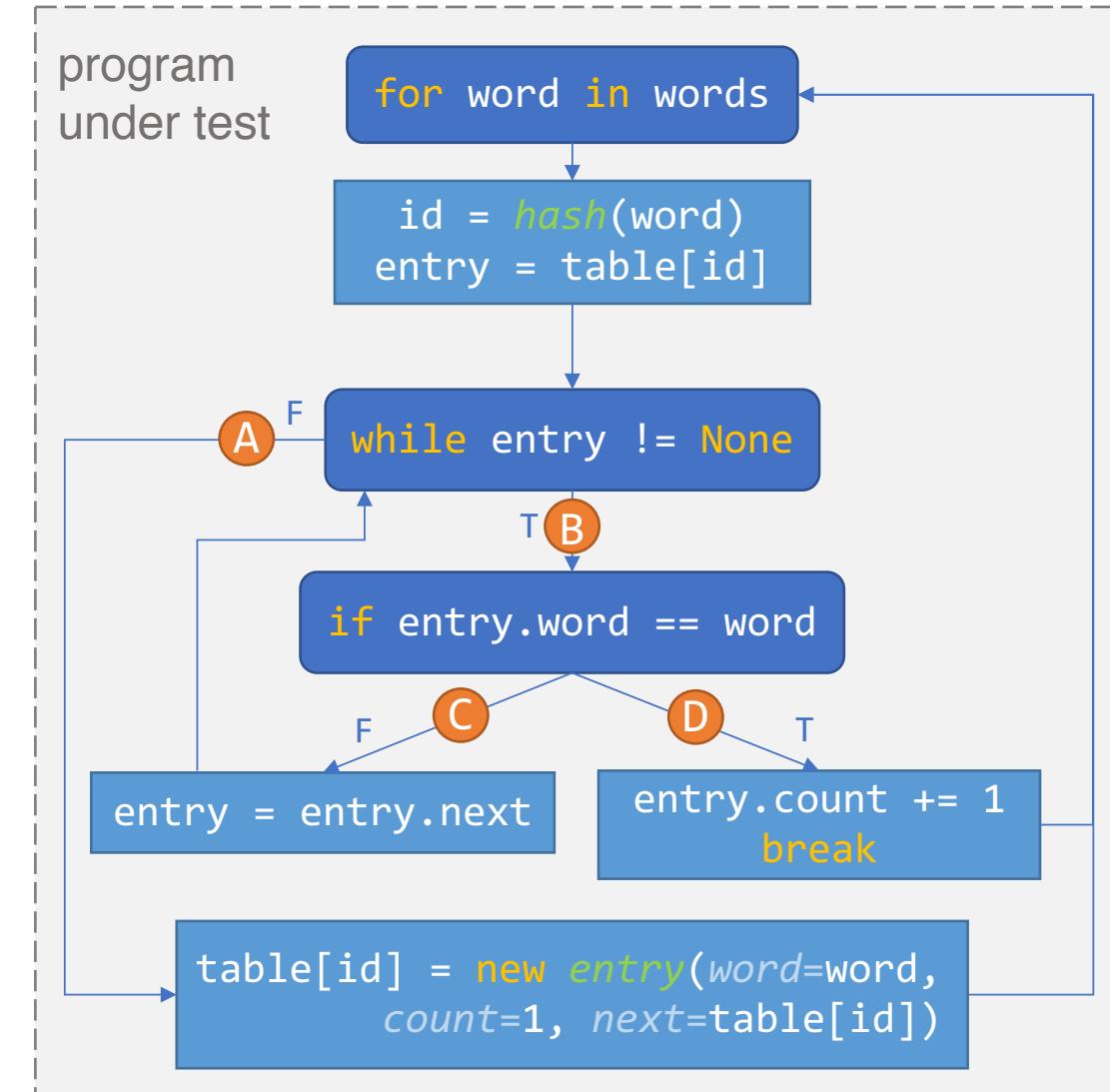
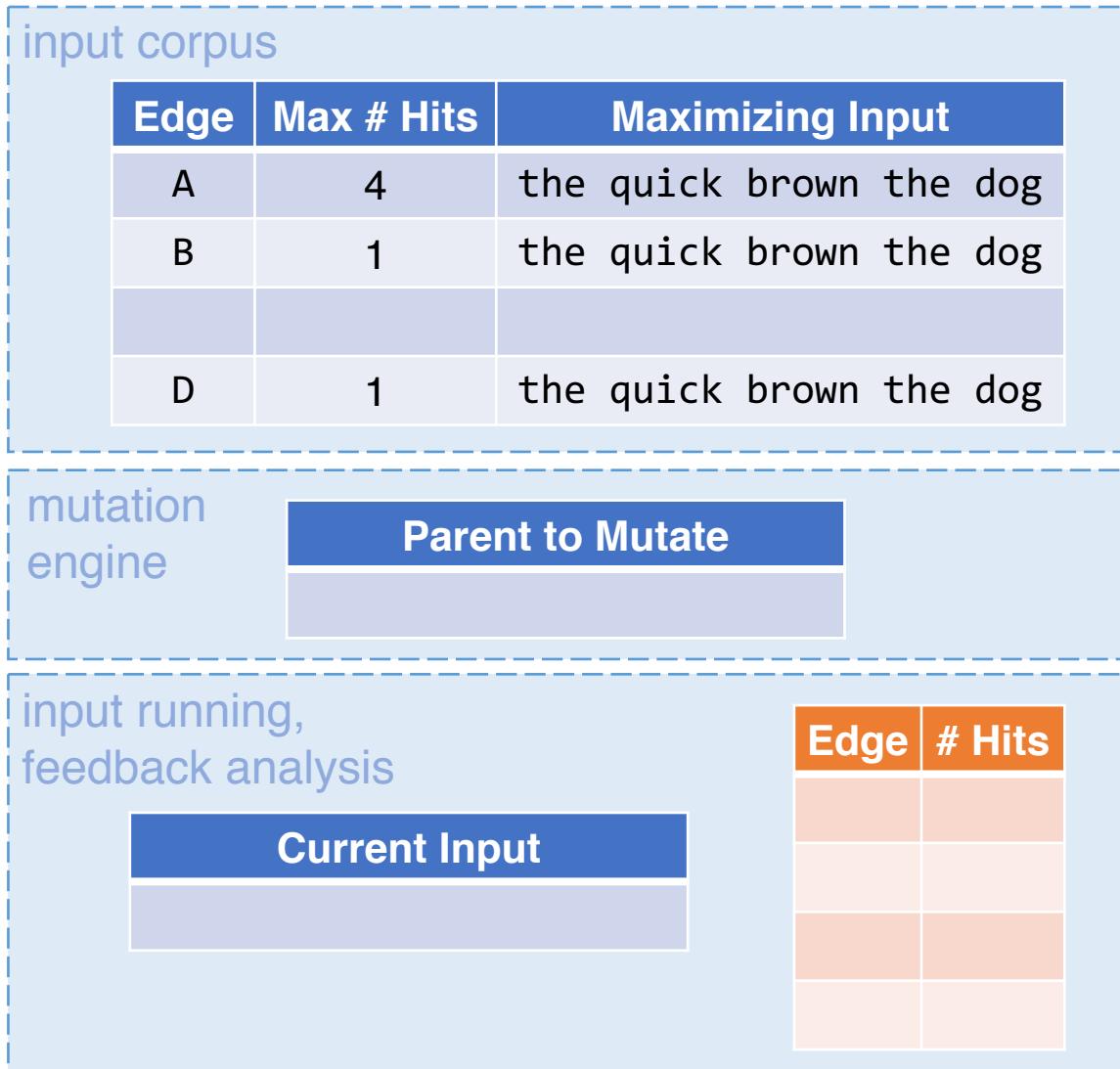
# PerfFuzz Algorithm



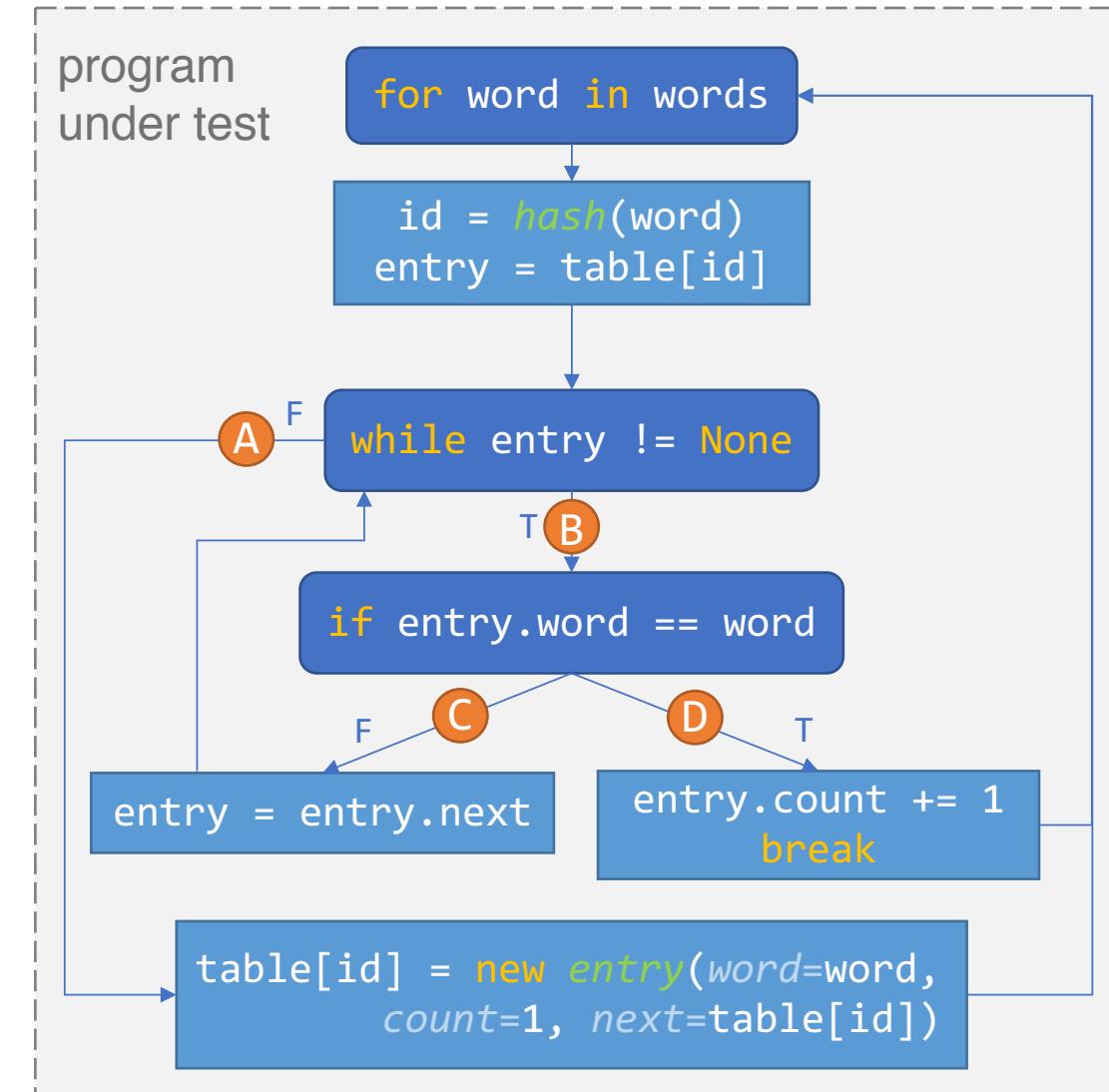
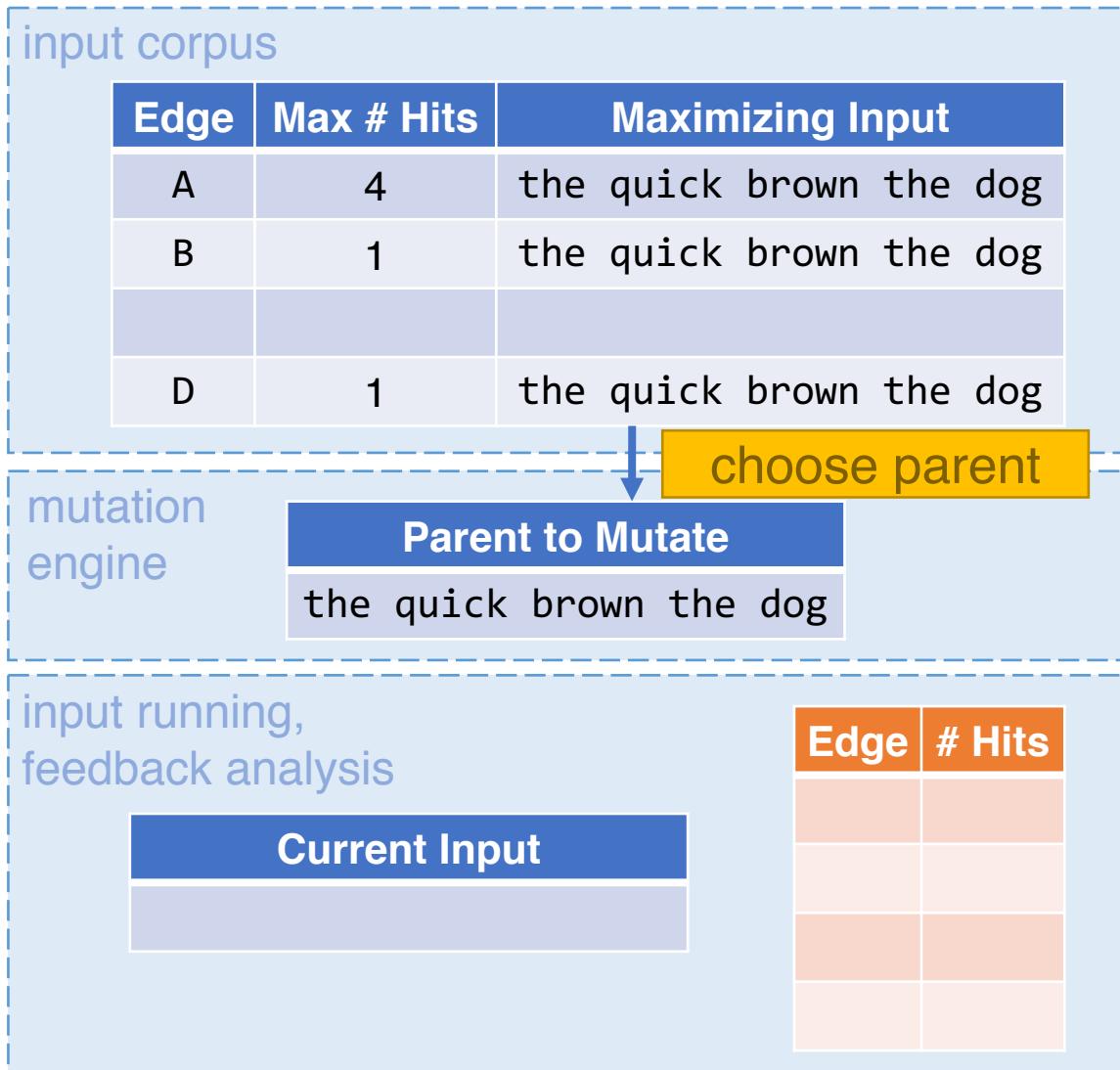
# PerfFuzz Algorithm



# PerfFuzz Algorithm



# PerfFuzz Algorithm



# PerfFuzz Algorithm

input corpus

Edge	Max # Hits	Maximizing Input
A	4	the quick brown the dog
B	1	the quick brown the dog
D	1	the quick brown the dog

mutation engine

Parent to Mutate

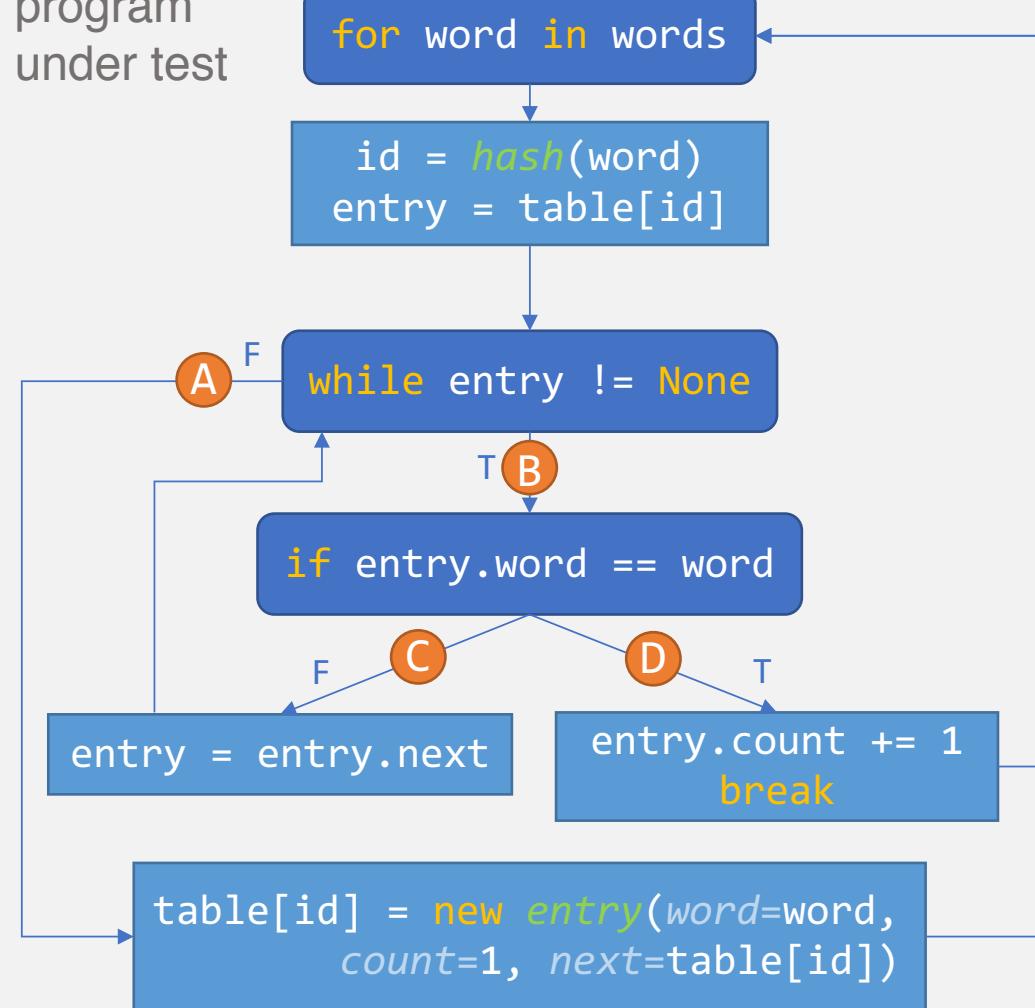
the quick brown the dog

input running,  
feedback analysis

Current Input

Edge	# Hits

program  
under test



# PerfFuzz Algorithm

input corpus

Edge	Max # Hits	Maximizing Input
A	4	the quick brown the dog
B	1	the quick brown the dog
D	1	the quick brown the dog

mutation engine

Parent to Mutate

the quick brown the dog

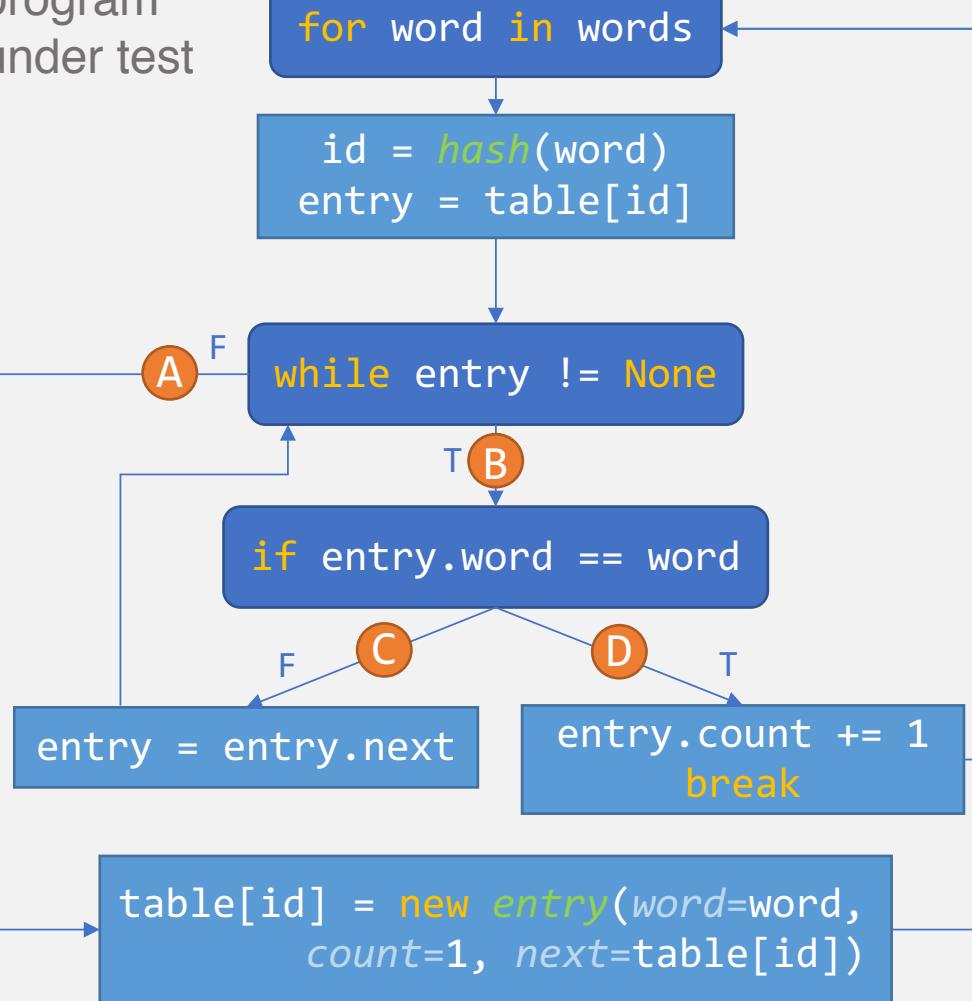
let's mutate this many times

input running,  
feedback analysis

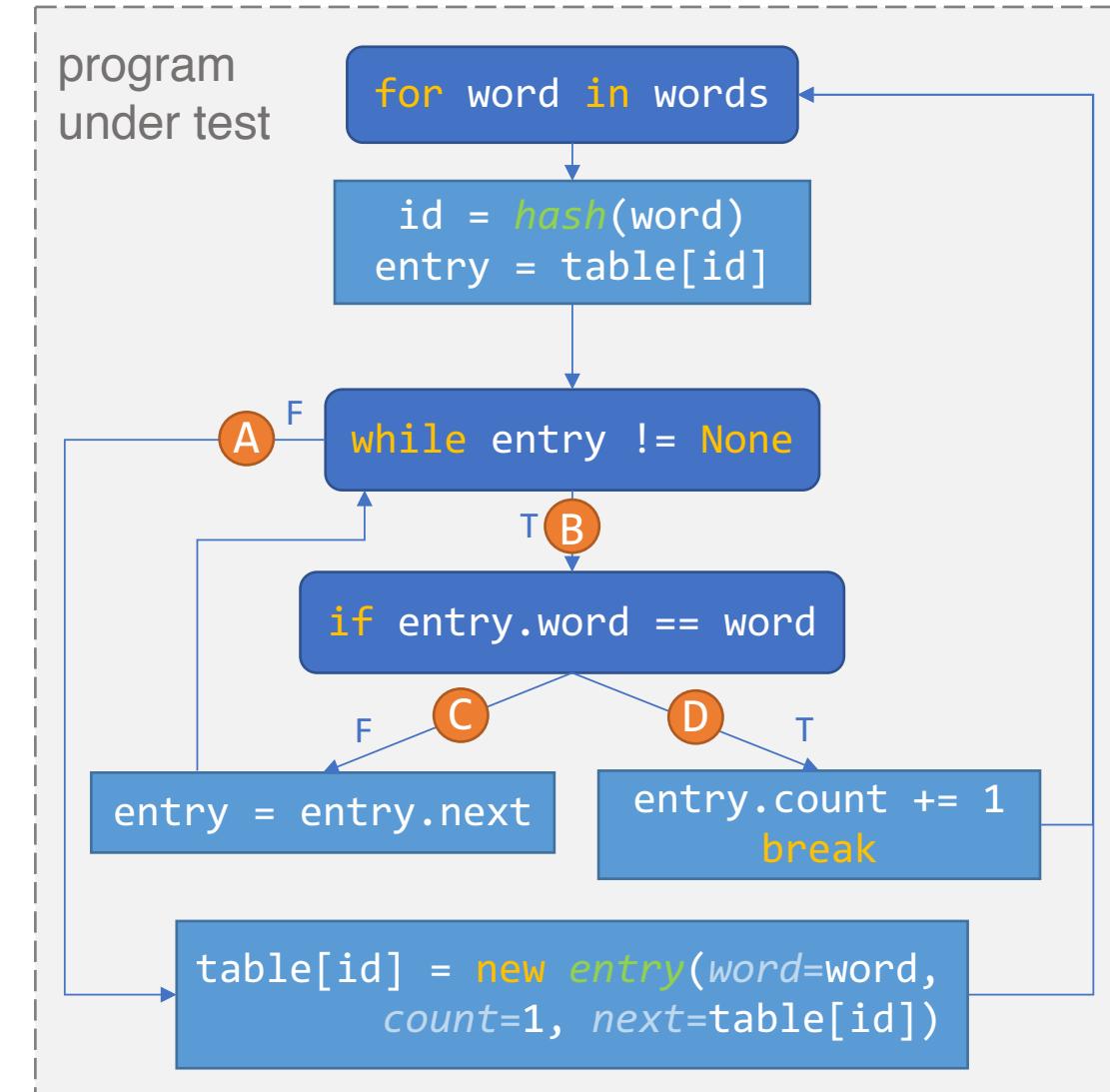
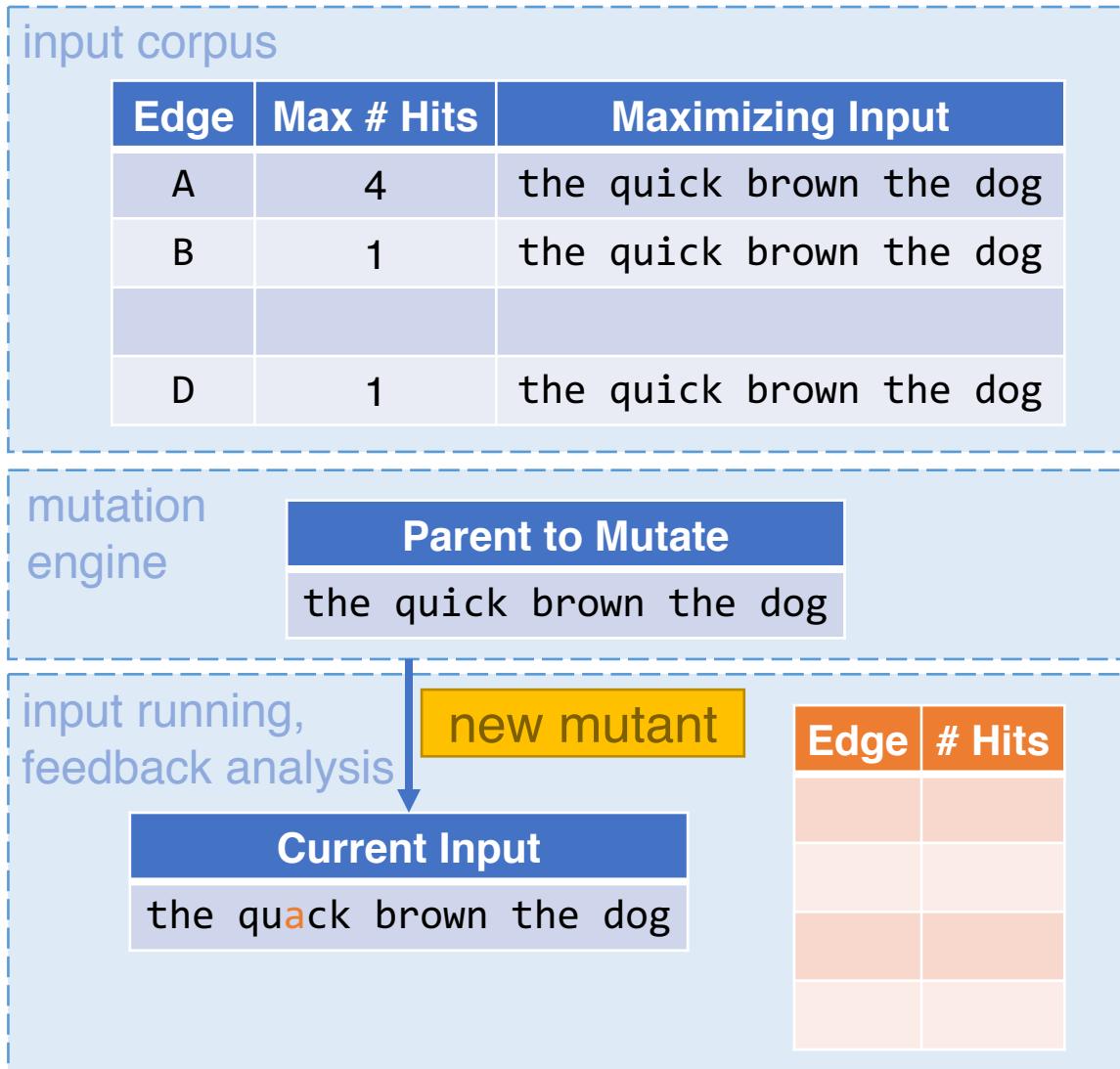
Current Input

Edge	# Hits

program under test



# PerfFuzz Algorithm



# PerfFuzz Algorithm

input corpus

Edge	Max # Hits	Maximizing Input
A	4	the quick brown the dog
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D	1	the quick brown the dog

mutation engine

Parent to Mutate

the quick brown the dog

input running,  
feedback analysis

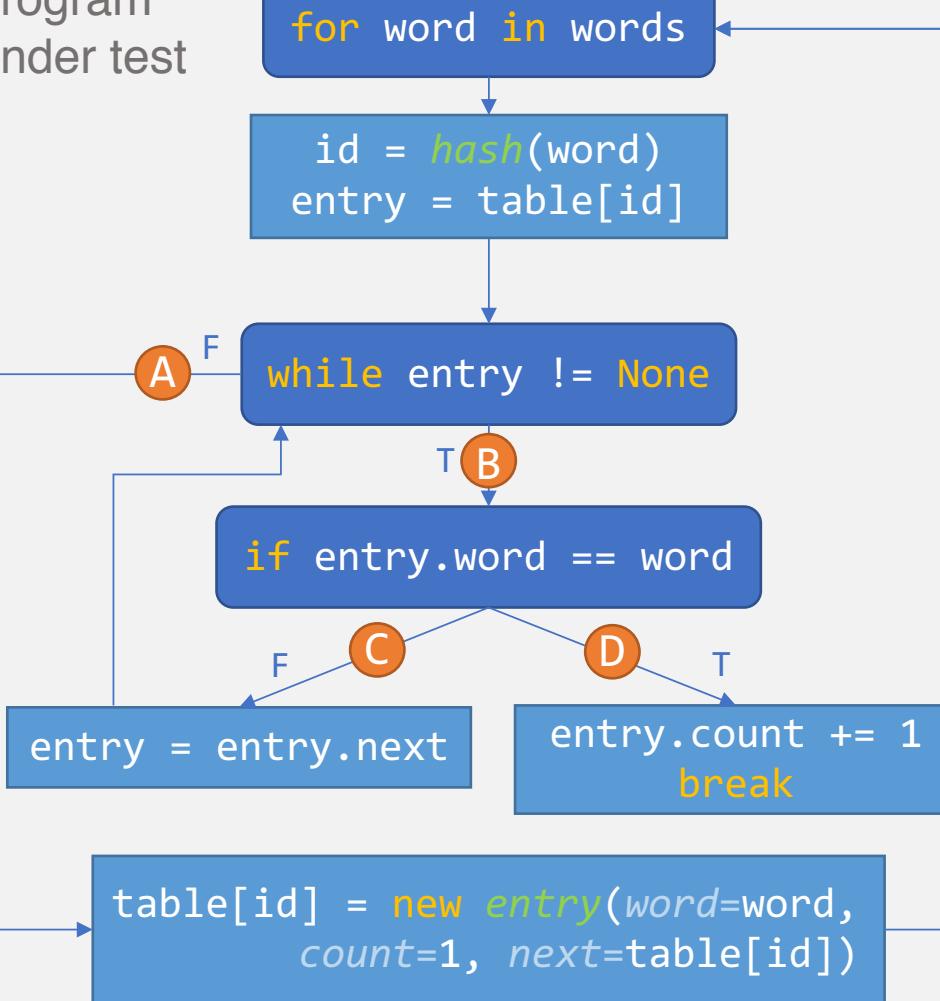
Current Input

the quack brown the dog

Edge	# Hits

input

program  
under test



# PerfFuzz Algorithm

input corpus

Edge	Max # Hits	Maximizing Input
A	4	the quick brown the dog
B	1	the quick brown the dog
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mutation engine

Parent to Mutate

the quick brown the dog

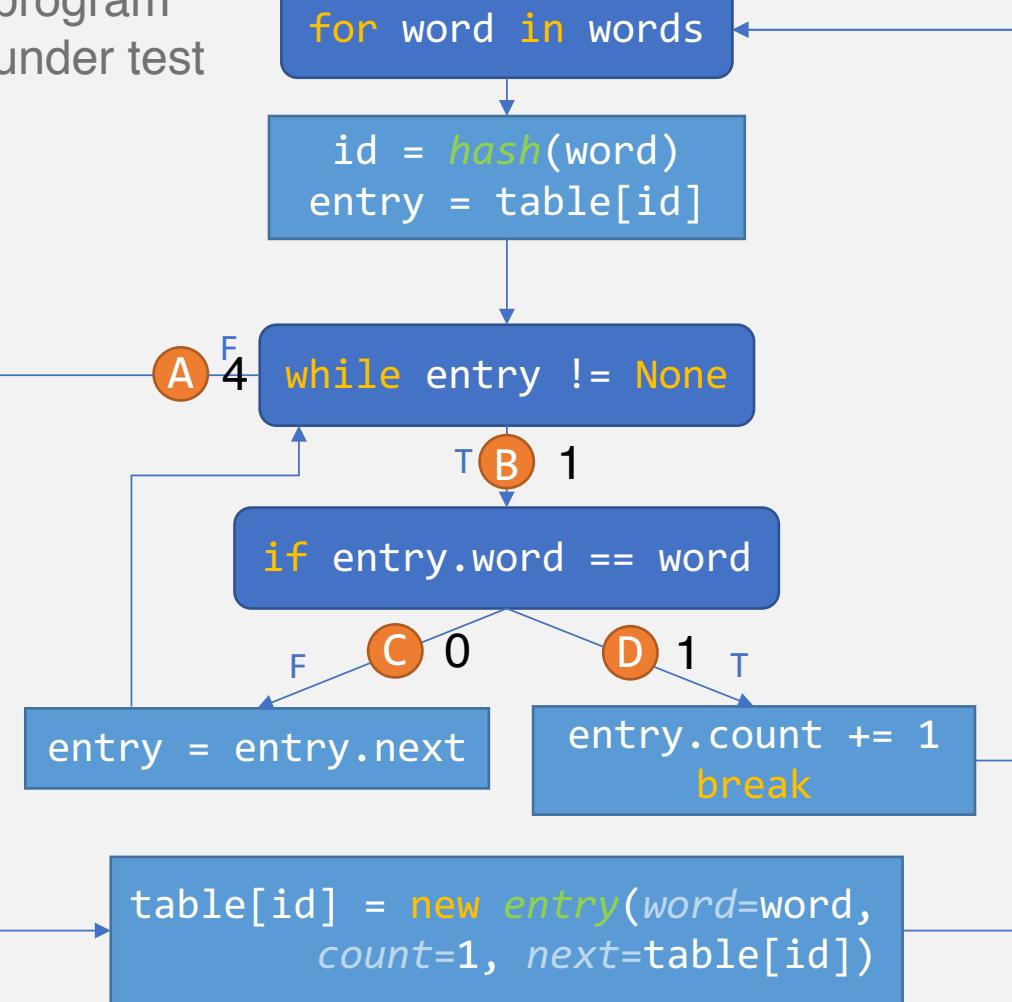
input running,  
feedback analysis

Current Input

the quack brown the dog

Edge	# Hits

program  
under test



# PerfFuzz Algorithm

input corpus

Edge	Max # Hits	Maximizing Input
A	4	the quick brown the dog
B	1	the quick brown the dog
D	1	the quick brown the dog

mutation engine

Parent to Mutate

the quick brown the dog

input running,  
feedback analysis

Current Input

the quack brown the dog

Edge	# Hits
A	4
B	1
D	1

program under test

for word in words

    id = hash(word)  
    entry = table[id]

A

while entry != None

B

if entry.word == word

    entry = entry.next

feedback

    entry.count += 1  
    break

table[id] = new entry(word=word,  
count=1, next=table[id])

# PerfFuzz Algorithm

input corpus

Edge	Max # Hits	Maximizing Input
A	4	the quick brown the dog
B	1	the quick brown the dog
D	1	the quick brown the dog

mutation engine

Parent to Mutate

the quick brown the dog

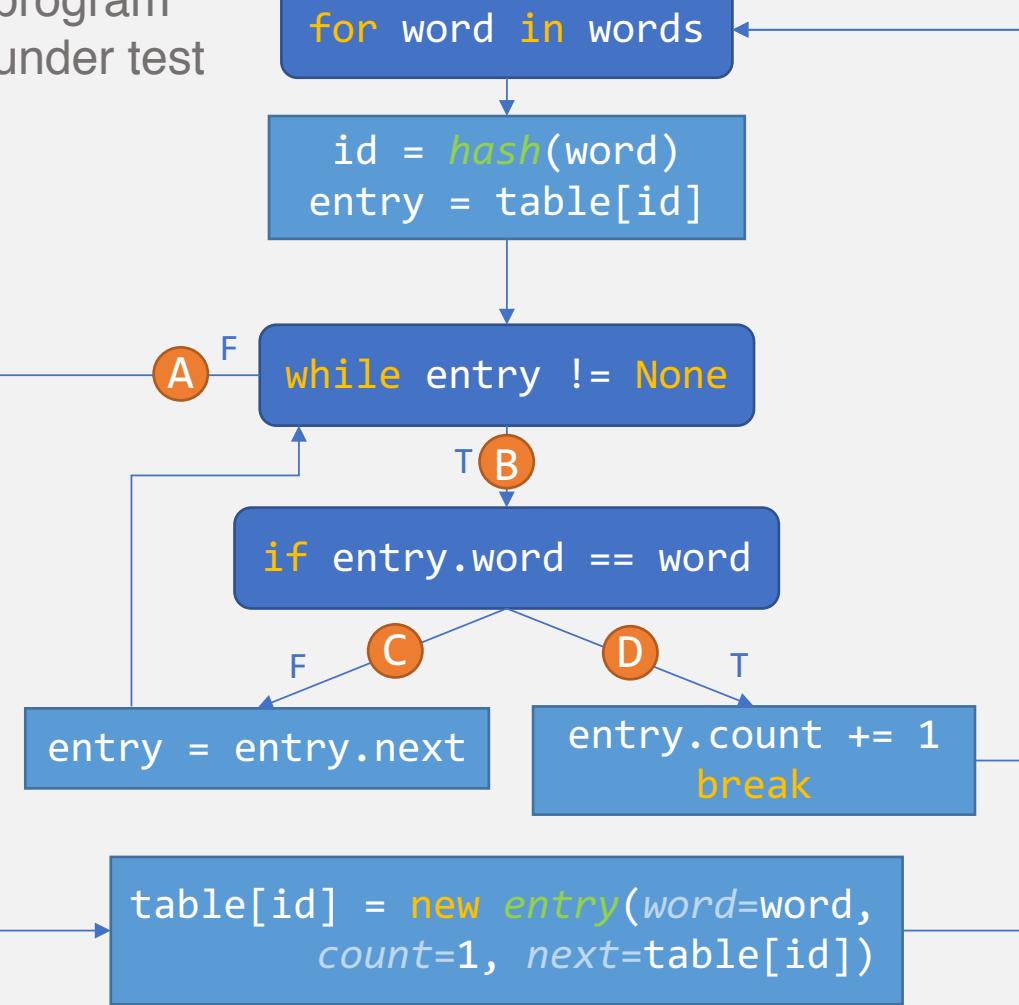
input running,  
feedback analysis

Current Input

the quack brown the dog

Edge	# Hits
A	4
B	1
D	1

program  
under test



# PerfFuzz Algorithm

input corpus

Edge	Max # Hits	Maximizing Input
A	4	the quick brown the dog
B	1	the quick brown the dog
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mutation engine

Parent to Mutate

the quick brown the dog

input running,  
feedback analysis

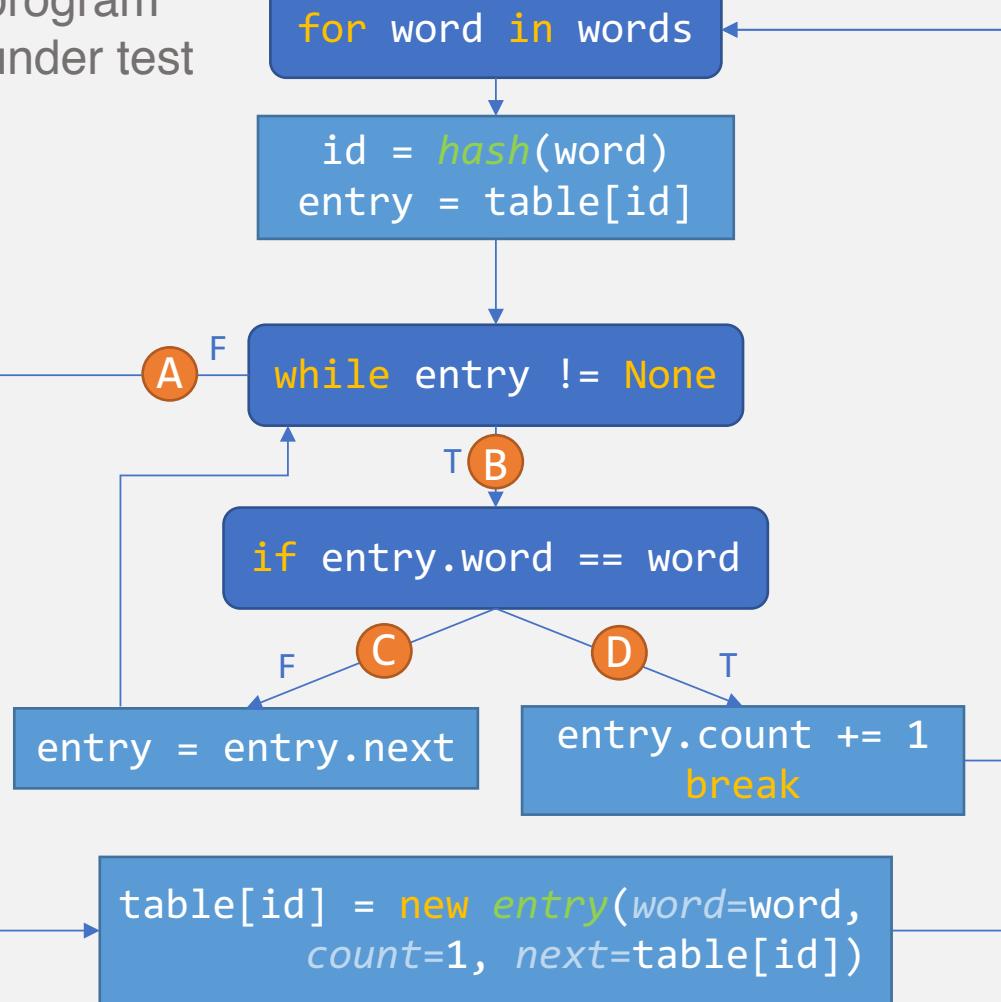
Current Input

the quack brown the dog

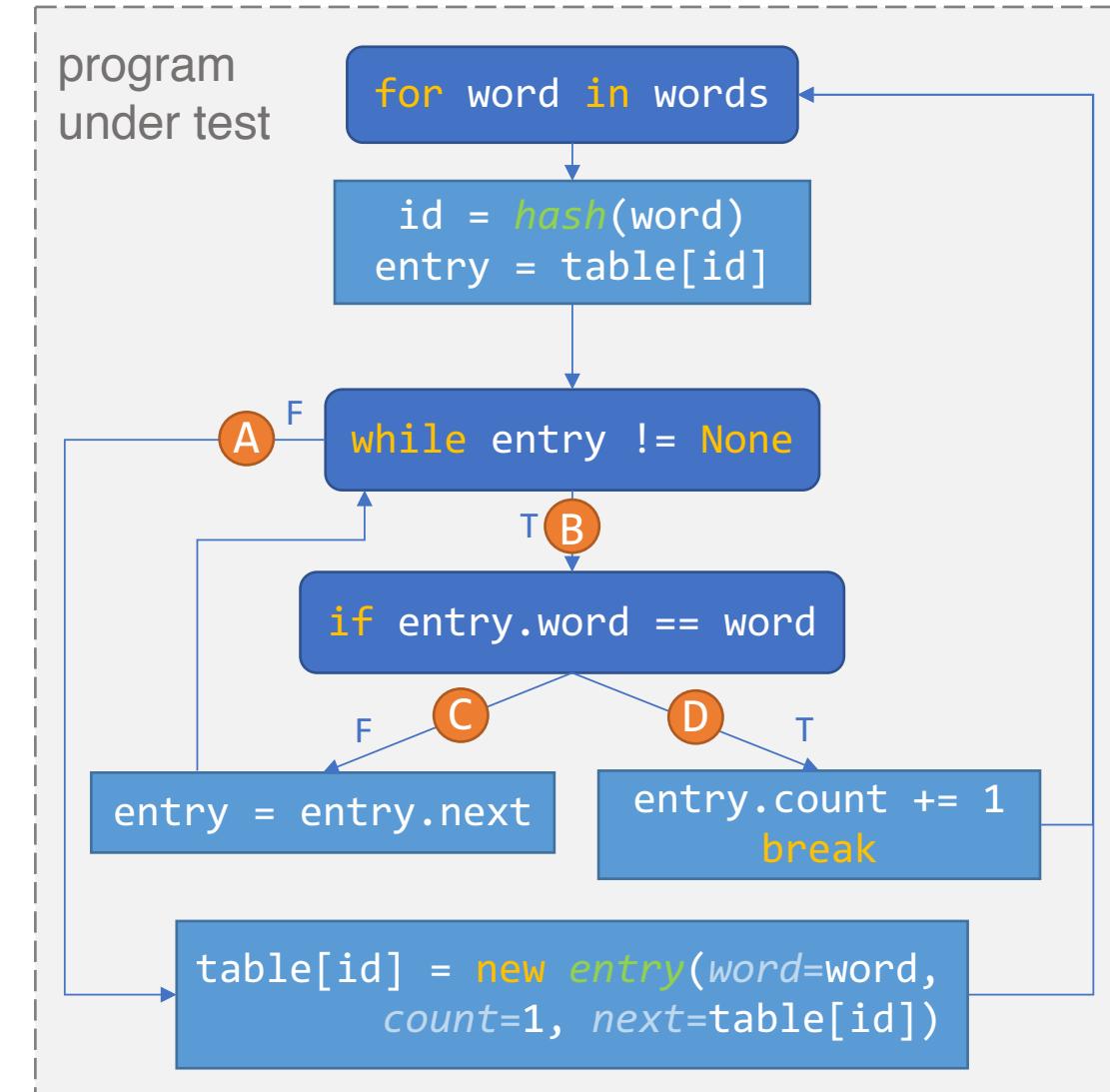
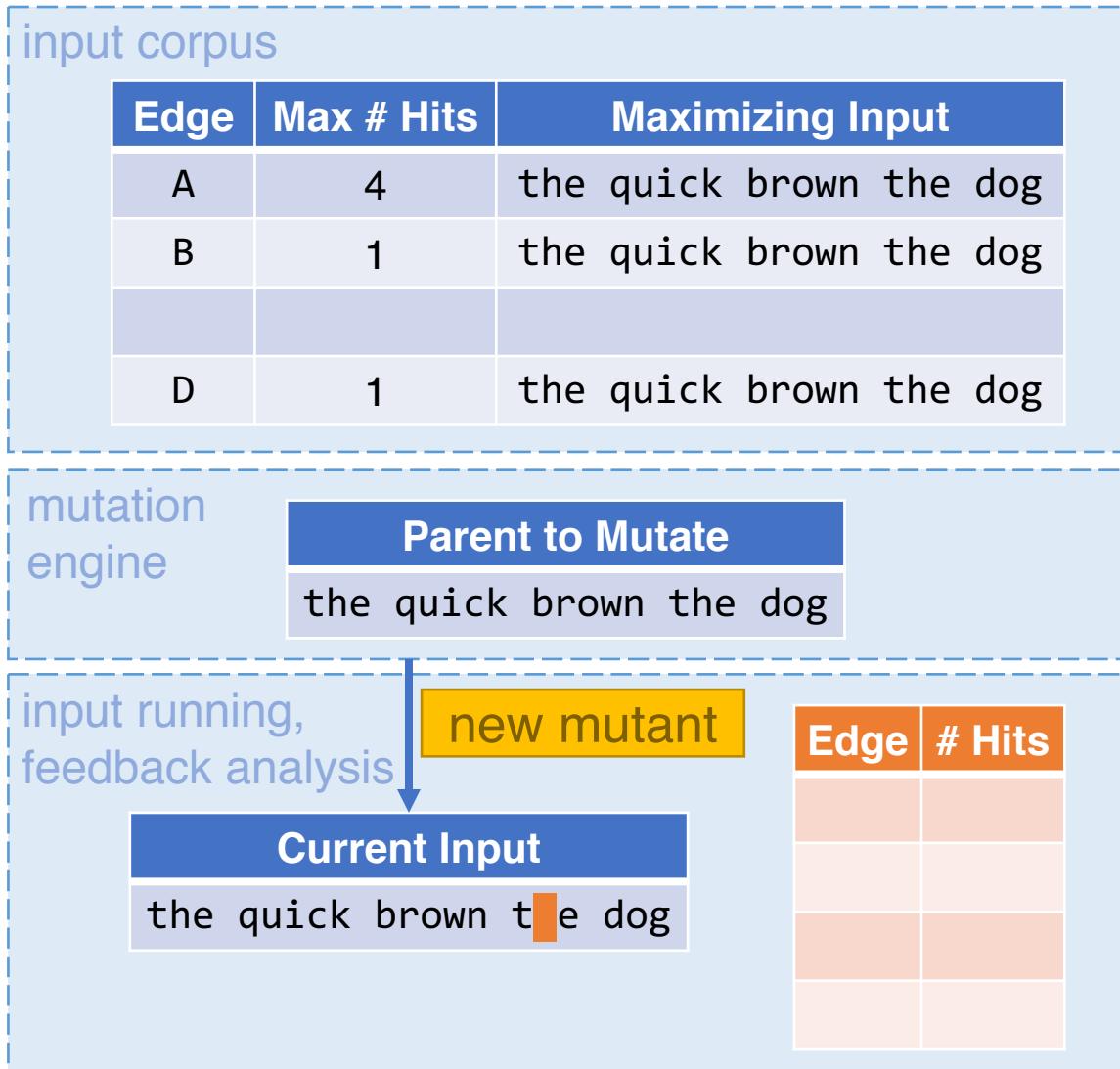
Edge	# Hits
A	4
B	1
D	1

no new  
max

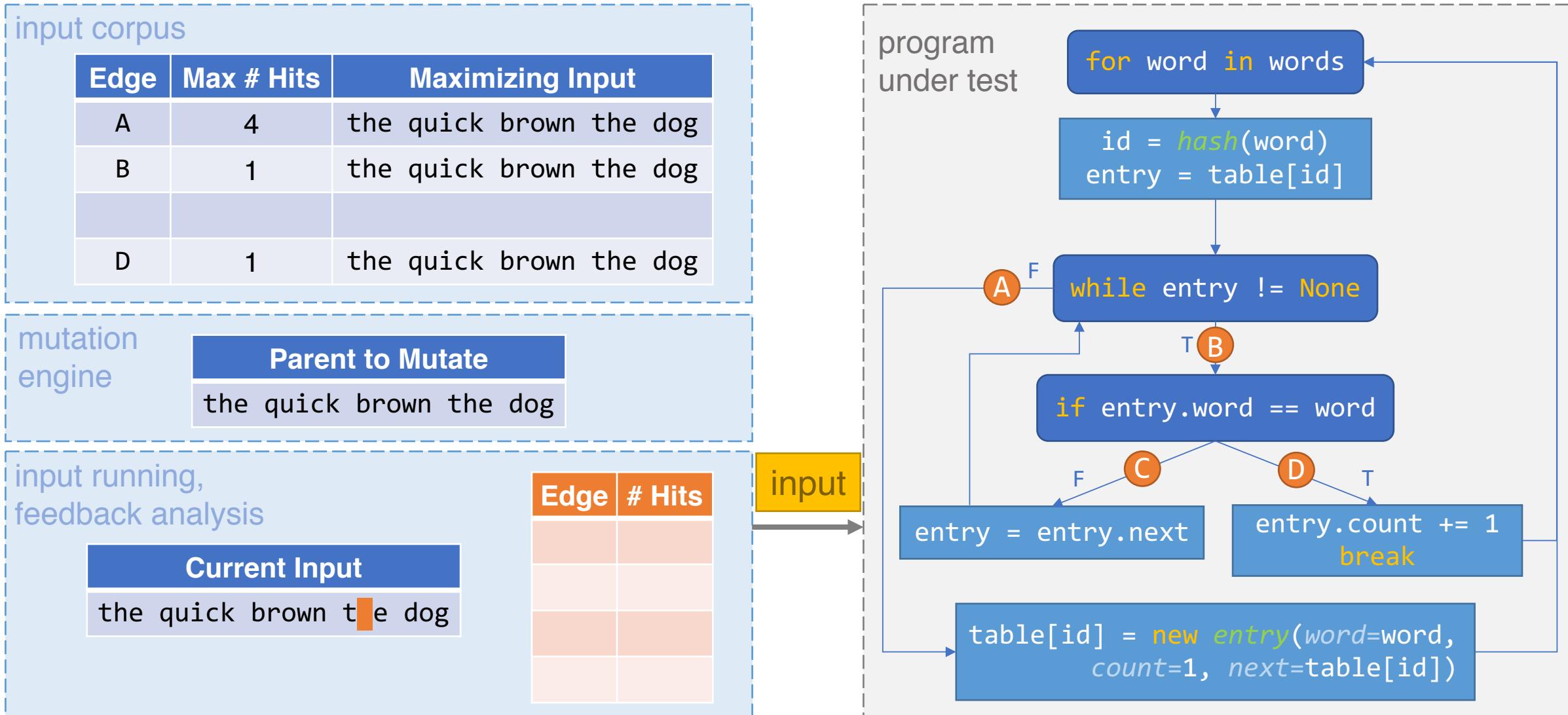
program  
under test



# PerfFuzz Algorithm



# PerfFuzz Algorithm



# PerfFuzz Algorithm

input corpus

Edge	Max # Hits	Maximizing Input
A	4	the quick brown the dog
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mutation engine

Parent to Mutate

the quick brown the dog

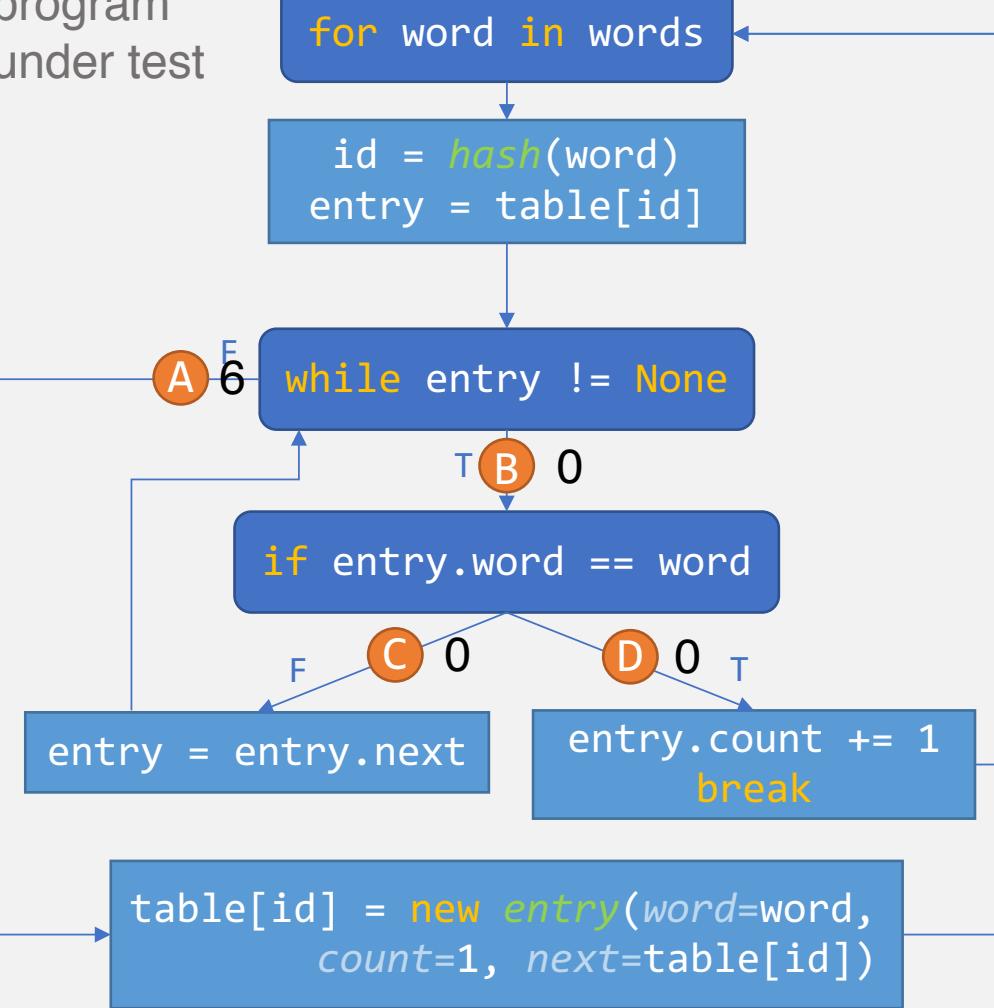
input running,  
feedback analysis

Current Input

the quick brown t<sub>le</sub> dog

Edge	# Hits

program  
under test



# PerfFuzz Algorithm

input corpus

Edge	Max # Hits	Maximizing Input
A	4	the quick brown the dog
B	1	the quick brown the dog
D	1	the quick brown the dog

mutation engine

Parent to Mutate

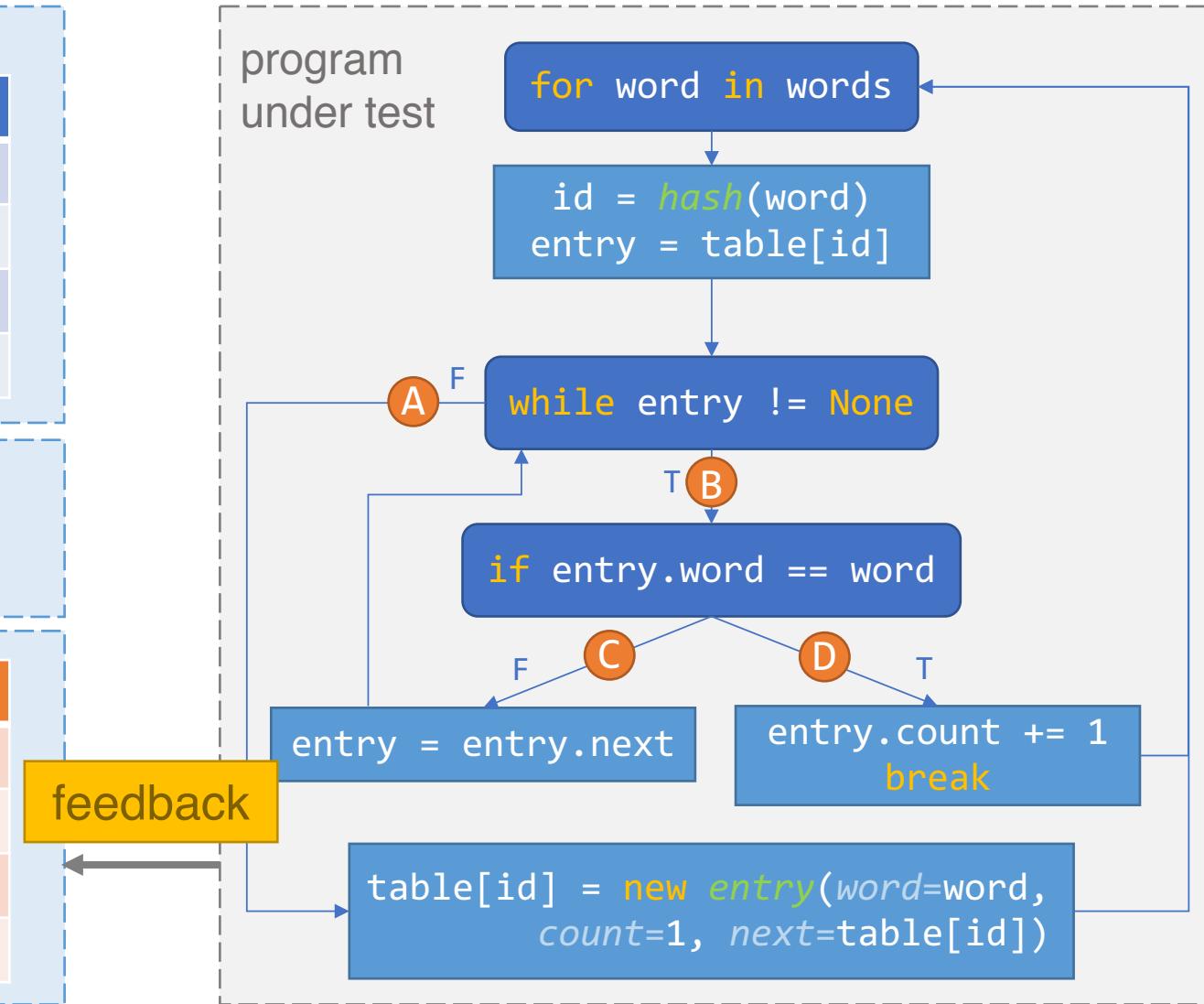
the quick brown the dog

input running,  
feedback analysis

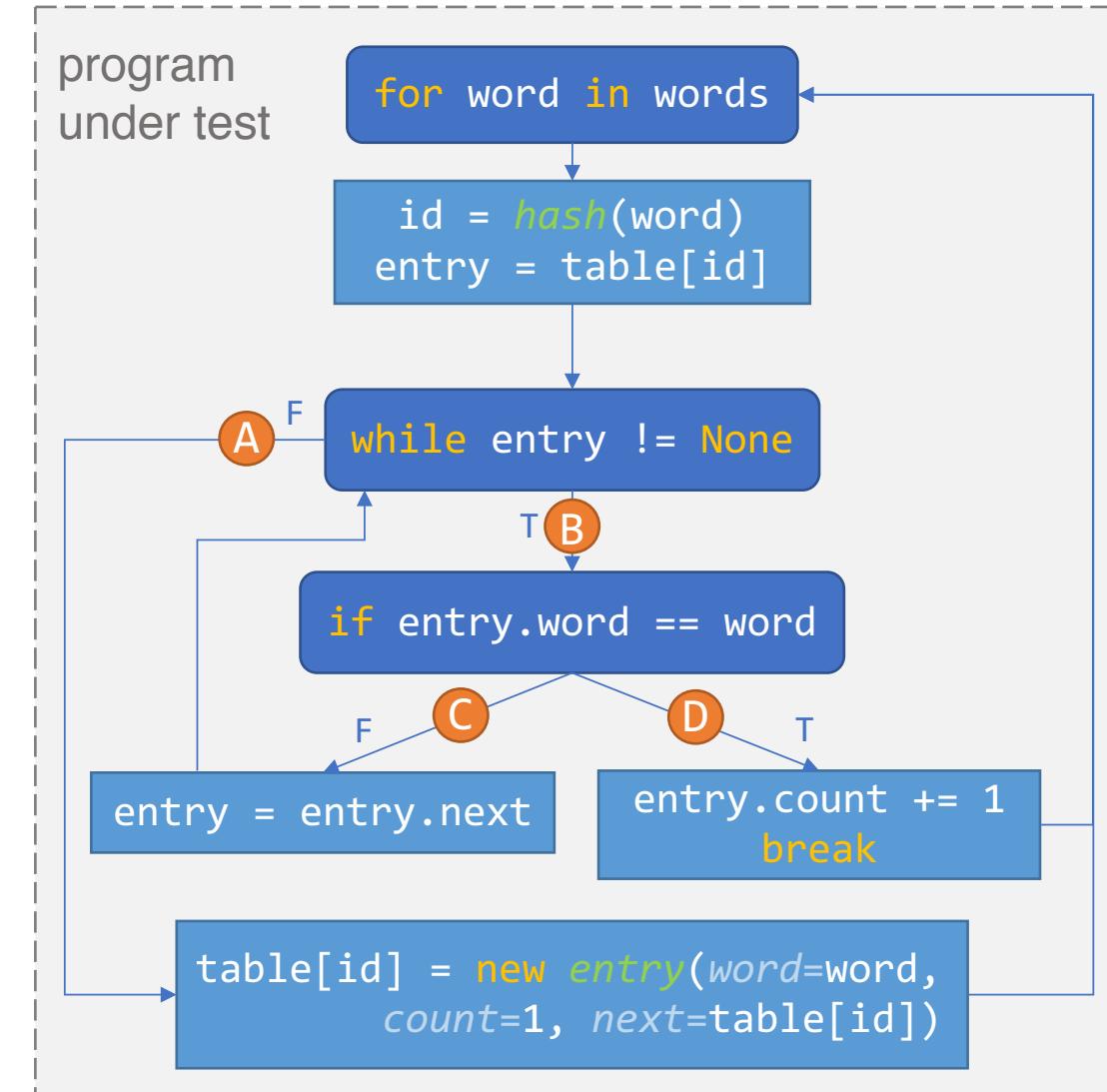
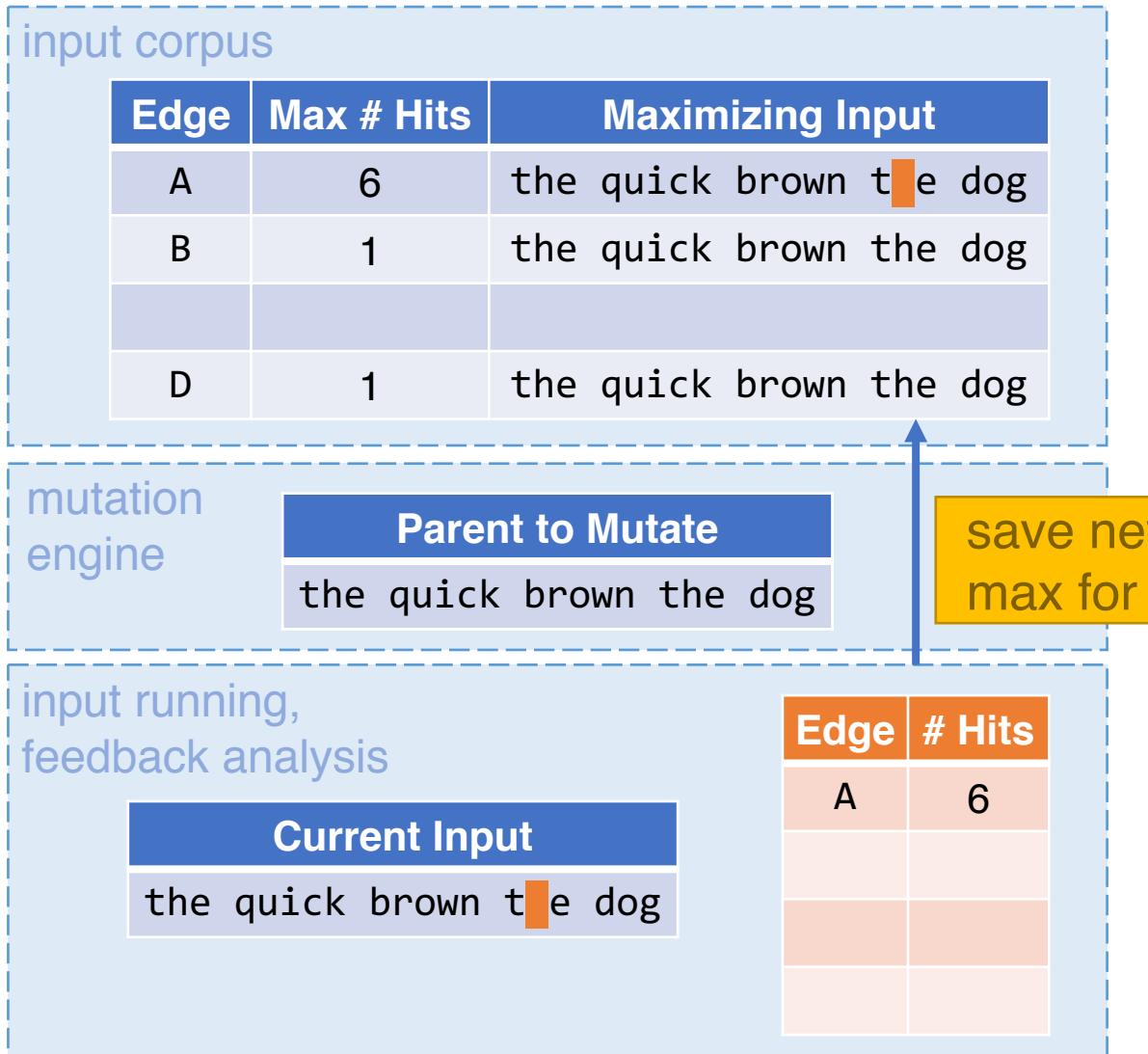
Current Input

the quick brown te dog

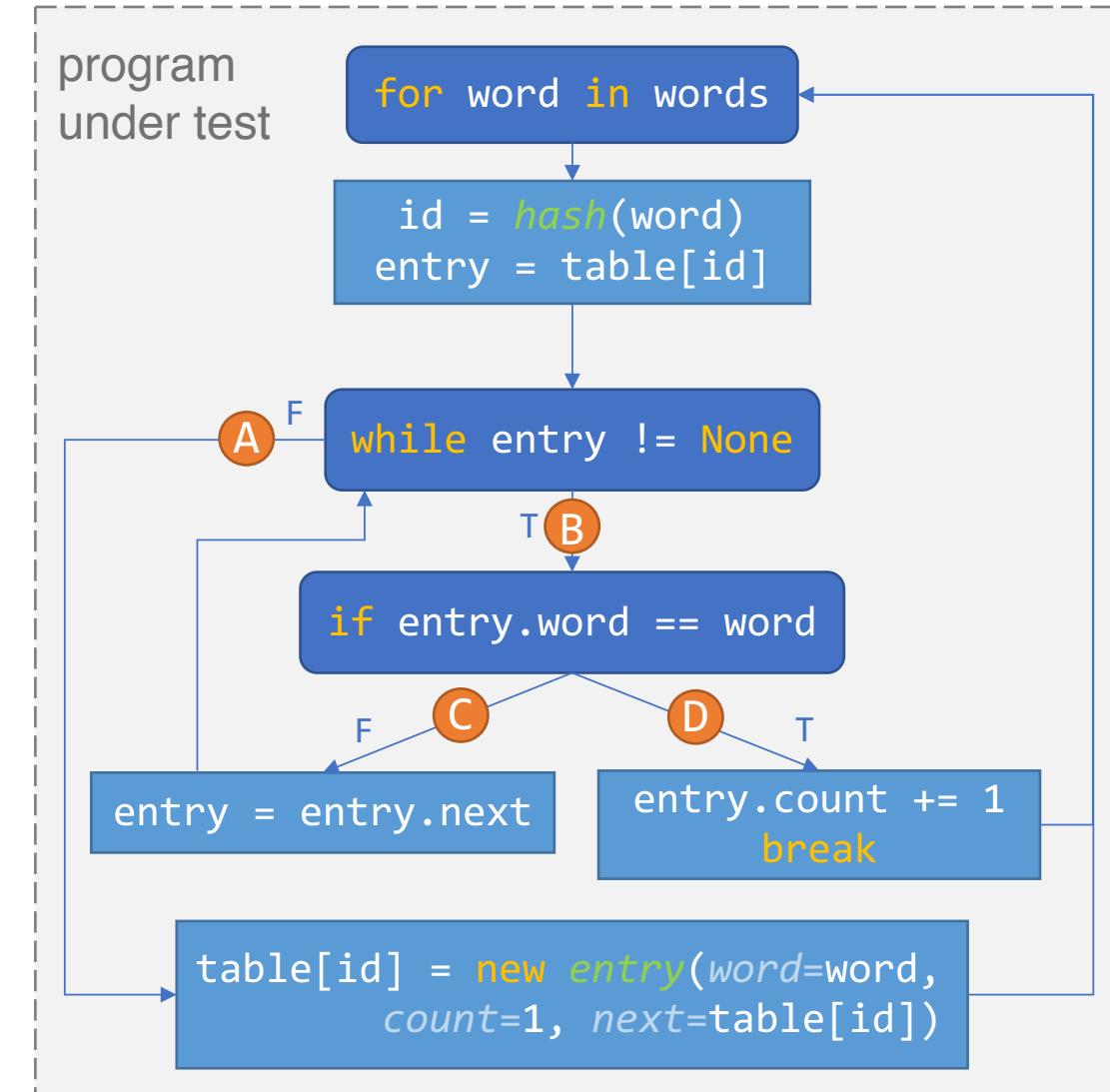
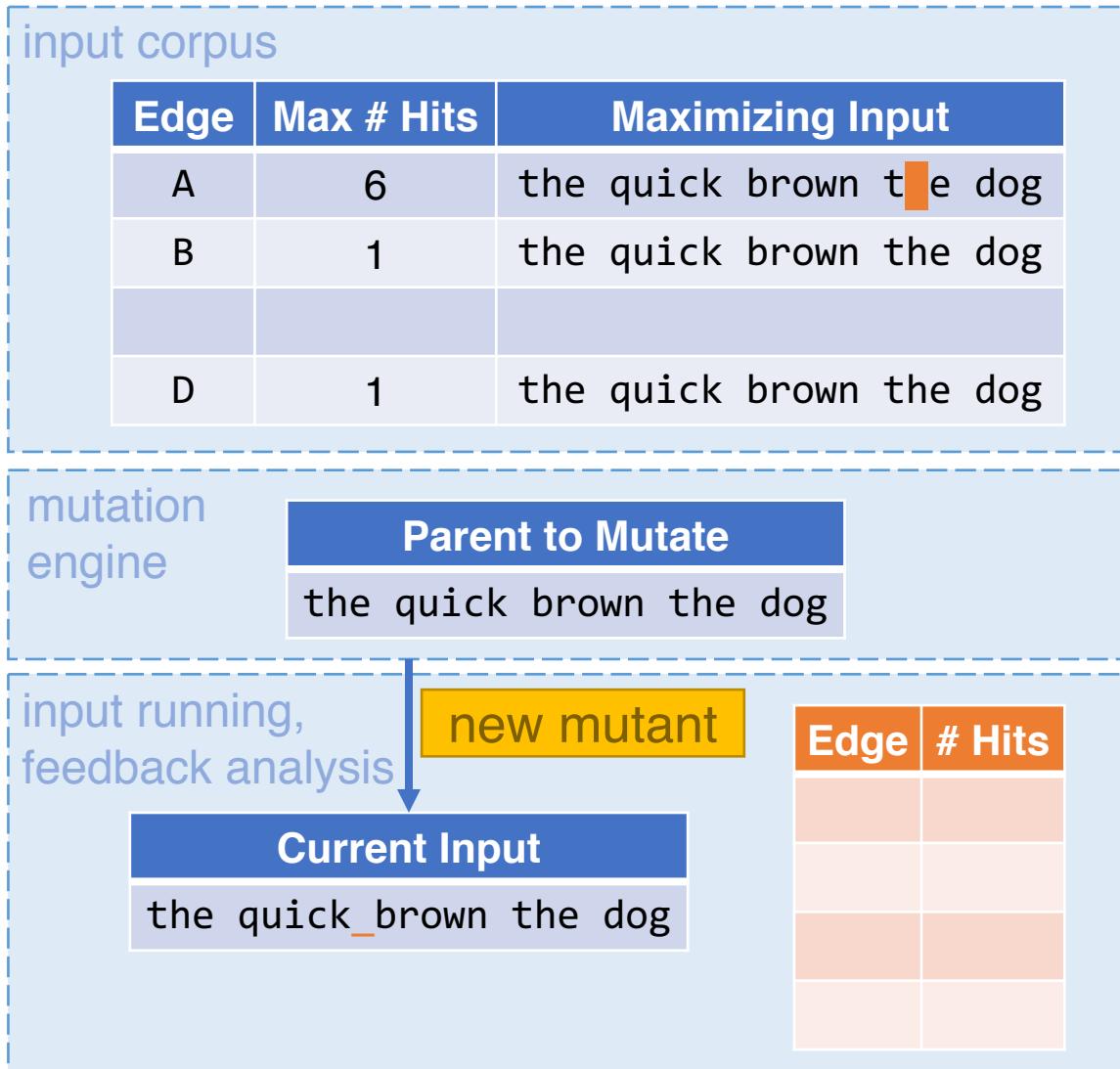
Edge	# Hits
A	6



# PerfFuzz Algorithm



# PerfFuzz Algorithm



# PerfFuzz Algorithm

input corpus

Edge	Max # Hits	Maximizing Input
A	6	the quick brown <b>t</b> e dog
B	1	the quick brown the dog
D	1	the quick brown the dog

mutation engine

Parent to Mutate

the quick brown the dog

input running,  
feedback analysis

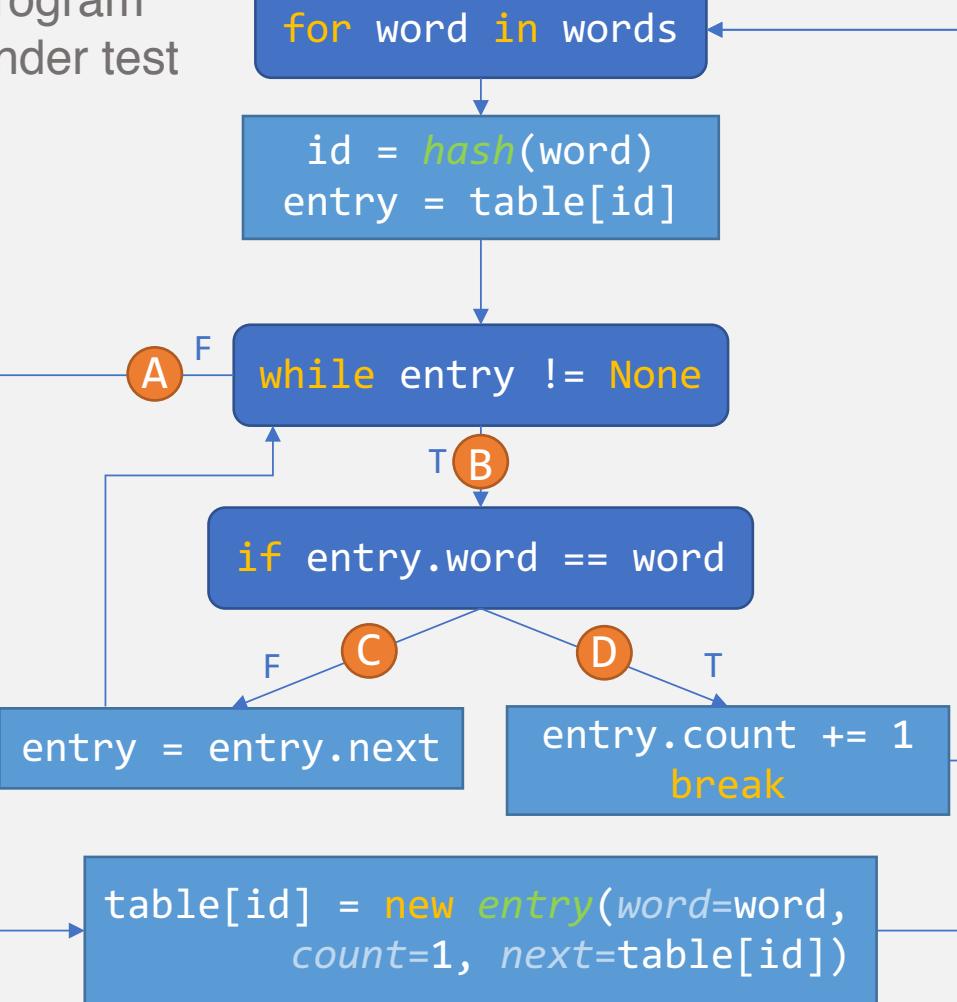
Current Input

the quick brown the dog

Edge	# Hits

input

program  
under test



# PerfFuzz Algorithm

input corpus

Edge	Max # Hits	Maximizing Input
A	6	the quick brown <b>t</b> e dog
B	1	the quick brown the dog
D	1	the quick brown the dog

mutation engine

Parent to Mutate

the quick brown the dog

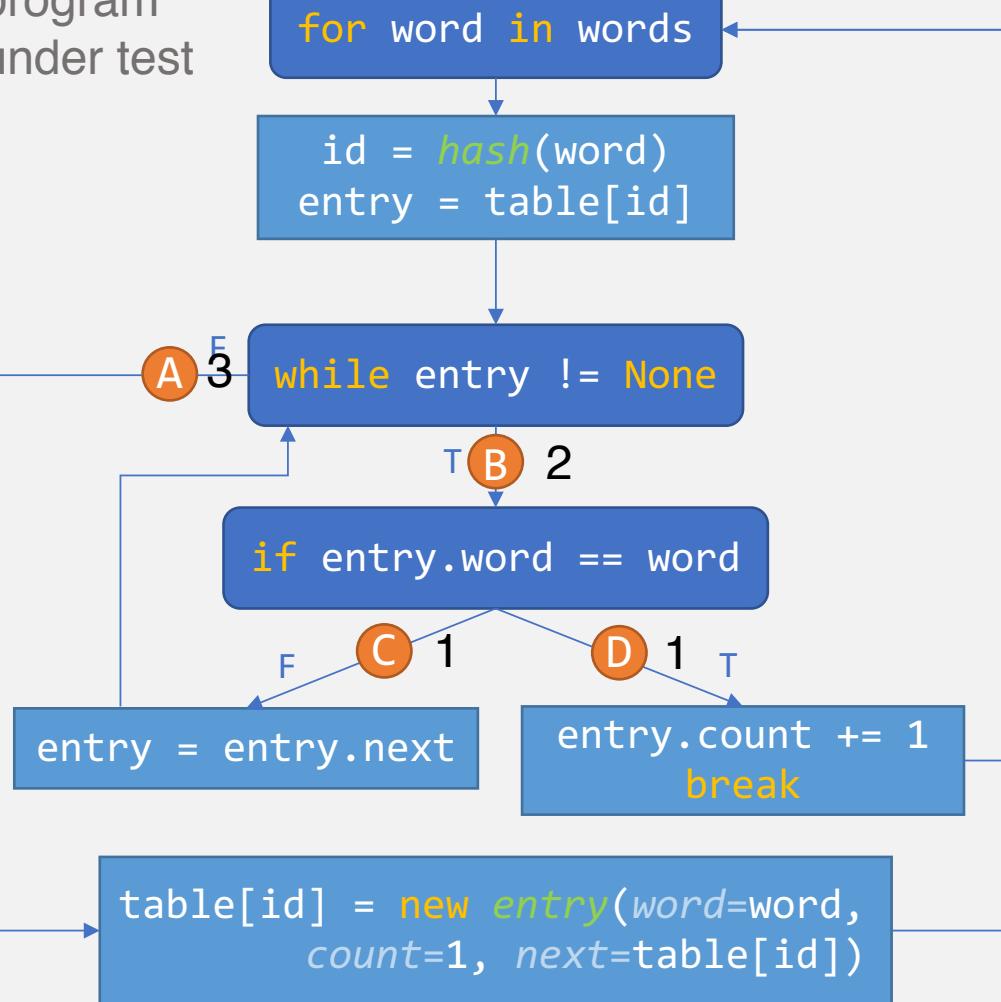
input running,  
feedback analysis

Current Input

the quick brown the dog

Edge	# Hits

program  
under test



# PerfFuzz Algorithm

input corpus

Edge	Max # Hits	Maximizing Input
A	6	the quick brown <b>t</b> e dog
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mutation engine

Parent to Mutate

the quick brown the dog

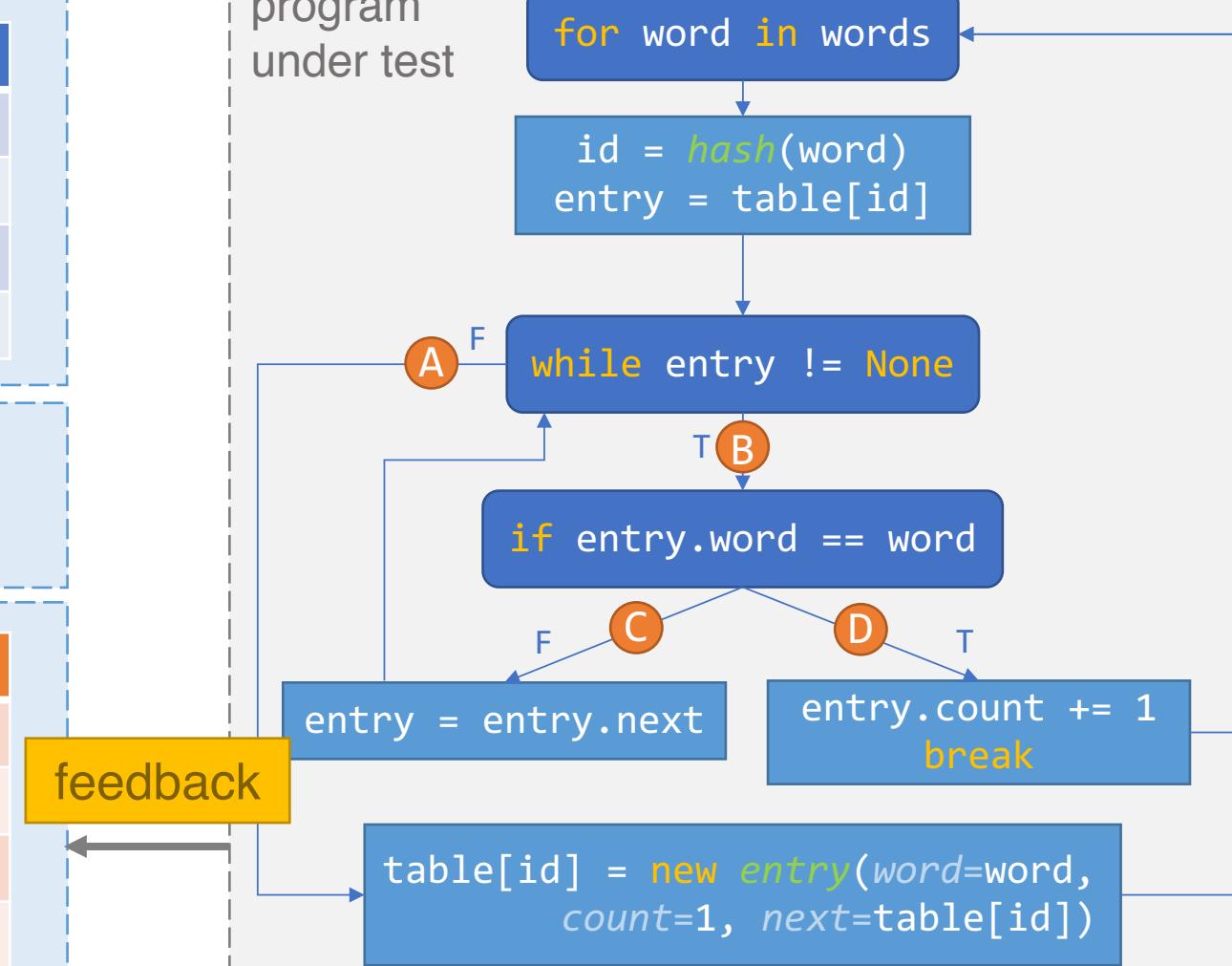
input running,  
feedback analysis

Current Input

the quick brown the dog

Edge	# Hits
A	3
B	2
C	1
D	1

program  
under test



# PerfFuzz Algorithm

input corpus

Edge	Max # Hits	Maximizing Input
A	6	the quick brown <b>t</b> e dog
B	1	the quick brown the dog
D	1	the quick brown the dog

mutation engine

Parent to Mutate

the quick brown the dog

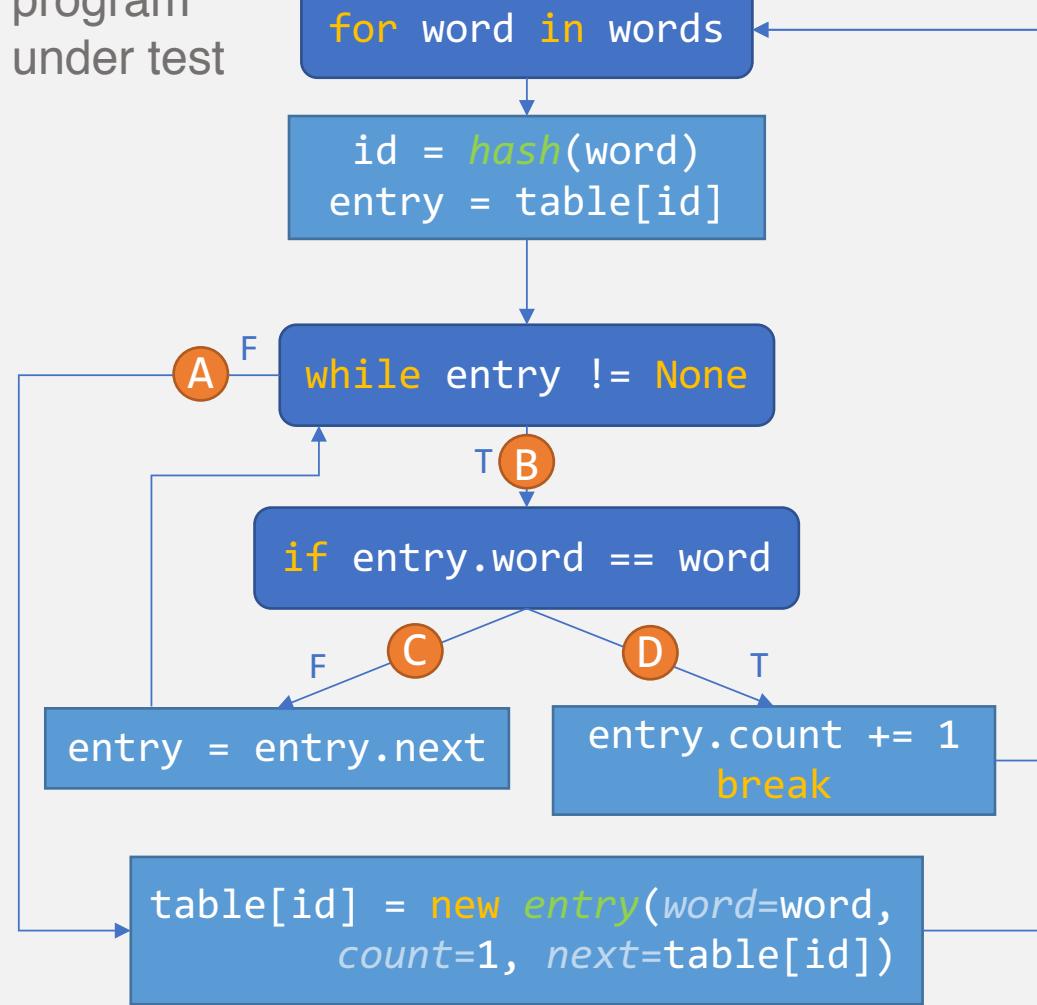
input running,  
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mutation engine

Parent to Mutate

the quick brown the dog

save new  
max for B,C

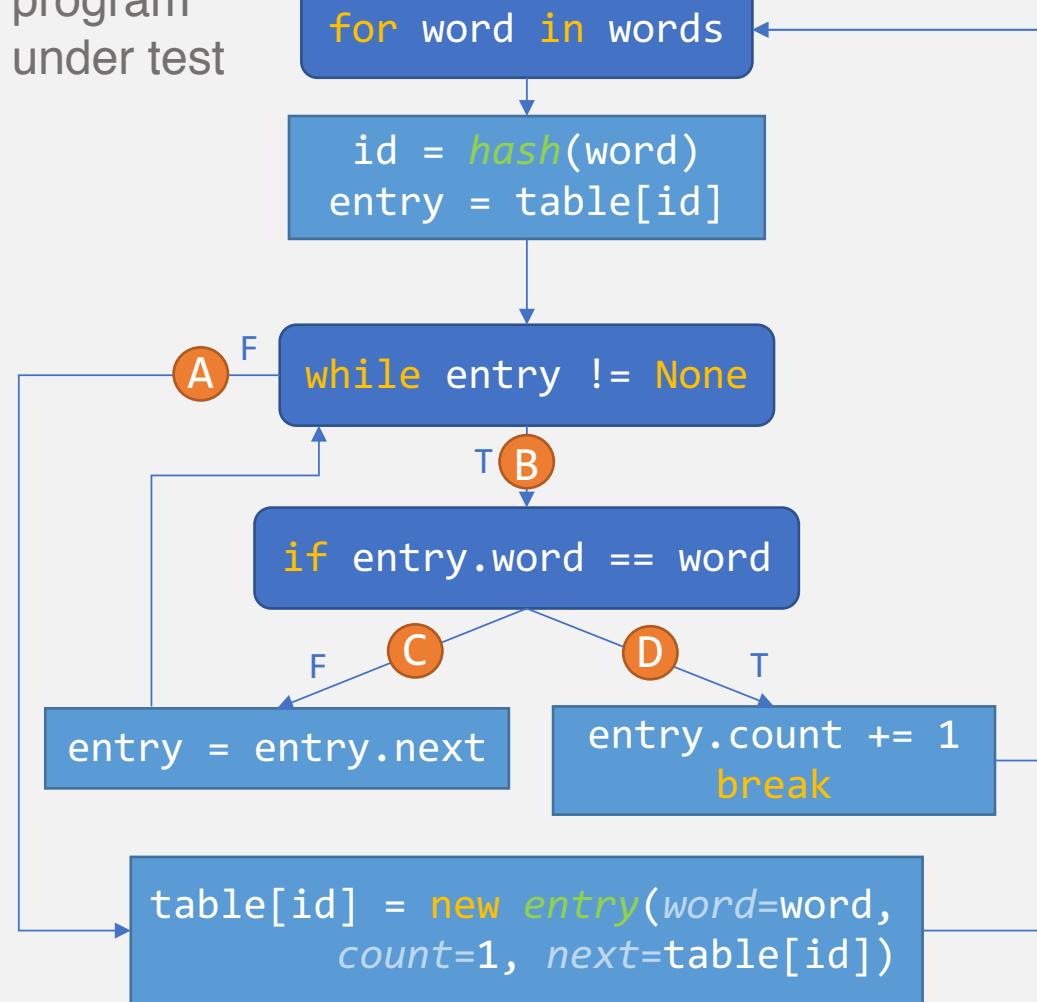
input running,  
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Current Input

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Edge	# Hits
A	3
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program  
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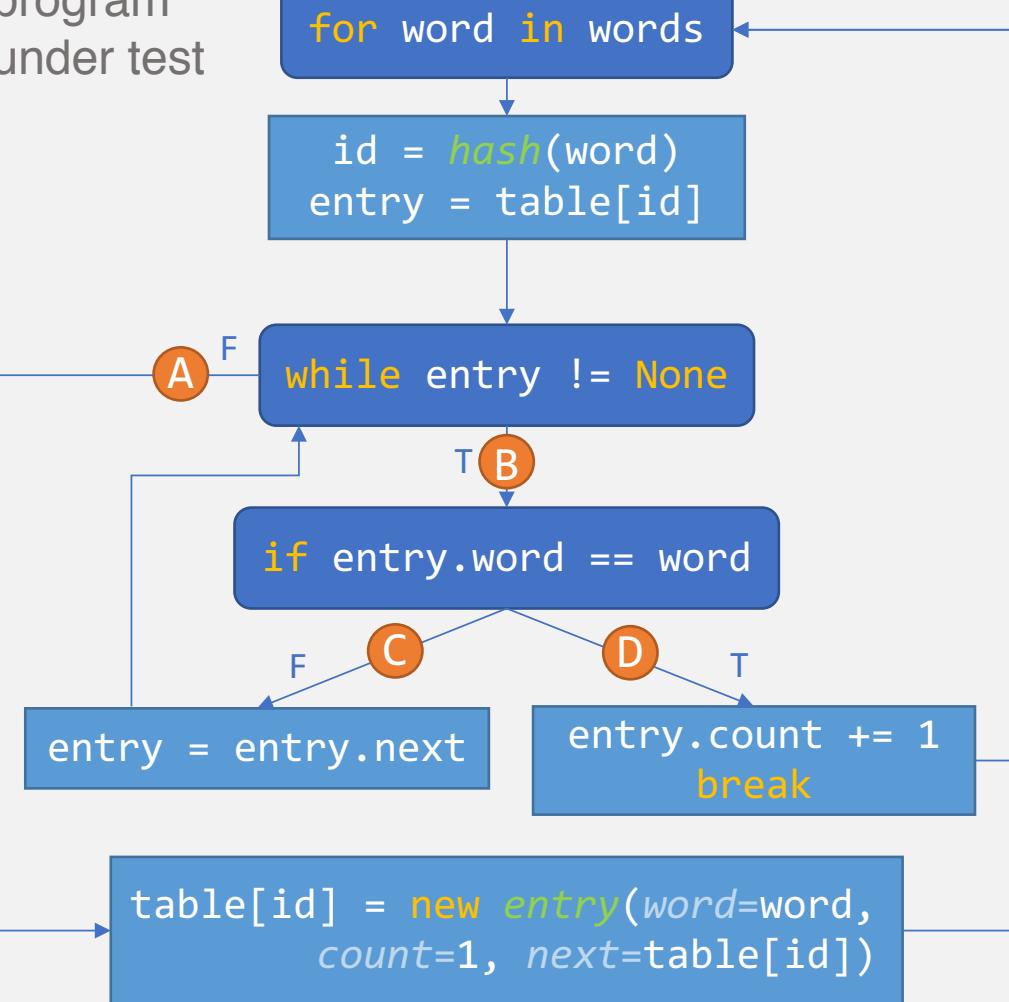
the quick brown the dog

input running,  
feedback analysis

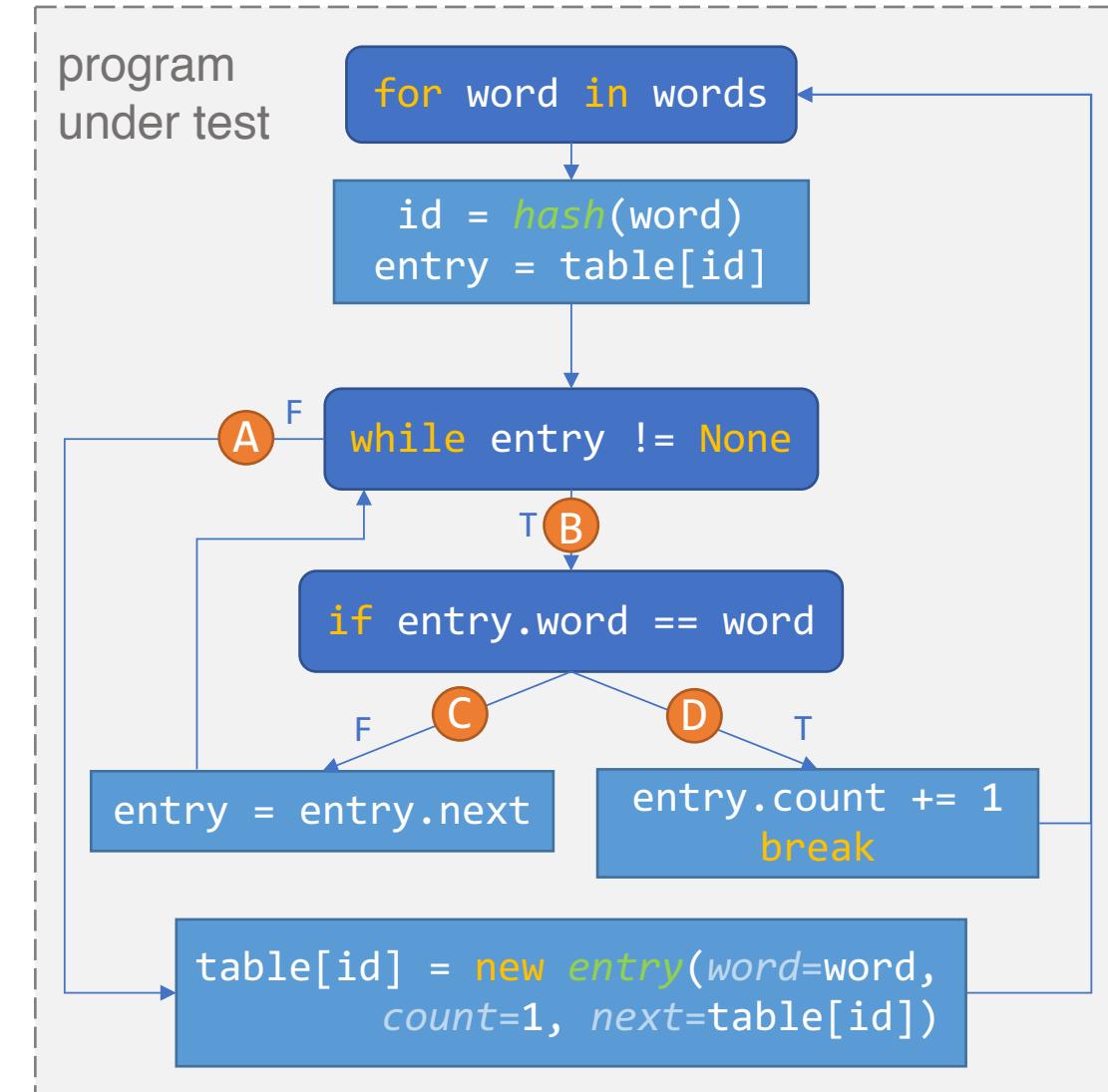
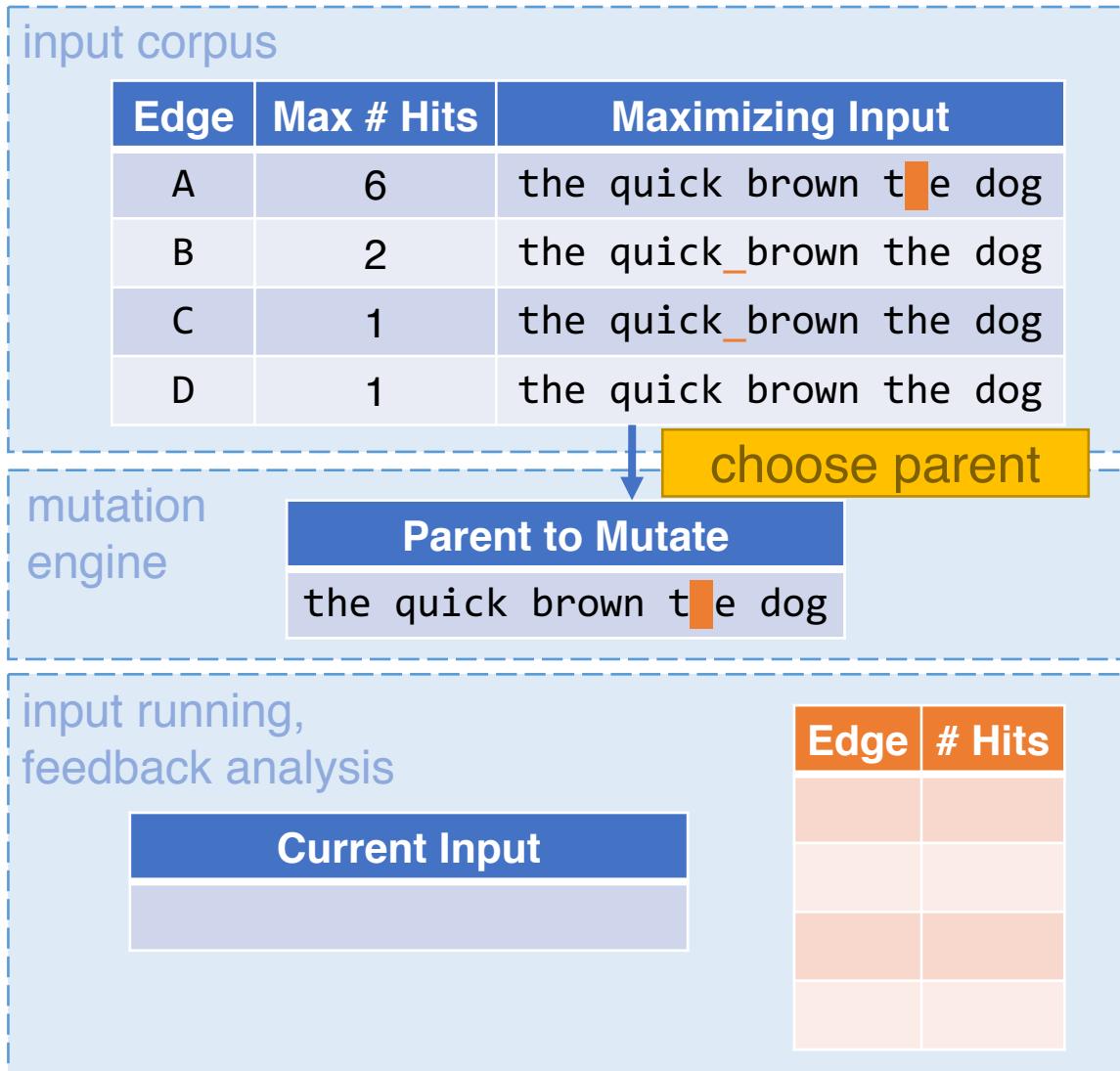
Current Input

Edge	# Hits

program  
under test



# PerfFuzz Algorithm



# PerfFuzz Algorithm

input corpus

Edge	Max # Hits	Maximizing Input
A	6	the quick brown t <small>he</small> dog
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C	1	the quick_ <u>brown</u> the dog
D	1	the quick brown the dog

mutation engine

Parent to Mutate

the quick brown the dog

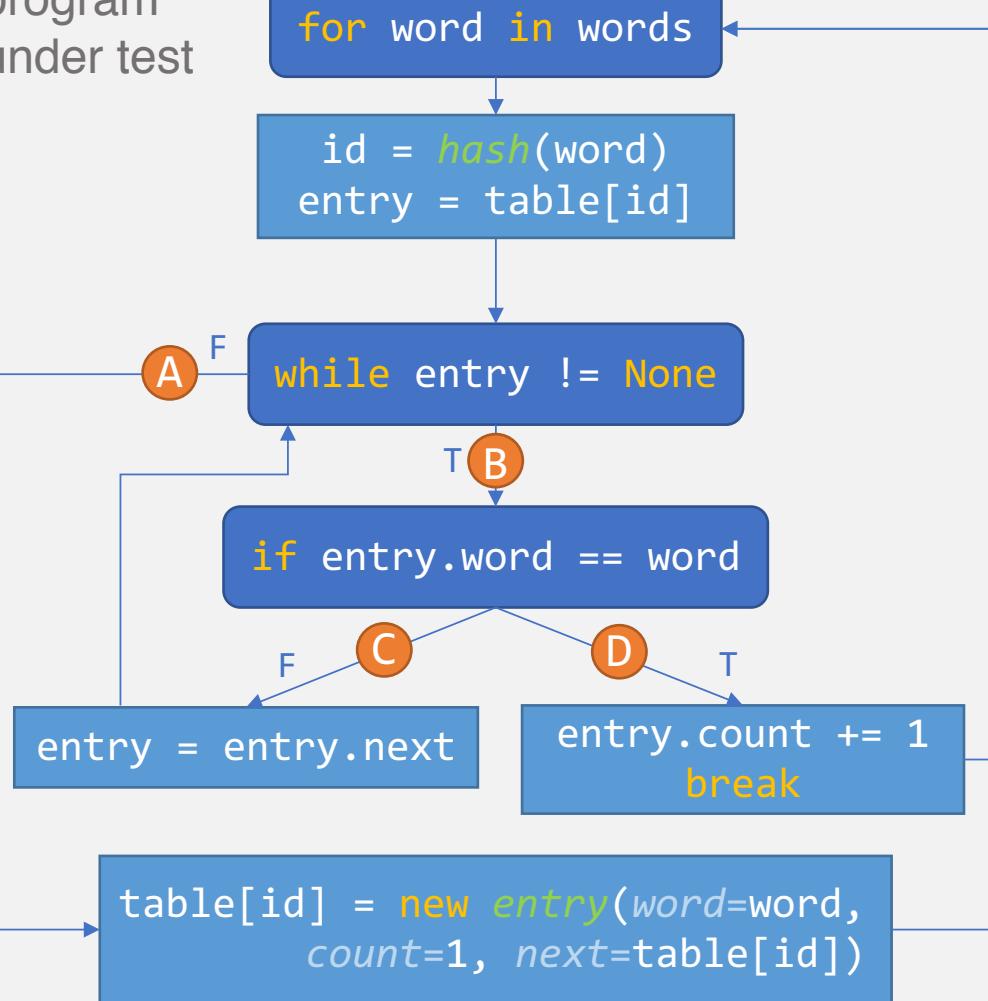
let's mutate this many times

input running,  
feedback analysis

Current Input

Edge	# Hits

program under test



# PerfFuzz Algorithm

input corpus

Edge	Max # Hits	Maximizing Input
A	6	the quick brown t <small>he</small> dog
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mutation engine

Parent to Mutate  
the quick brown t

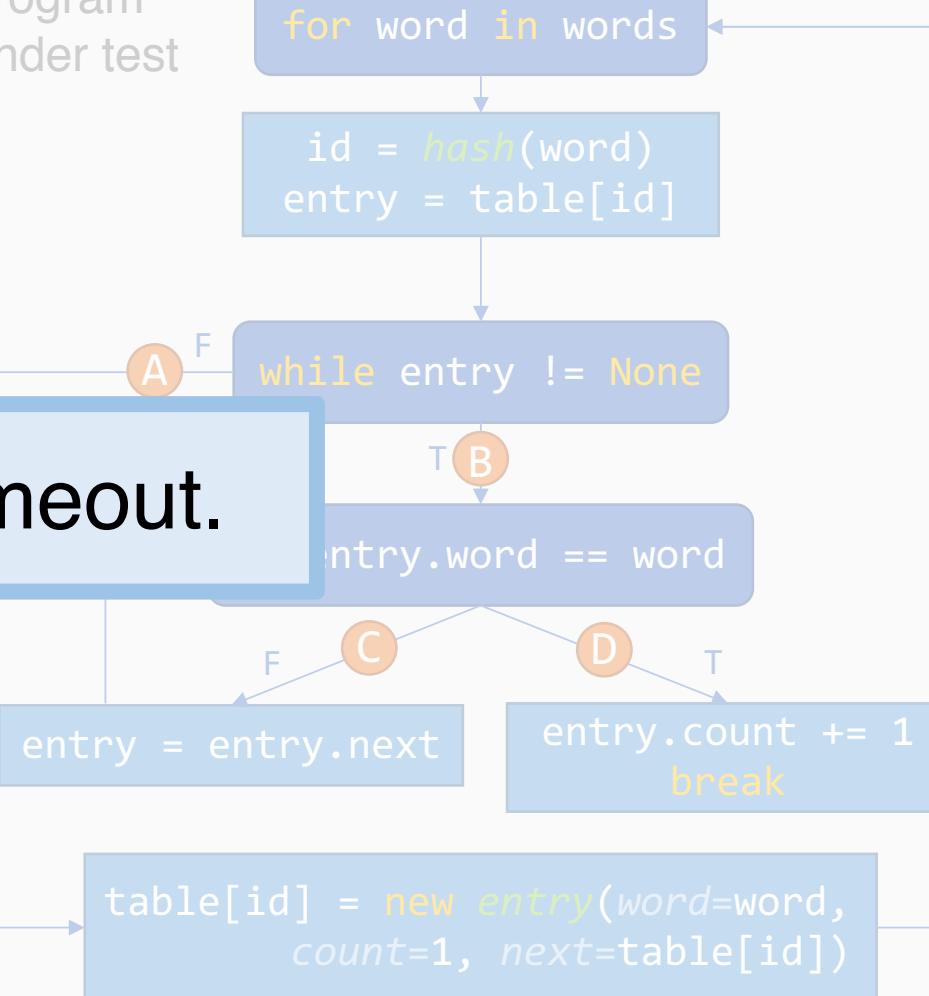
input running,  
feedback analysis

Current Input

Edge	# Hits

Repeat until timeout.

program under test



# PerfFuzz Algorithm: Results

## input corpus

Edge	Max # Hits	Maximizing Input
A	12	t h e q u i c k b r o w
B	21	t ?t xt at\$ #a ))t Qwaa
C	21	t ?t xt at\$ #a ))t Qwaa
D	11	t t t t t t t t t t t

## mutation engine



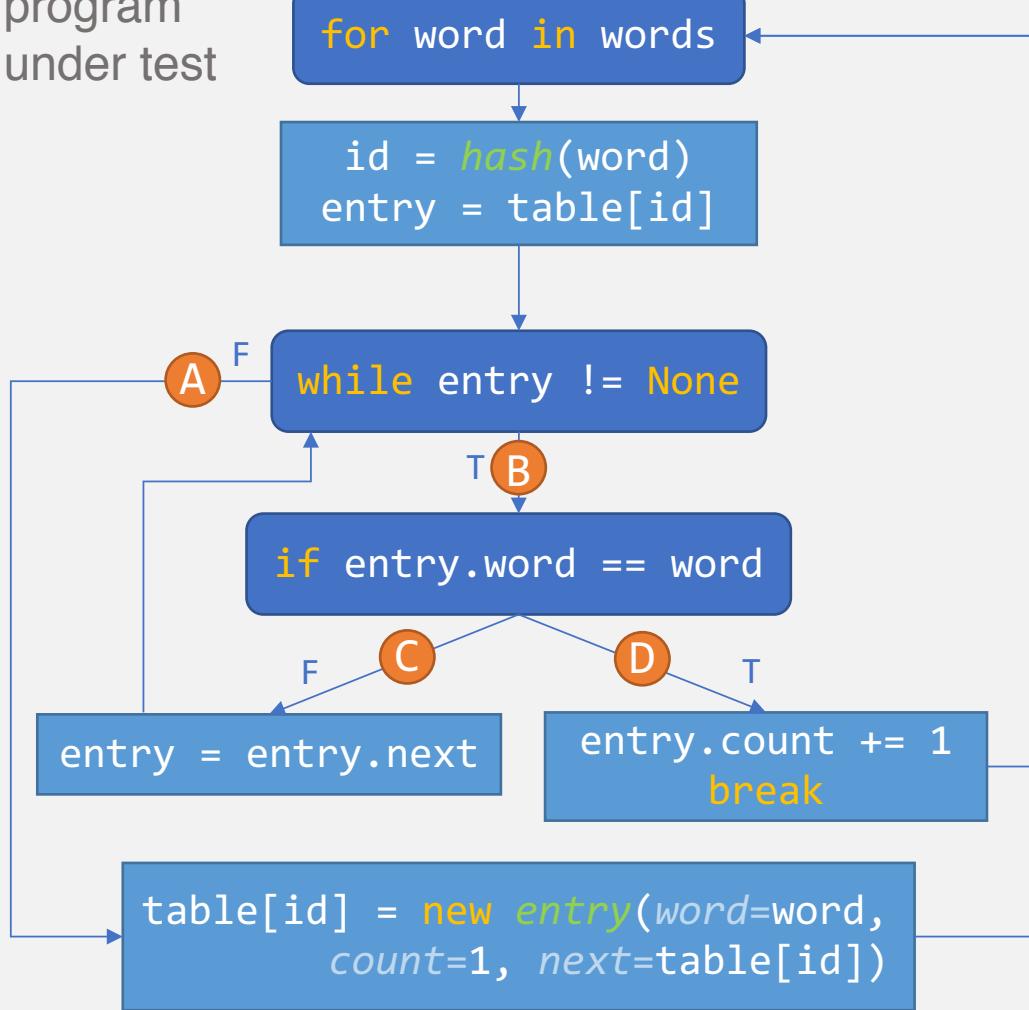
## input running, feedback analysis

Current Input



Edge	# Hits

## program under test



# PerfFuzz Algorithm: Results

## input corpus

Edge	Max # Hits	Maximizing Input
A	12	t h e q u i c k b r o w
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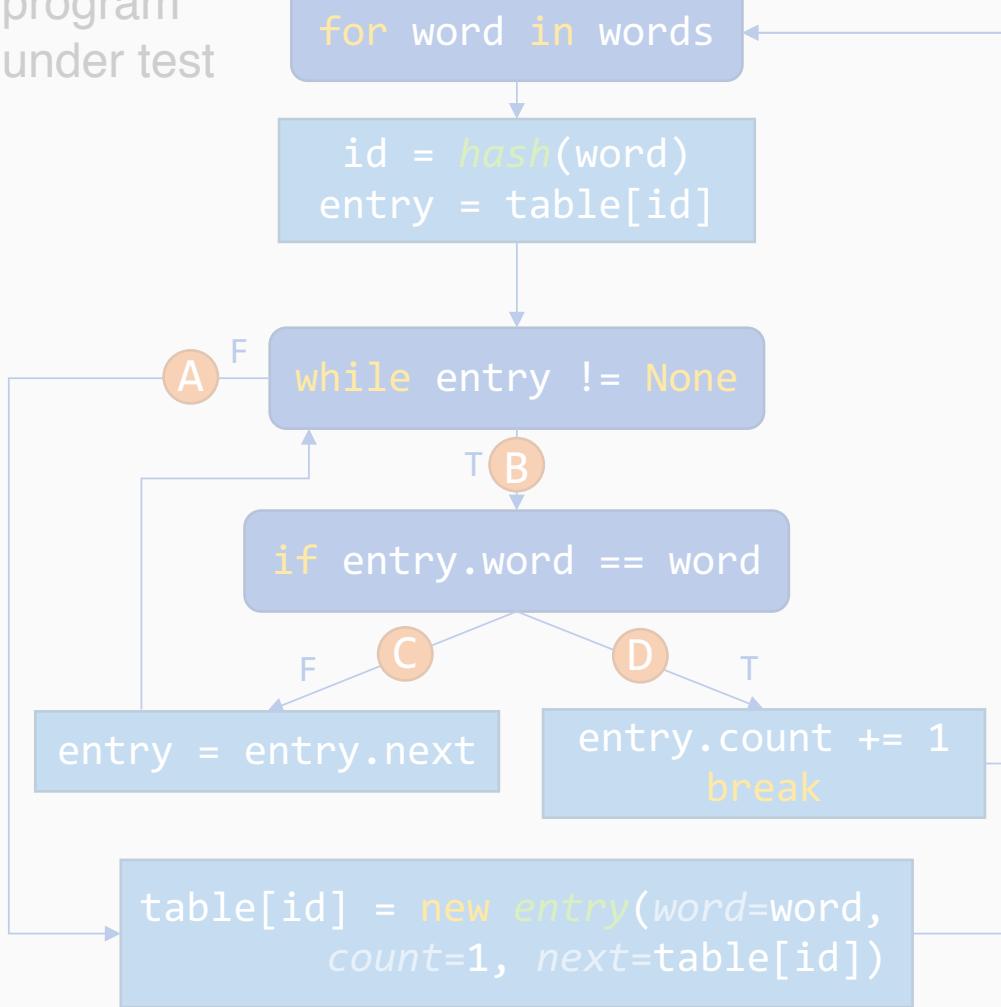
## input running, feedback analysis

Current Input

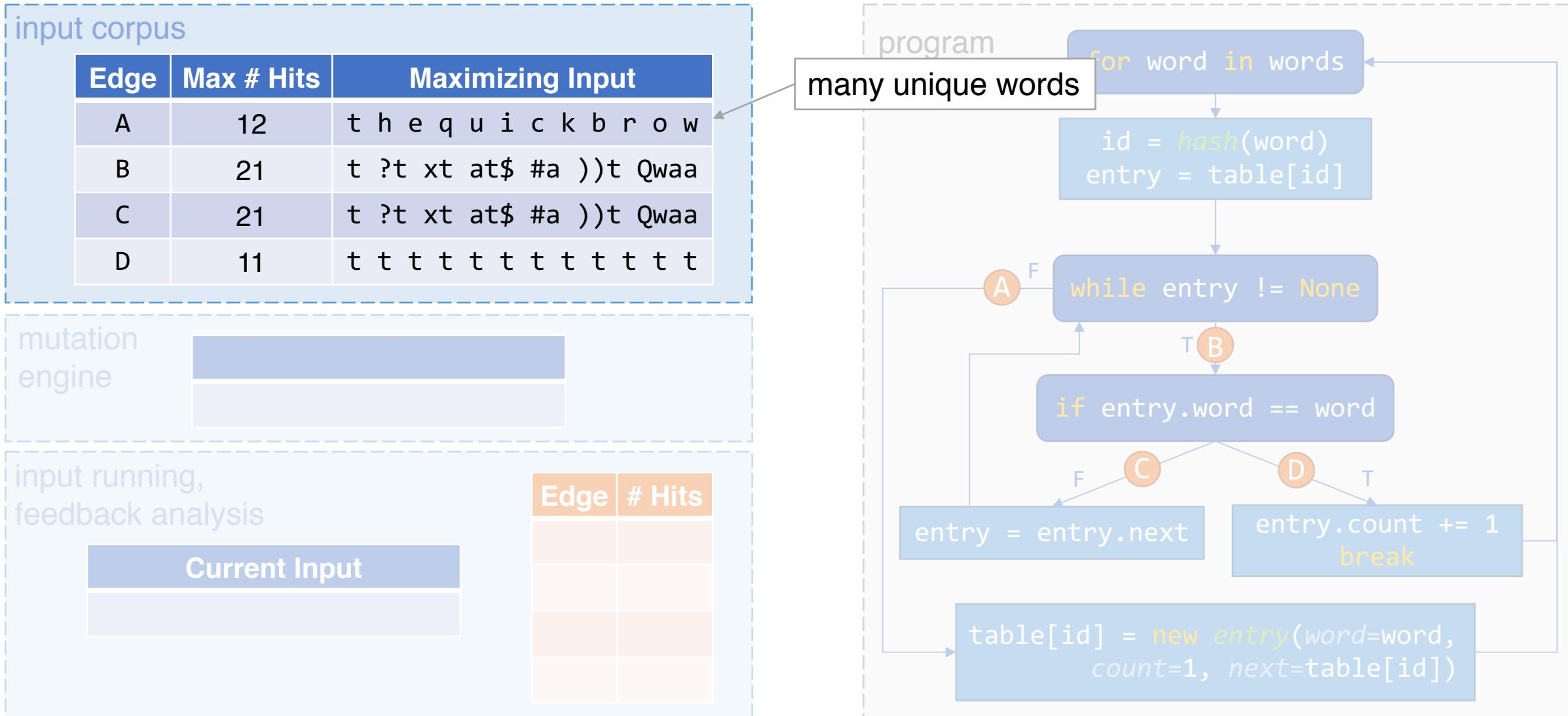


Edge	# Hits

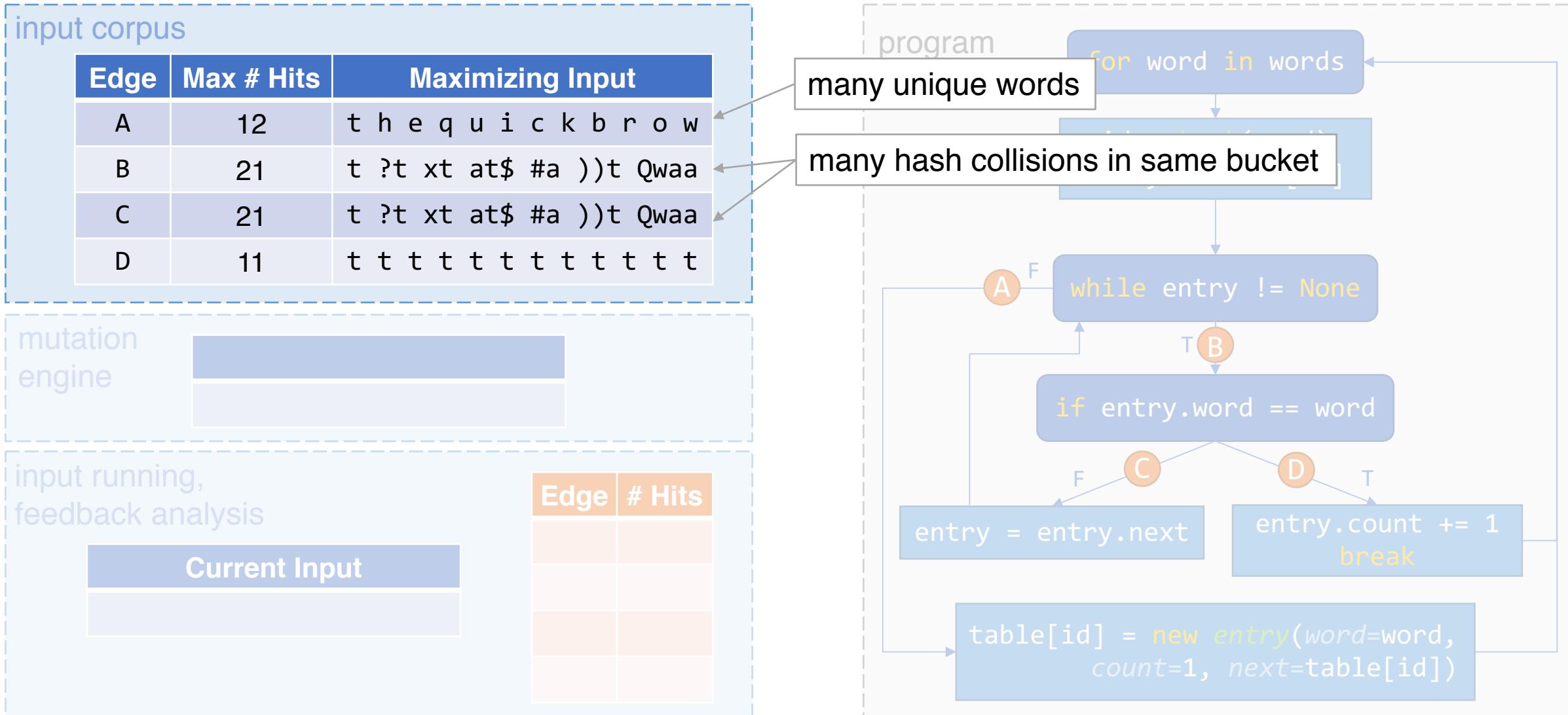
## program under test



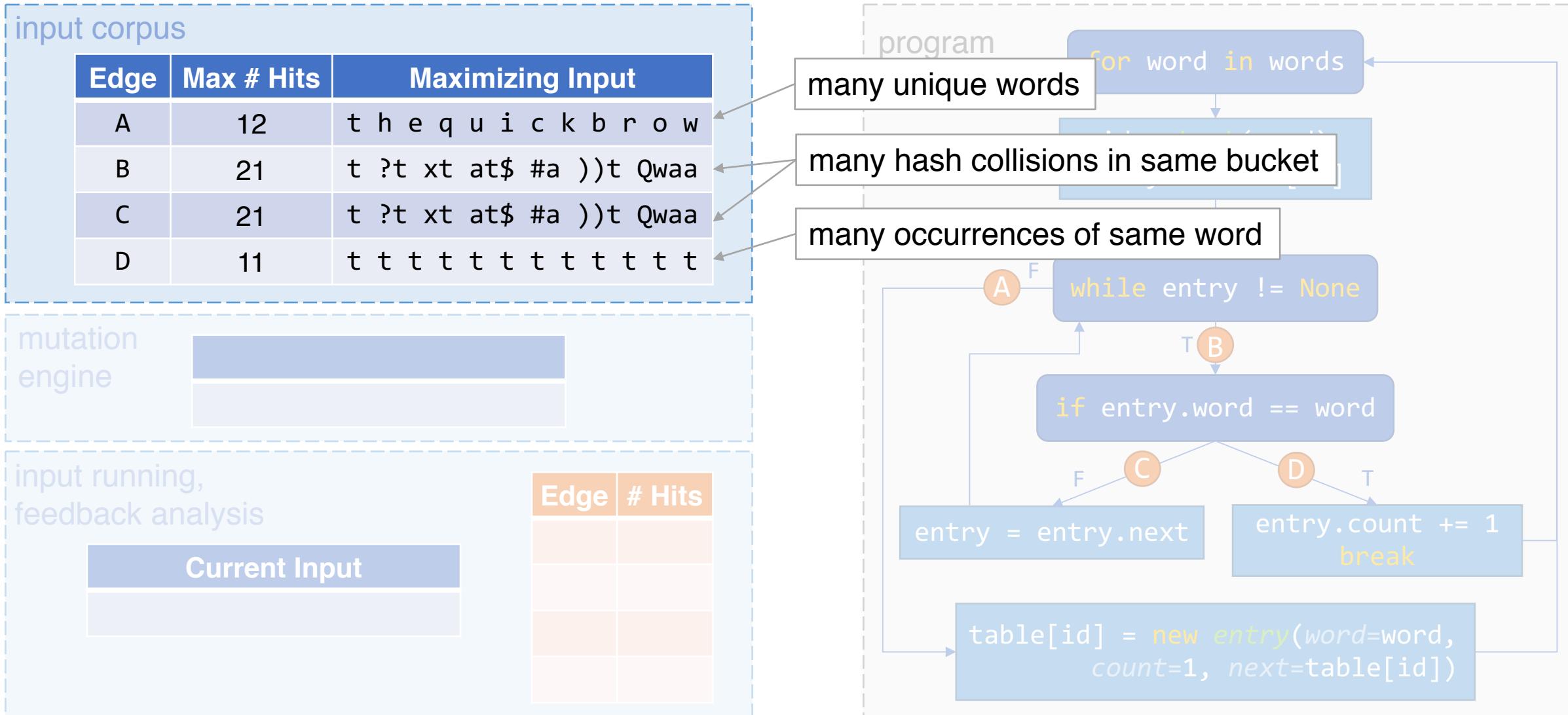
# PerfFuzz Algorithm: Results



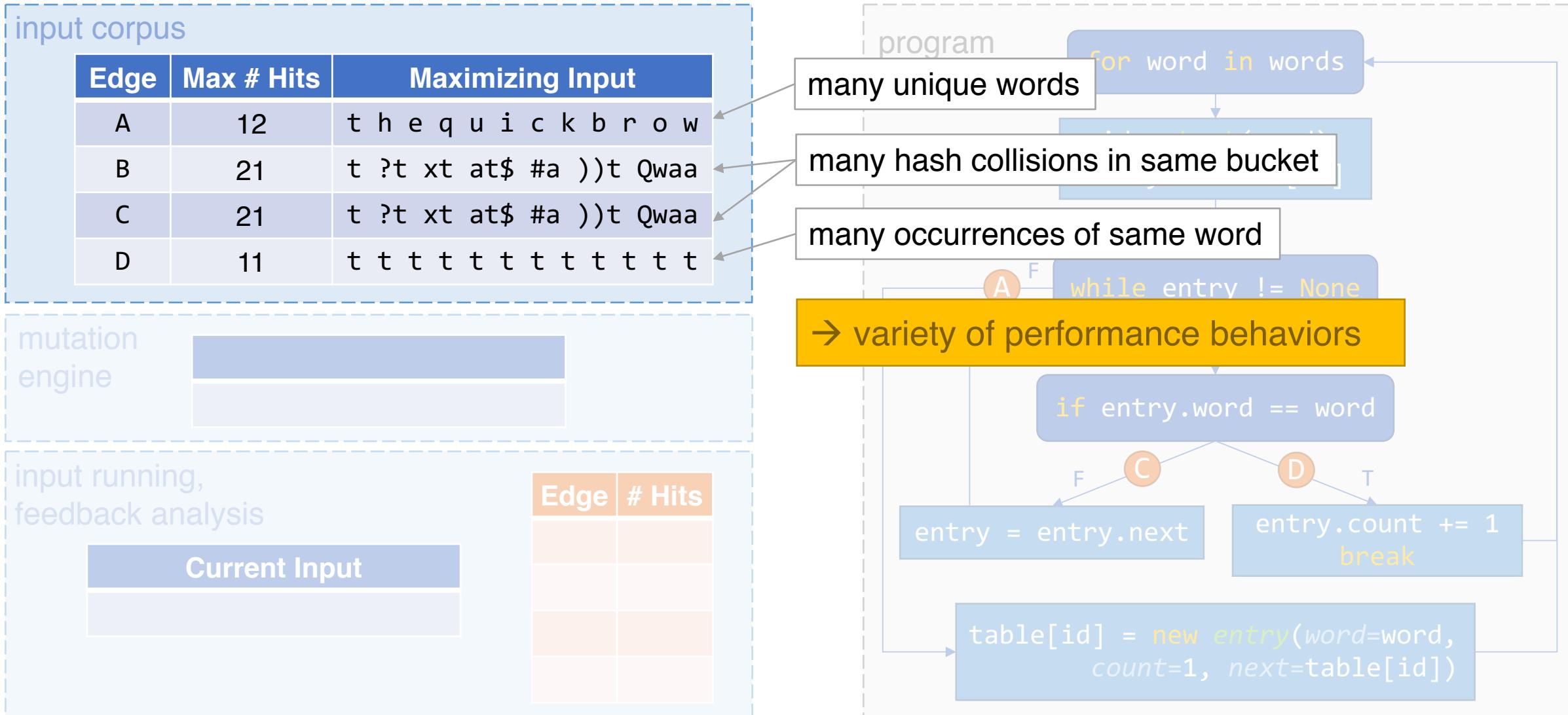
# PerfFuzz Algorithm: Results



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# PerfFuzz Algorithm: Results



# Evaluation Outline

- Compare to SlowFuzz
  - Macro-benchmarks
  - Micro-benchmarks
- Compare to AFL
- Case Studies

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- Compare to SlowFuzz
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  - Micro-benchmarks
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# Prior Work

SlowFuzz

→ Fuzzing to find algorithmic complexity vulnerabilities

- Saves inputs that increase *total* path length
- Randomly chooses parent
- Prioritizes mutations that increase path length
- Faster than PerfFuzz (based on LibFuzzer)

T. Petsios, J. Zhao, A. D. Keromytis, and S. Jana. 2017. SlowFuzz: Automated Domain-Independent Detection of Algorithmic Complexity Vulnerabilities. In Proceedings of CCS '17. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1145/3133956.3134073>

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# Experimental Setup: Macro-Benchmarks

- Max input size: 500 bytes
- Seeds: AFL default seed for each format
- Run each tool for 6 hours
- Repeat 6-hour runs 20 times

Library	LoC	Function Exercised
libpng	30k	PNG read
libxml2	70k	XML read
libjpeg-turbo	30k	JPEG decompress
zlib	9k	GZIP decompress

# Macro-Benchmarks: Maximum Path Length

- Path length: total number of hits of CFG edges by an input

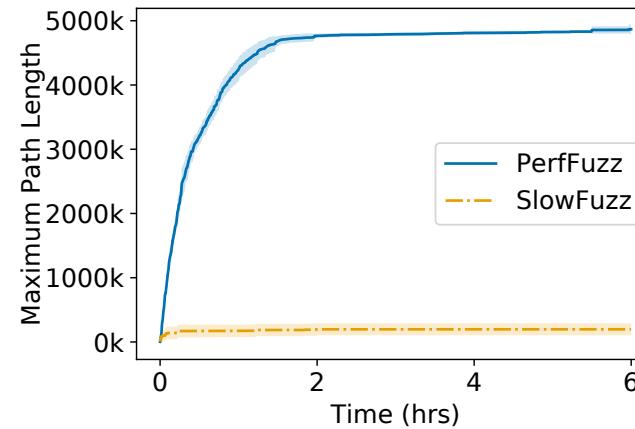
Edge	# Hits
A	1
B	11
C	0
D	11

path len: 23

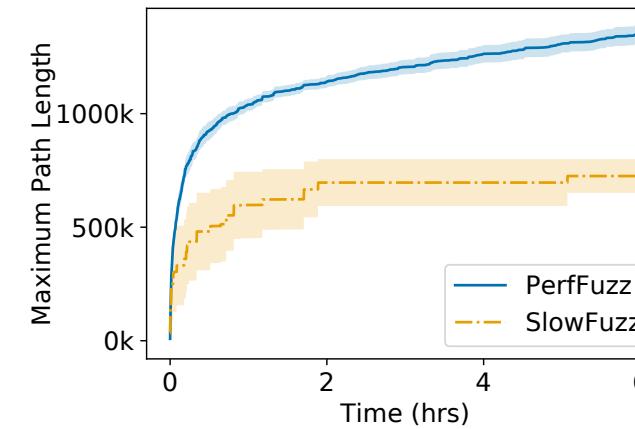
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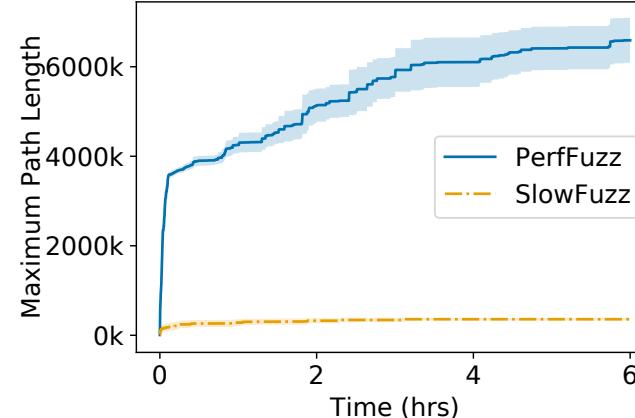
libpng



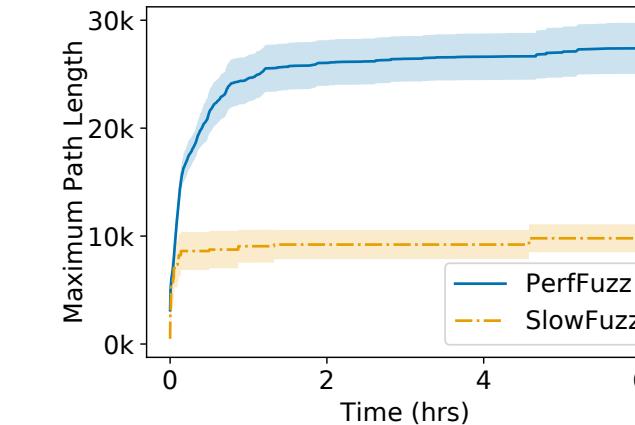
libxml2



libjpeg-turbo



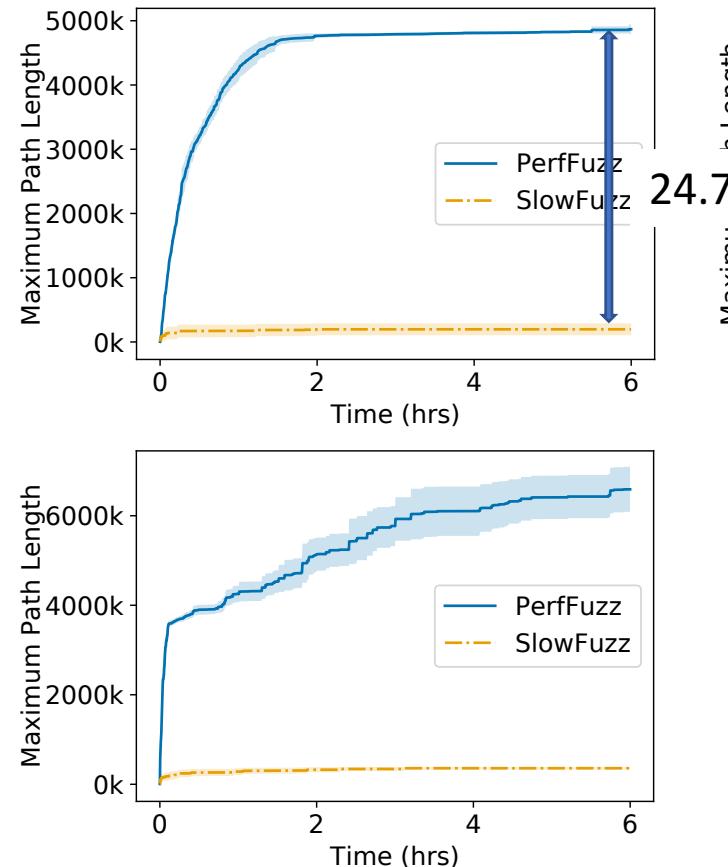
zlib



# Macro-Benchmarks: Maximum Path Length

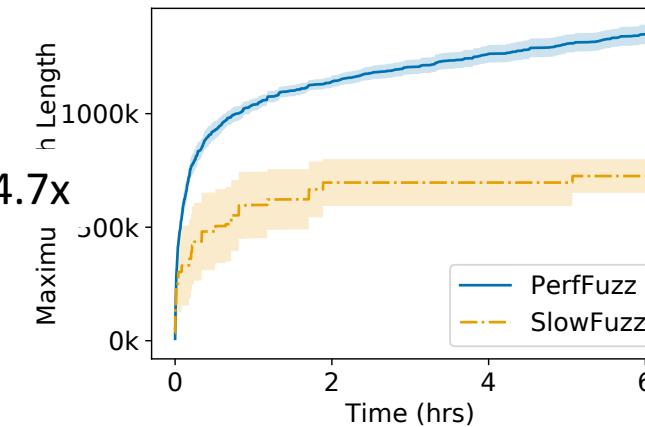
- Path length: total number of hits of CFG edges by an input

libpng

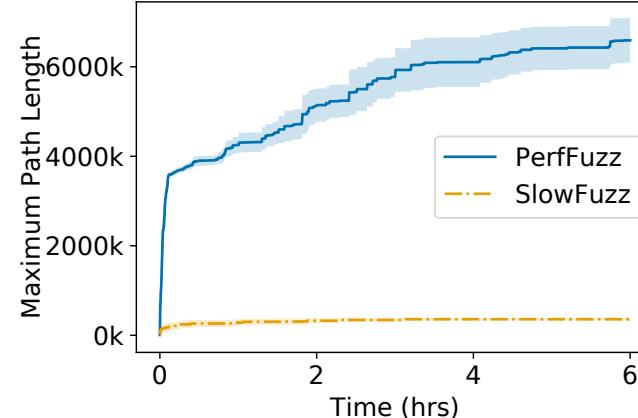


24.7x

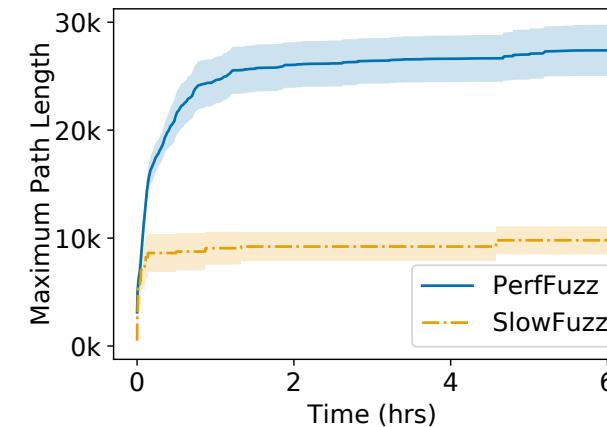
libxml2



libjpeg-turbo



zlib



# Macro-Benchmarks: Maximum Hot Spot

- Hot spot: maximum # hits of a CFG edge by an input

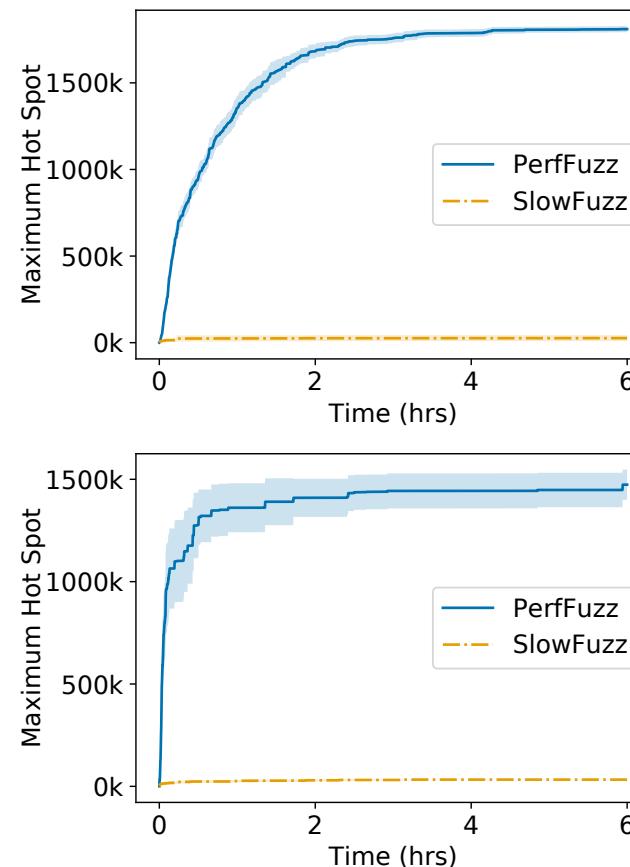
Edge	# Hits
A	1
B	11
C	0
D	11

hot spot: 11

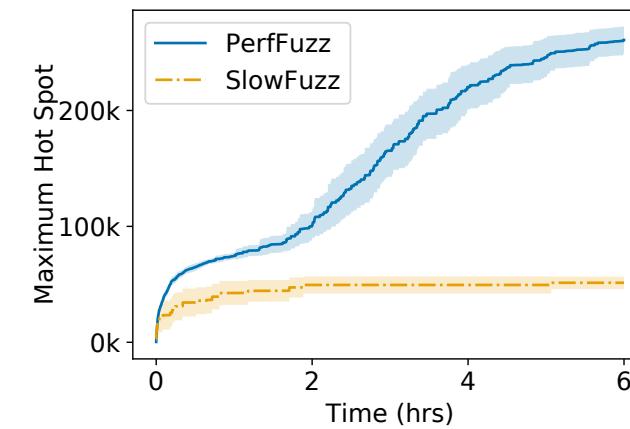
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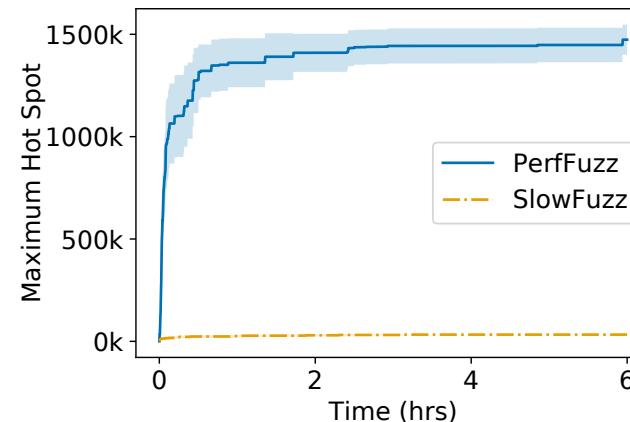
libpng



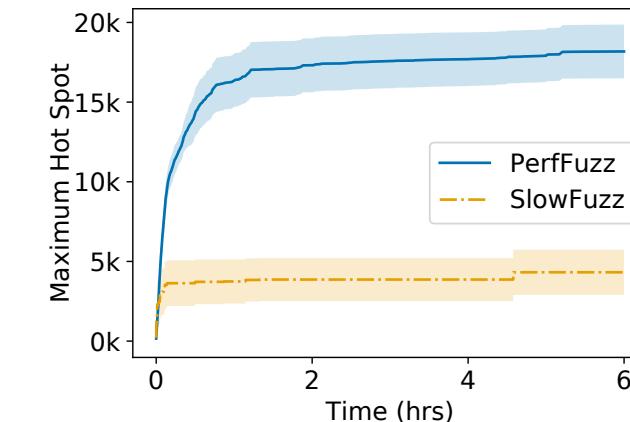
libxml2



libjpeg-turbo



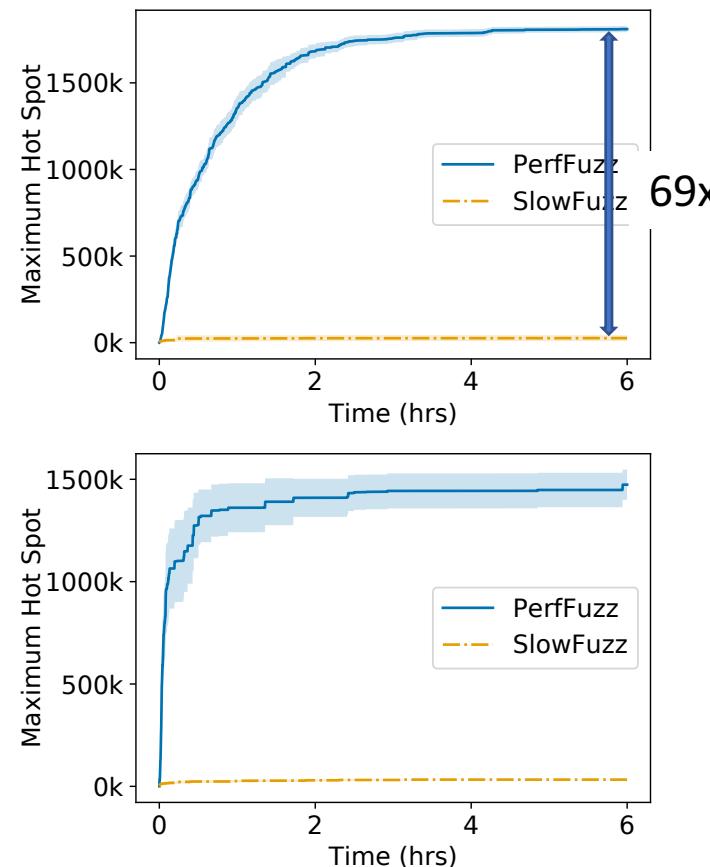
zlib



# Macro-Benchmarks: Maximum Hot Spot

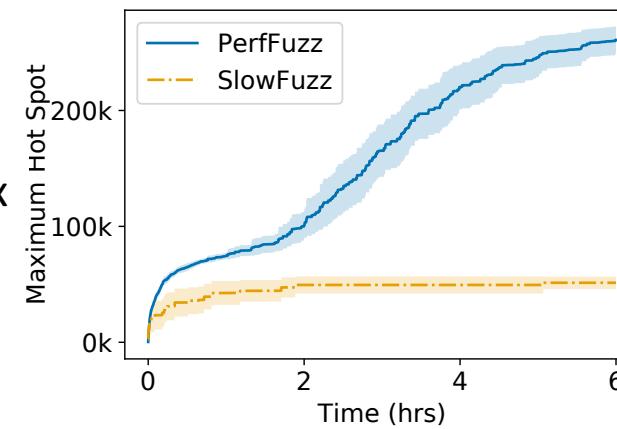
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libpng

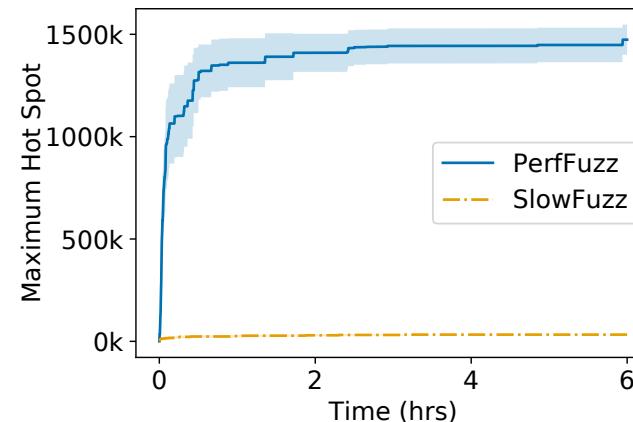


69x

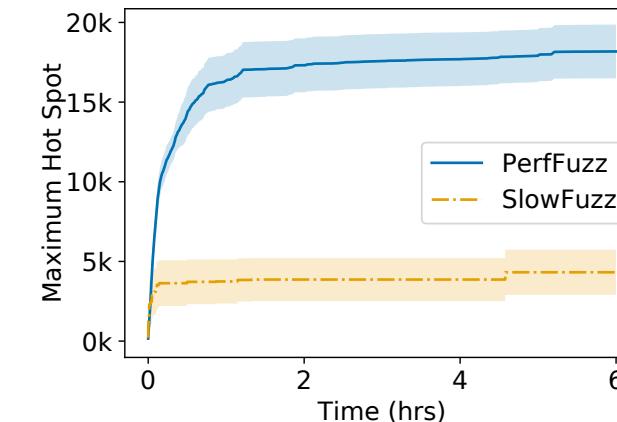
libxml2



libjpeg-turbo

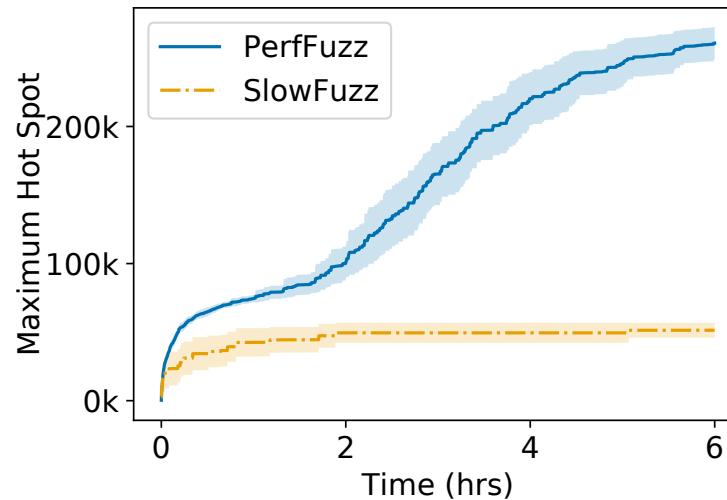


zlib



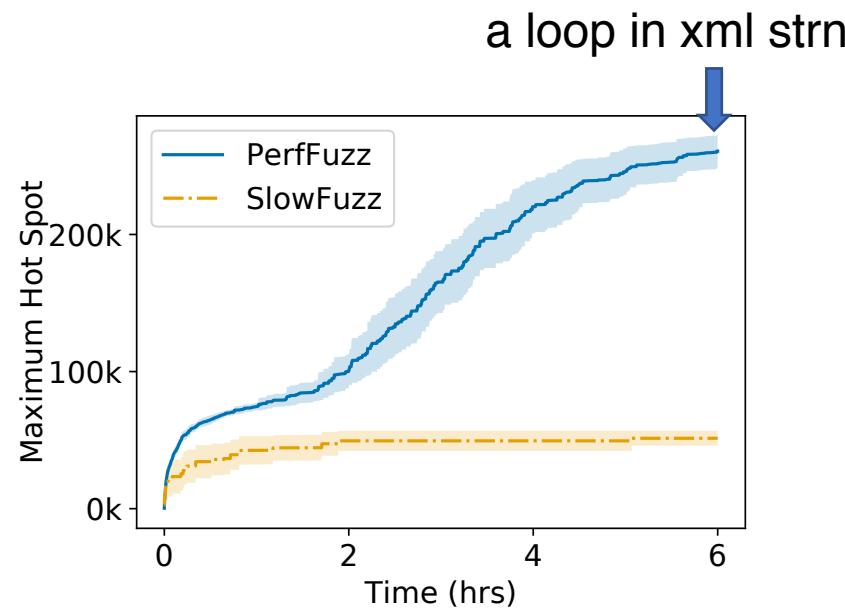
# What Does It Mean?

libxml2 case study:



# What Does It Mean?

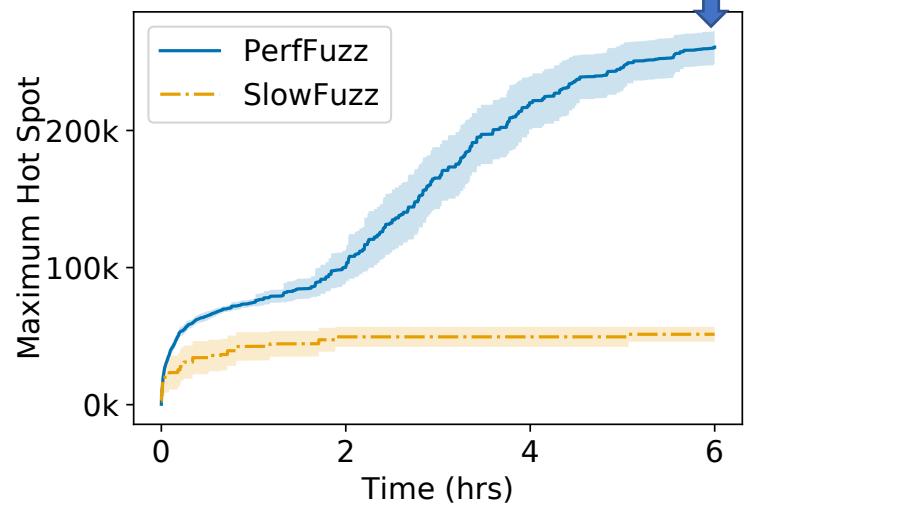
libxml2 case study:



# What Does It Mean?

## libxml2 case study:

a loop in xml strcpy



output of read XML  
on that input:

```
parser error : Double hyphen within comment: <!--3
<a>>>0>>>#>G<!--3---6-----4-----
^

parser error : Double hyphen within comment: <!--3---6
<a>>>0>>>#>G<!--3---6-----4-----
^

parser error : Double hyphen within comment: <!--3---6--
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^

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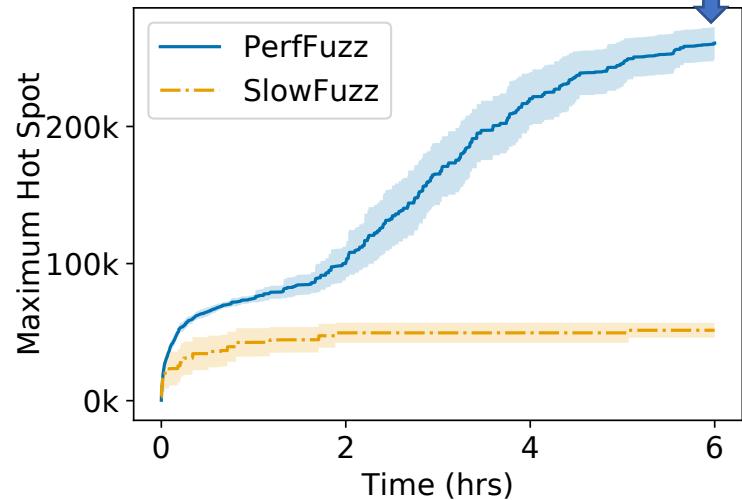
parser error : Double hyphen within comment: <!--3---6-----
<a>>>0>>>#>G<!--3---6-----4-----
^

parser error : Double hyphen within comment: <!--3---6-----
<a>>>0>>>#>G<!--3---6-----4-----
^
```

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## libxml2 case study:

a loop in xml strcpy



output of read XML  
on that input:

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^

parser error : Double hyphen within comment:  
<a>>>0>>>#>G<!--3---6-----  
^

quadratic complexity

# Experimental Setup: Micro-Benchmarks

- Choose benchmarks with known worst-case complexity:

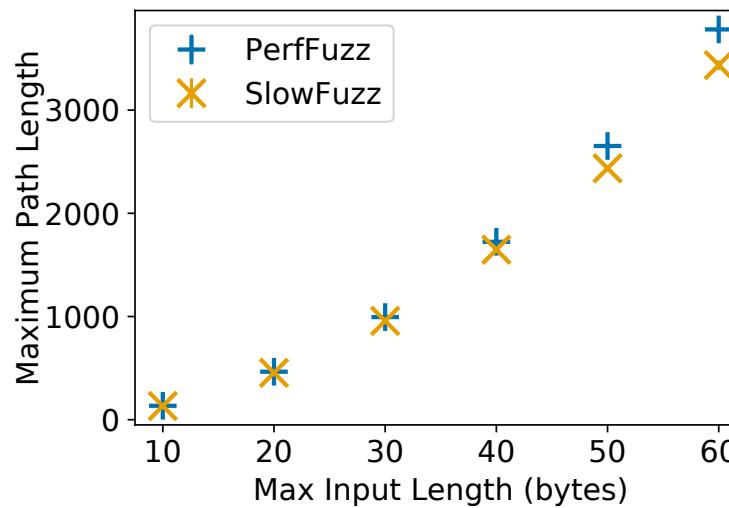
Micro-benchmark	Complexity	Seed	Timeout
<b>Insertion sort</b> (SlowFuzz example)	$n^2$ $n = \text{input len}$	List of 0's	10 min
<b>PCRE regex match</b> (URL regex)	$n^2$ $n = \text{input len}$	Null string	60 min
<b>wf-0.41</b> (Fedora Linux)	$m^2$ $m = \text{num words}$	“the quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog”	60 min

- Repeat 20 runs for each input length: 10, 20, ..., 60 bytes.

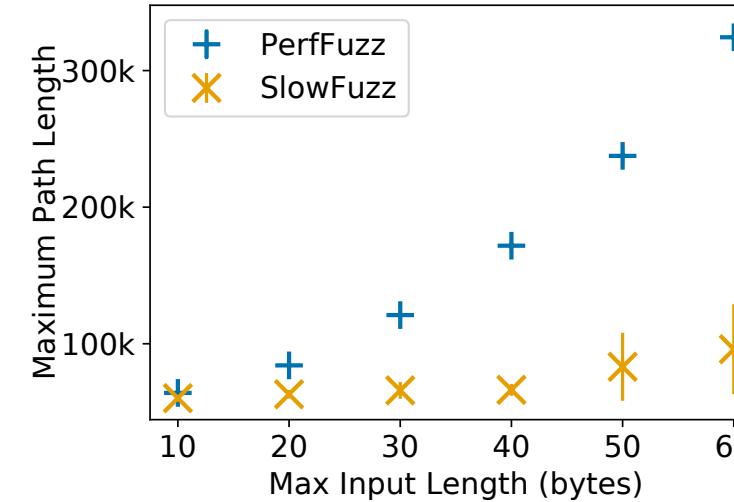
# Micro-Benchmarks: Algorithmic Complexity

- Maximum path length for varying input sizes

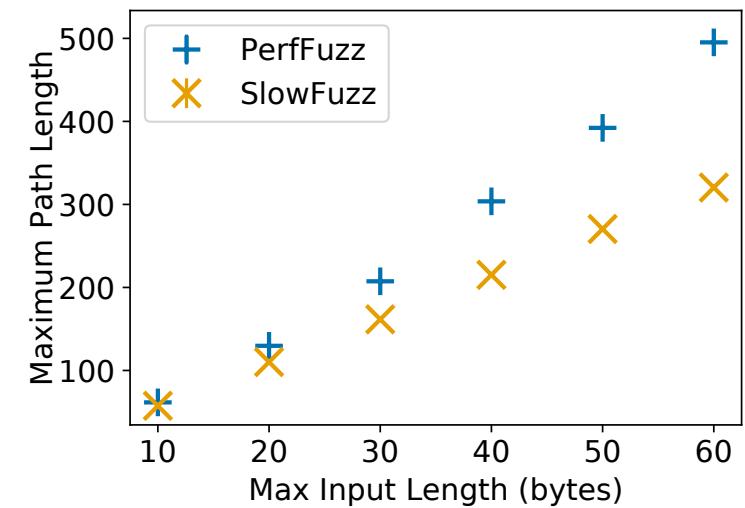
Insertion Sort



PCRE URL regex



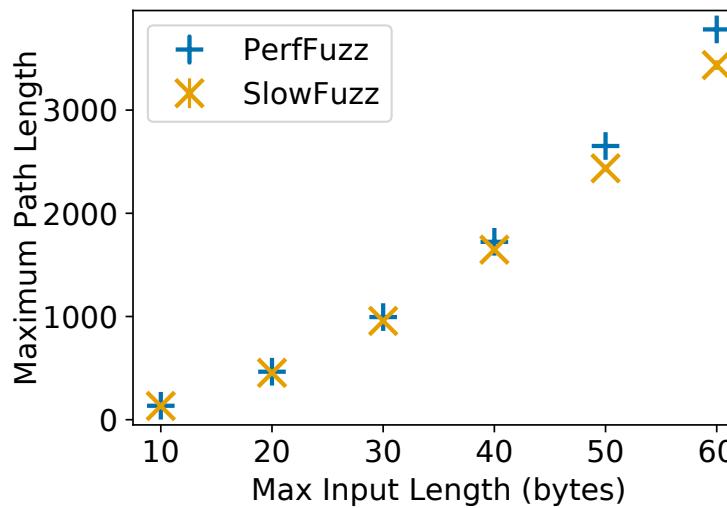
Word Frequency



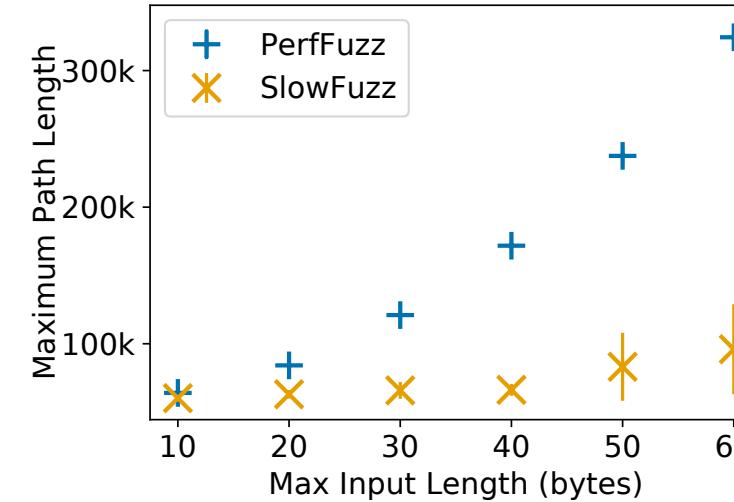
# Micro-Benchmarks: Algorithmic Complexity

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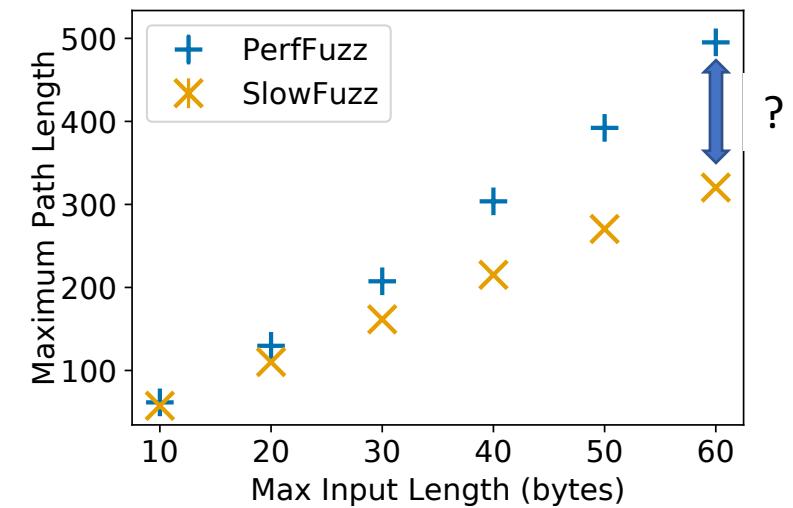
Insertion Sort



PCRE URL regex



Word Frequency



# Back to our Motivating Example

- SlowFuzz worst case:

t r t t s f o Öe r t s f o r t x x t s f o r t x x

- PerfFuzz worst case:

t <81>v ^?@t <80>!^?@t <80>!t t^Rn t t t t t t t t

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t r t t s f o Öe r t s f o r t x x t s f o r t x x

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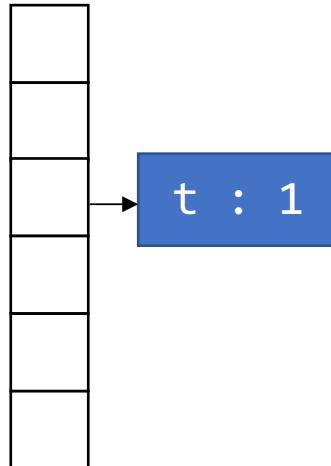
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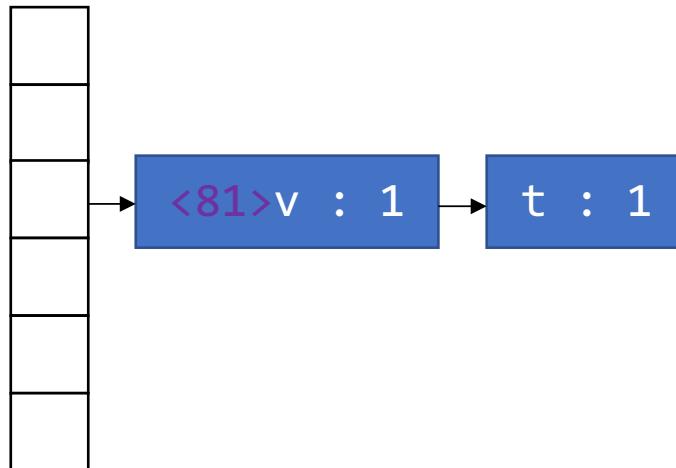
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t r t t s f o Öe r t s f o r t x x t s f o r t x x

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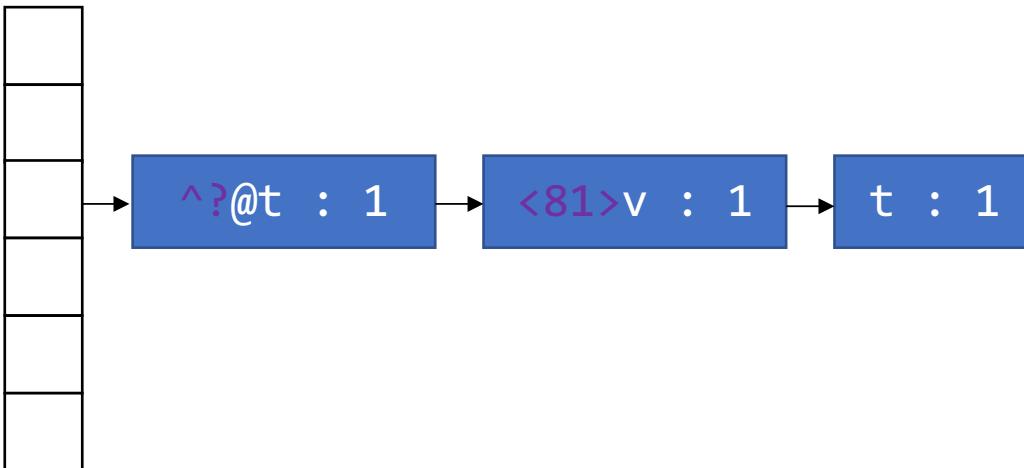
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t r t t s f o Öe r t s f o r t x x t s f o r t x x

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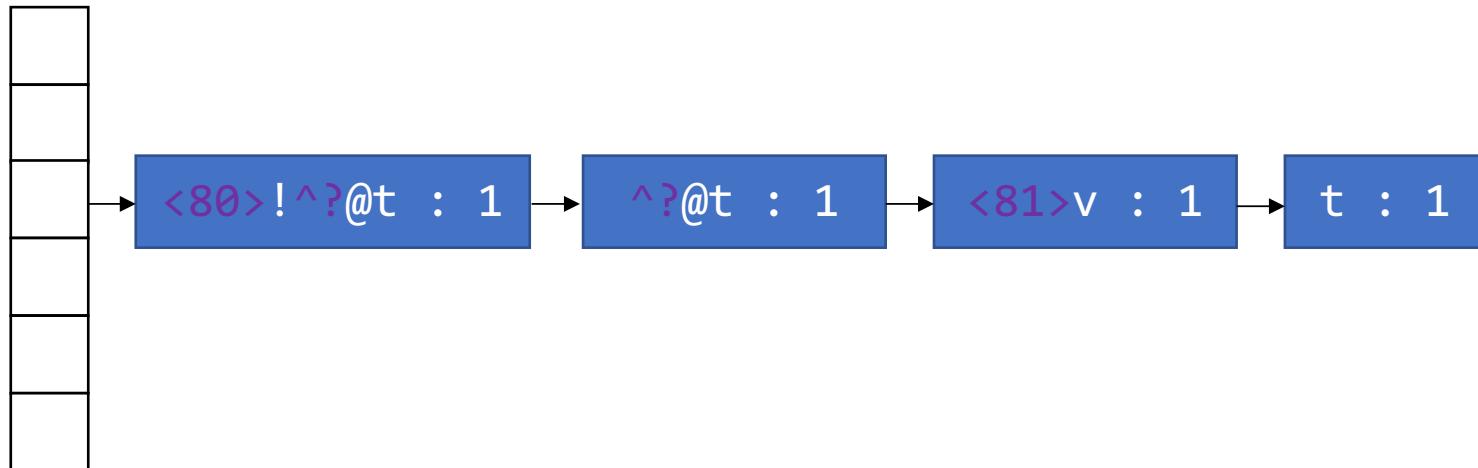
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t r t t s f o Öe r t s f o r t x x t s f o r t x x

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t <81>v ^?@t <80>!^?@t <80>!t t^Rn t t t t t t t t



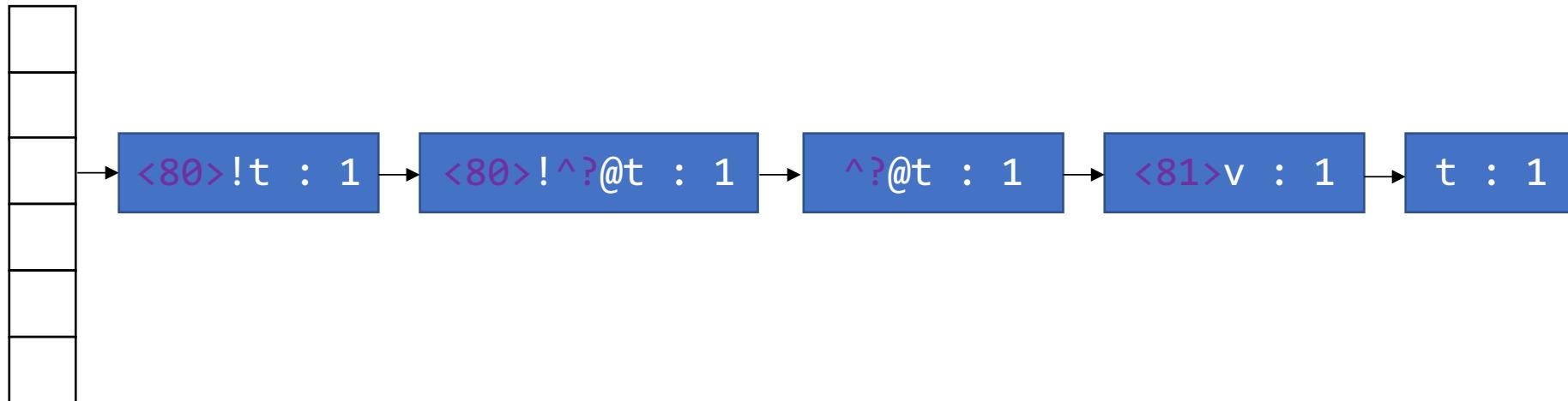
# Back to our Motivating Example

- SlowFuzz worst case:

t r t t s f o Öe r t s f o r t x x t s f o r t x x

- PerfFuzz worst case:

t <81>v ^?@t <80>!^?@t <80>!t t^Rn t t t t t t t t



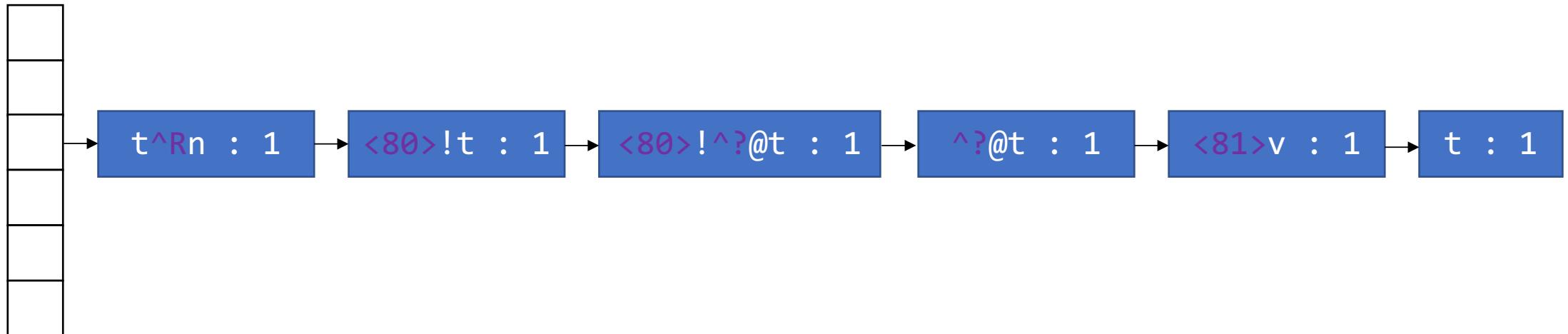
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t r t t s f o Öe r t s f o r t x x t s f o r t x x

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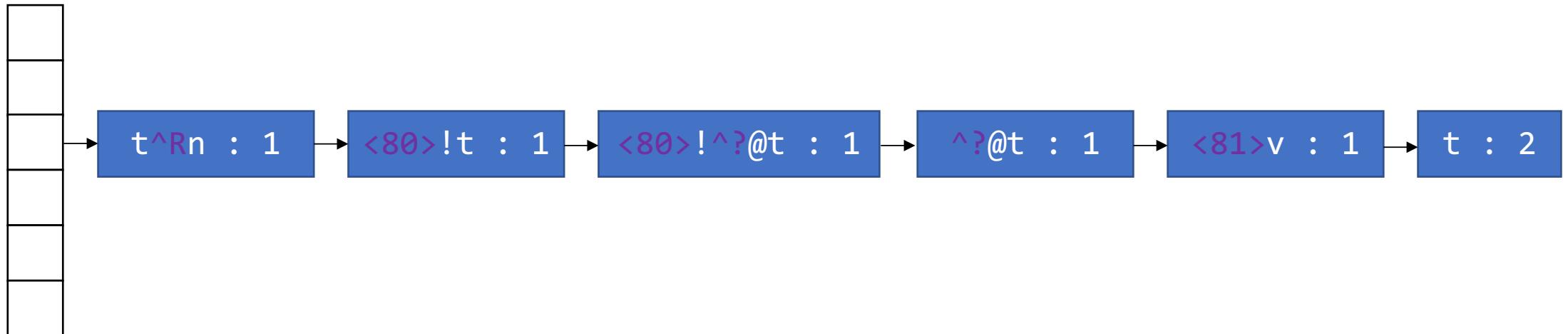
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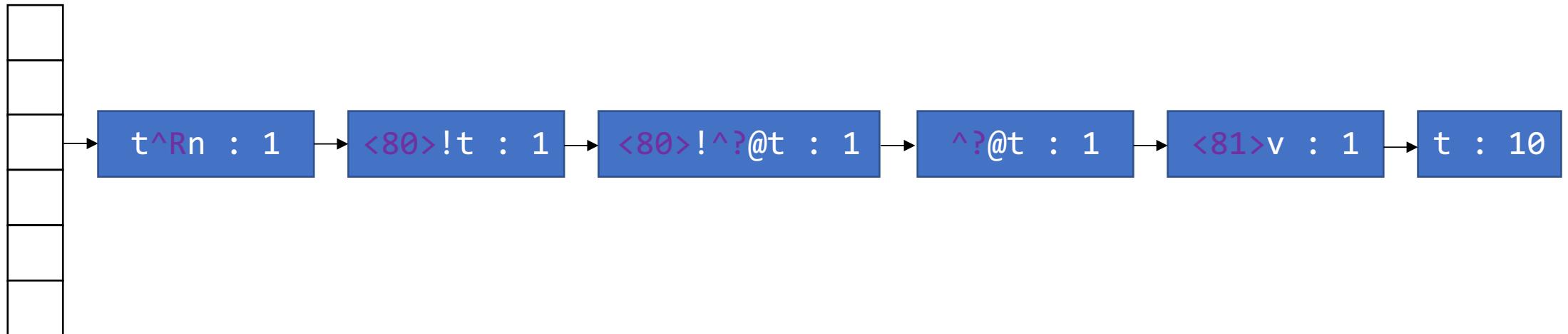
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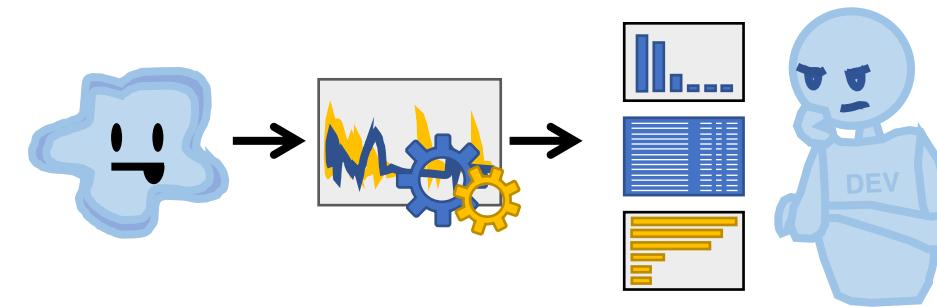
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t <81>v ^?@t <80>!^?@t <80>!t t^Rn t t t t t t t t



# Conclusion

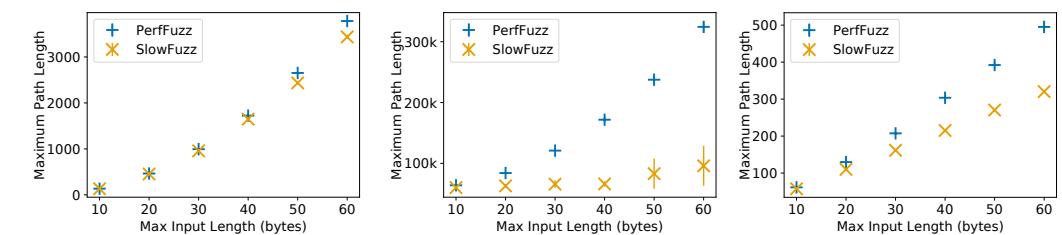
How to find **pathological inputs**?



Use **feedback-directed mutational fuzzing!**



**Multi-dimensional feedback** more effective.



Where's the code?

<https://github.com/carolemieux/perffuzz>