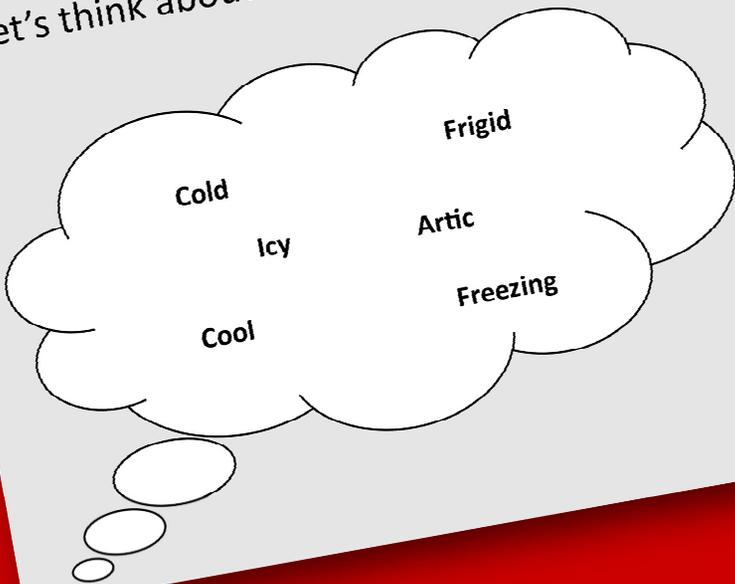


# Shades of Meaning

## A Lesson in Semantic Gradients

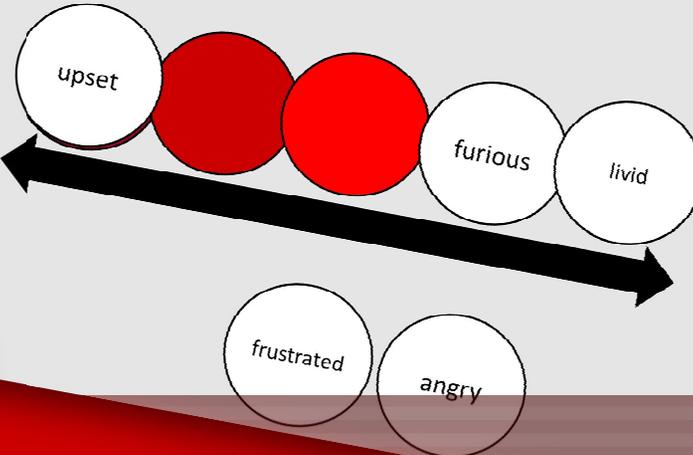
Let's think about different words for COLD!



A thought bubble containing the following words: Cold, Icy, Cool, Frigid, Artic, and Freezing.

Pre-generated Sorting Practice

### Different Shades



A diagram showing a semantic gradient for anger. It consists of a horizontal line with a double-headed arrow. Along the line are five circles. From left to right, the circles are: a white circle labeled 'upset', a red circle, another red circle, a white circle labeled 'furious', and a white circle labeled 'livid'. Below the line, there are two more white circles: 'frustrated' and 'angry'.

Created by: Bill Bolden M.A., CCC-SLP

## Directions:

The purpose of this unit is to help students develop and strengthen their vocabulary skills. This unit specifically focuses on semantic gradients, or recognizing shades of meaning between closely related synonyms and antonyms. The concept of semantic gradient is adapted from the work of Reading Rockets (“Semantic Gradients” n.d.). Please see the link provided below for more information.

This unit provides you with materials to introduce the concept of semantic gradients, to practice gradients using synonyms (a more complex task) and antonyms. You are provided with templates and visuals to help guide the lessons and group discussions. Understand that these activities may require significant supports from the educator, especially when completing with students with language impairment. The goal of this lesson is to increase semantic flexibility. We are encouraging students to think about word relationships and word intensity (not an easy task for many students). I think you will find that with the right motivators, these activities can be quite fun however!

1. First, start by explaining to the students that today we are going to be thinking about “words.” Use the visual on pg. 4, and ask the students the question “what is red?” Encourage a discussion where students compare the color to other colors or offer examples of red items (e.g. fire truck, apple, stop sign). Once you have generated a discussion, ask the students to think of something that is “red.” Then turn to the next visual (pg.5) and ask the students to tell you “which one is red?” The students will most likely acknowledge that all are red. Ask them to identify the one that matches the object they were thinking about. Begin a discussion regarding how simply using the word “red” may lead to confusion regarding the specific color we meant. Turn to pg. 6 to introduce the idea of shades of meaning (i.e. different words which express subtle differences in meaning.)
2. Pgs. 7-8 can be used to illustrate this point with synonyms for *COLD*. Pgs. 20-21 offer blank templates and semantic sorting templates. To save on waste, you can laminate all pages and cut out the white circles. You can use dry erase markers to write in the words. I have also included pre-created practice for synonyms on pages 11-19 . You can use the brainstorm pages with these practice pages or simply use them as practice/progress monitoring.
3. On page 22, introduce the idea of shades of meaning between antonyms (e.g. hot and cold). Have the students examine

how the blue slowly changes into purple before becoming red. Similarly, small changes in words can eventually lead to completely opposite words. Again use the brainstorming template (pg. 25) to generate related vocabulary. Please note the hint at the bottom of the page. You may decide not to use all of the vocabulary in the semantic gradient chart. Remember that the focus is not on absolute perfect gradation. The focus is for the student to reflect and explain why they sorted the words as they did. Again, you will offer support as needed. A teaching example is provided on pages 23-24.

In order to complete these activities, it helps to prepare potential synonyms and antonyms (i.e. verbs, adverbs, adjectives). I have included a potential list for you. If you need more ideas, have the students look up words in a thesaurus with you!

<u>TOPIC/TARGET WORD</u>	<u>POTENTIAL GRADIENTS</u>	<u>TOPIC/TARGET WORD</u>	<u>POTENTIAL GRADIENTS</u>
temperature	Hot, cold, cool, icy, freezing, scorching,	speed	Fast, quick, rapid, swift, slow, sluggish
feelings	Mad, angry, livid, upset, furious, irked, happy, content, overjoyed, ecstatic	attractiveness	Pretty, cute, beautiful, gorgeous, ugly, hideous, unsightly
height	Tall, short, giant, towering, small, petite,	age	New, young, childlike, adolescent, teenager, old, elderly, infant, ancient,
size	Large, huge, enormous, average, big, small, little, tiny, minuscule,	amounts	Few, many, several, a lot, some, countless, numerous,
volume	Whisper, mumble, shout, yell, holler, scream, shriek, utter	Cleanliness	Spotty, dirty, filthy, clean, spotless, tidy, flawless, stained, tarnished, sparkling

Once the student has demonstrated an understanding of the activity, pick a shared context for instruction. This can be a book used in therapy or read in the classroom. You may also pick vocabulary that relates to a thematic unit from the curriculum (e.g. oceans, seasons, nature). Use the vocabulary from these activities (e.g. **towering** trees) to begin a semantic gradient activity discussing synonyms and antonyms related to “towering.”

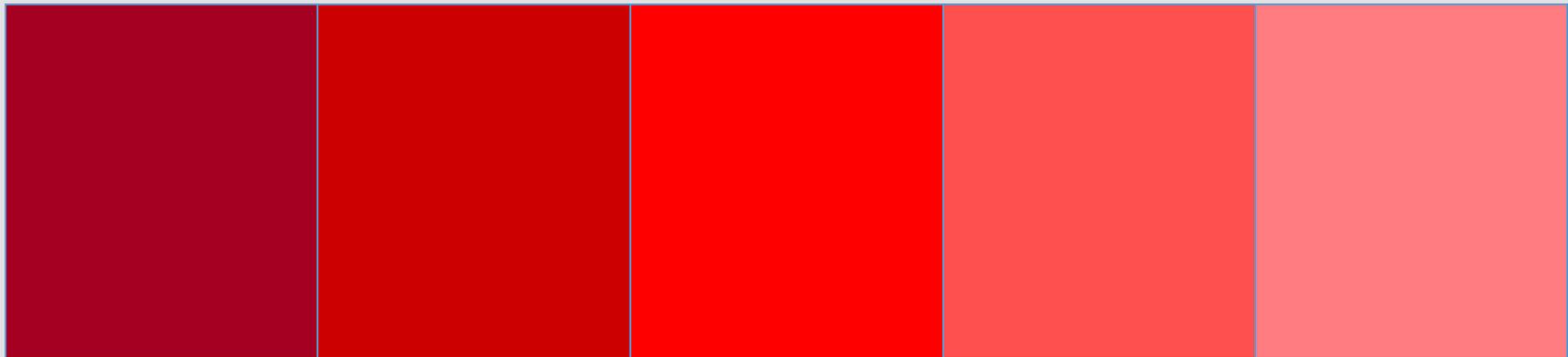
**For more information on Semantic Gradients: [http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/semantic\\_gradients](http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/semantic_gradients)**

# Let's put on our thinking caps!

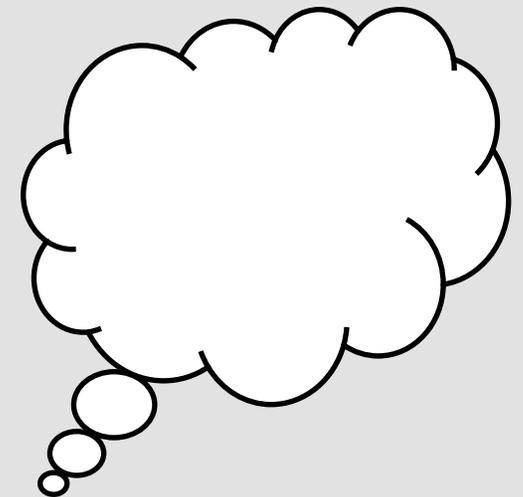
What is RED?

What does **RED** look like?

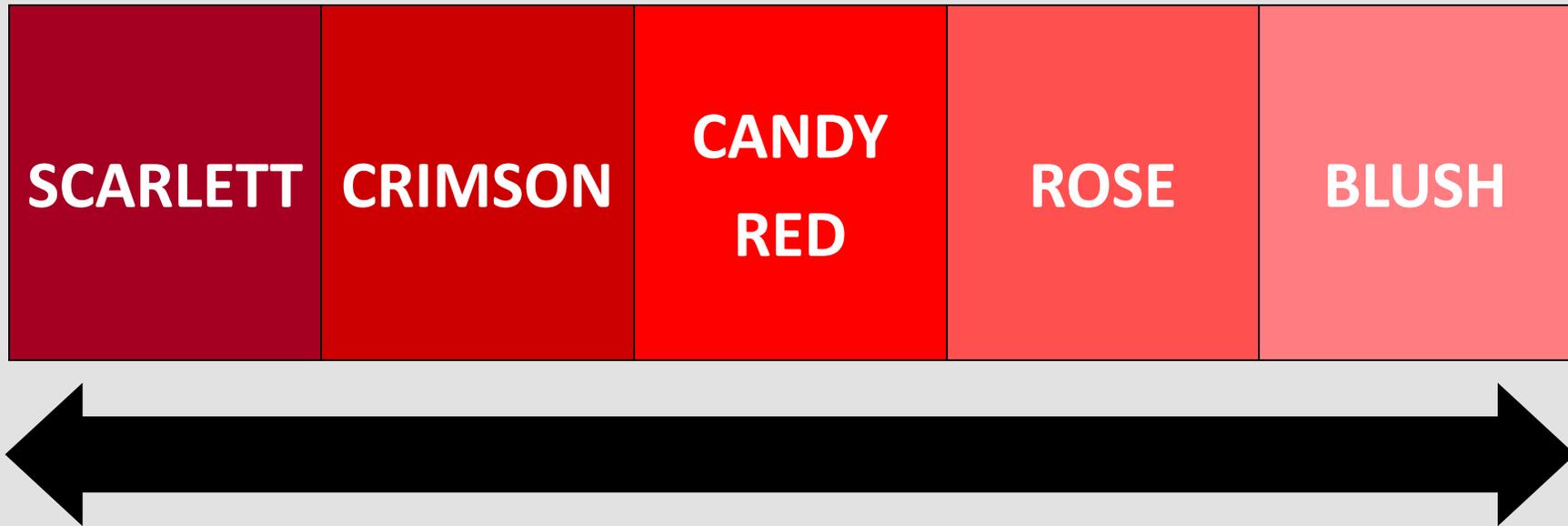
# Which one is RED?



How do we let people know  
which RED we are thinking  
about?



# Different Shades!



We can use different words to talk about the different  
SHADES OF “*RED*”!

Let's think about different words for **COLD**!

**Cold**

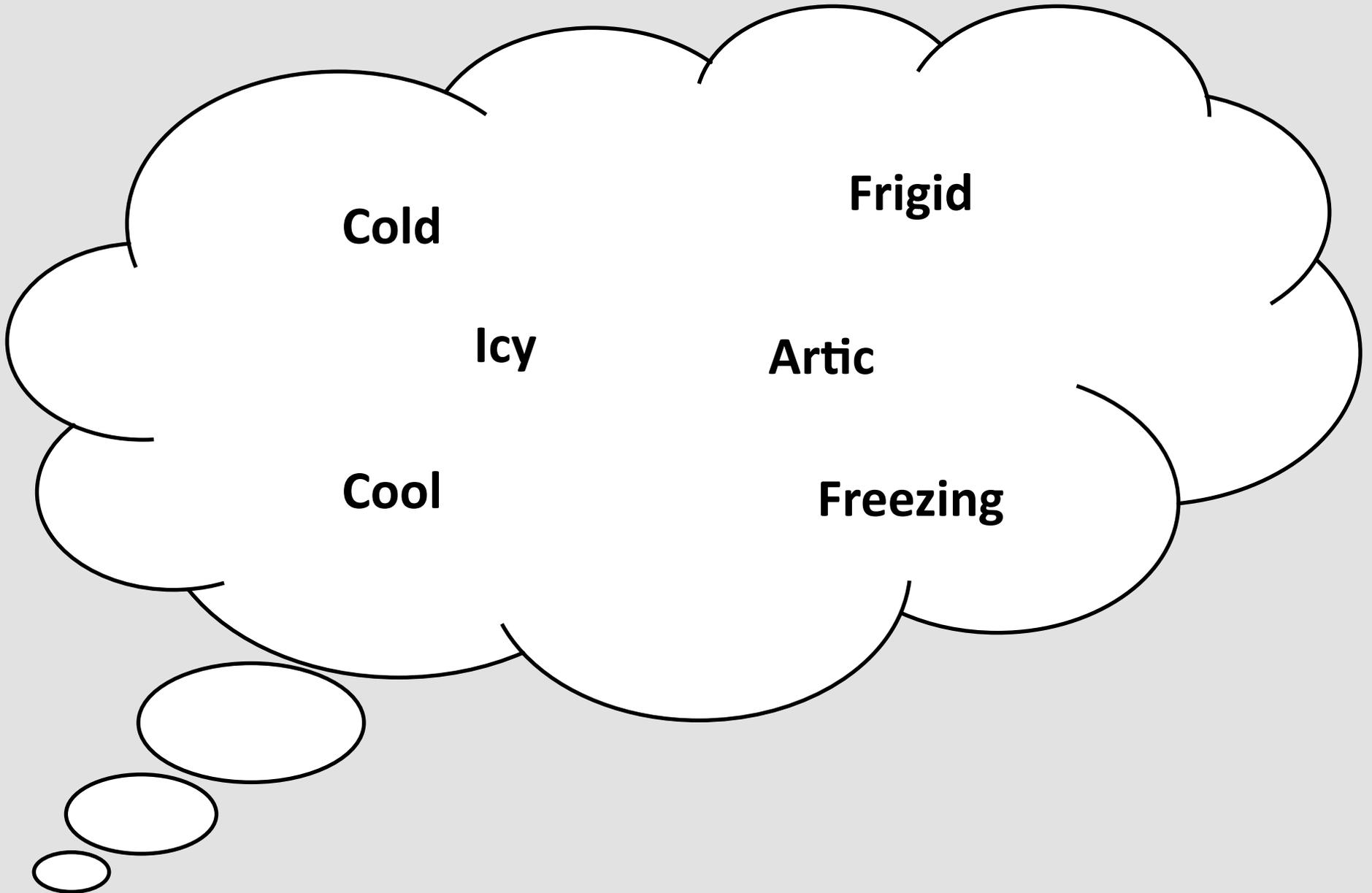
**Frigid**

**Icy**

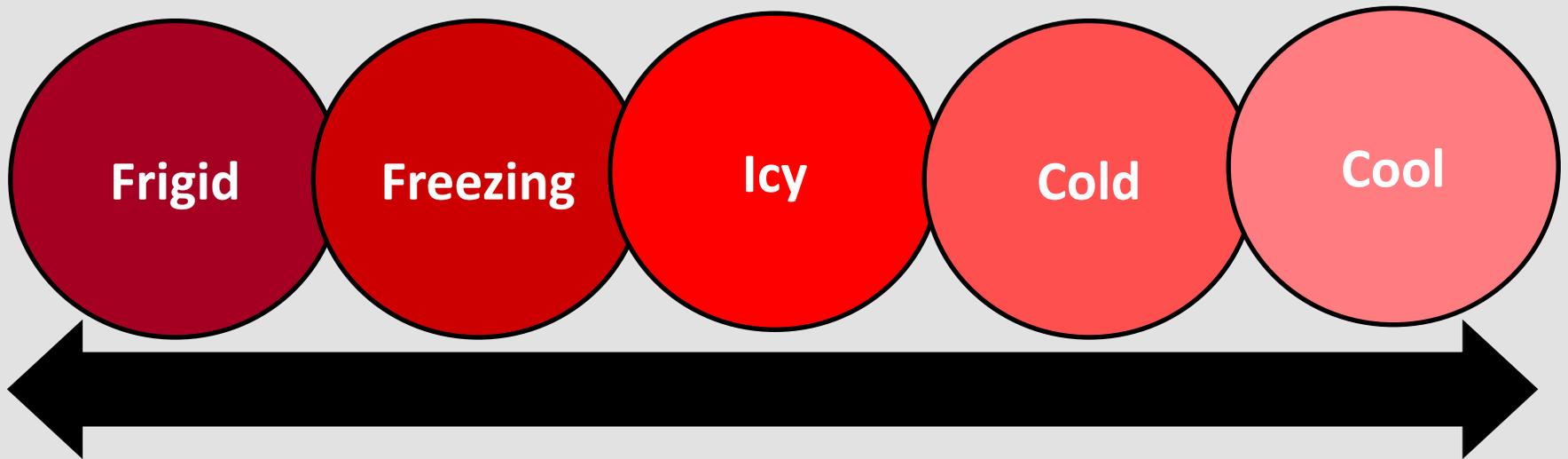
**Arctic**

**Cool**

**Freezing**

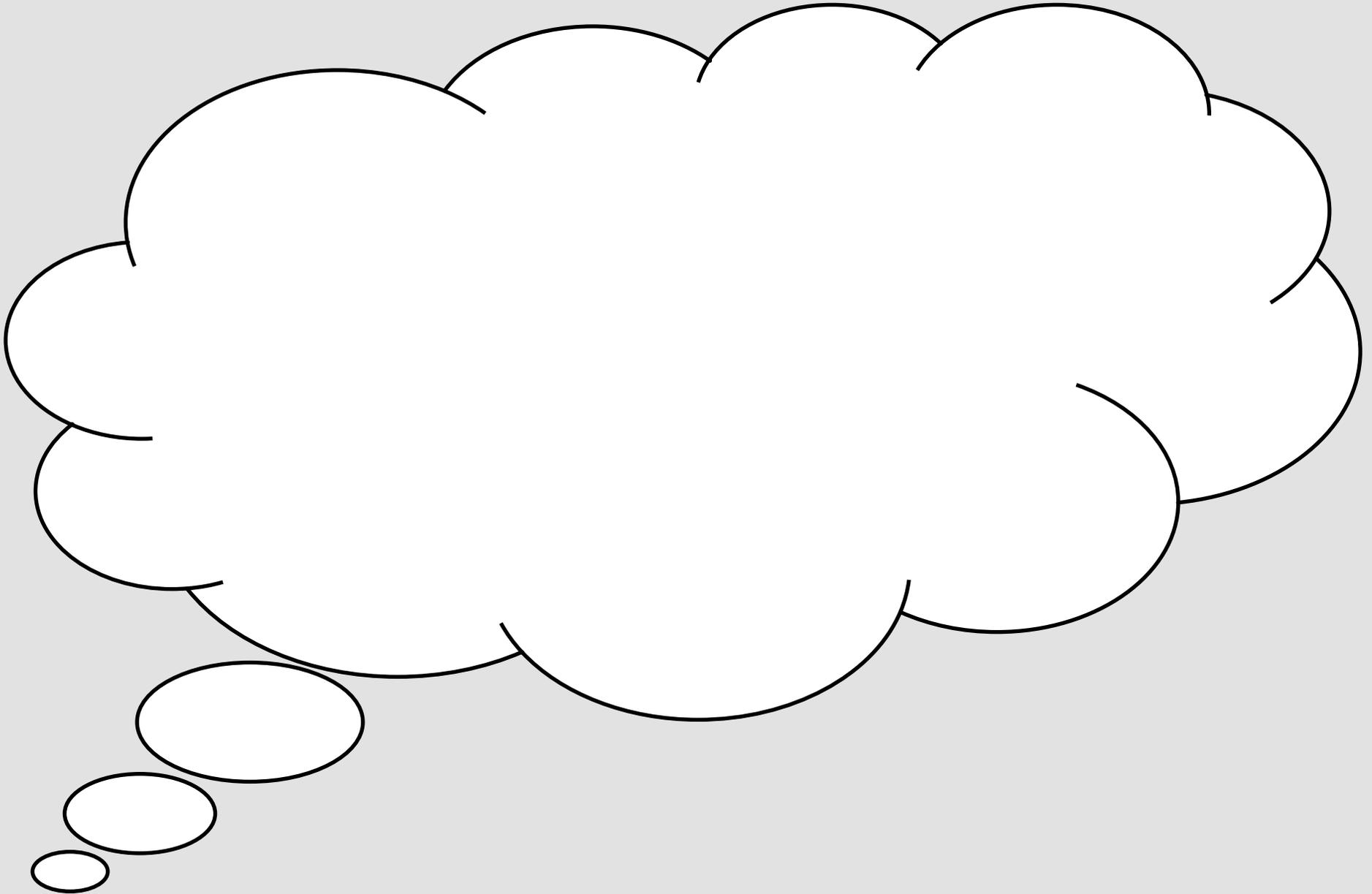


# Different Shades

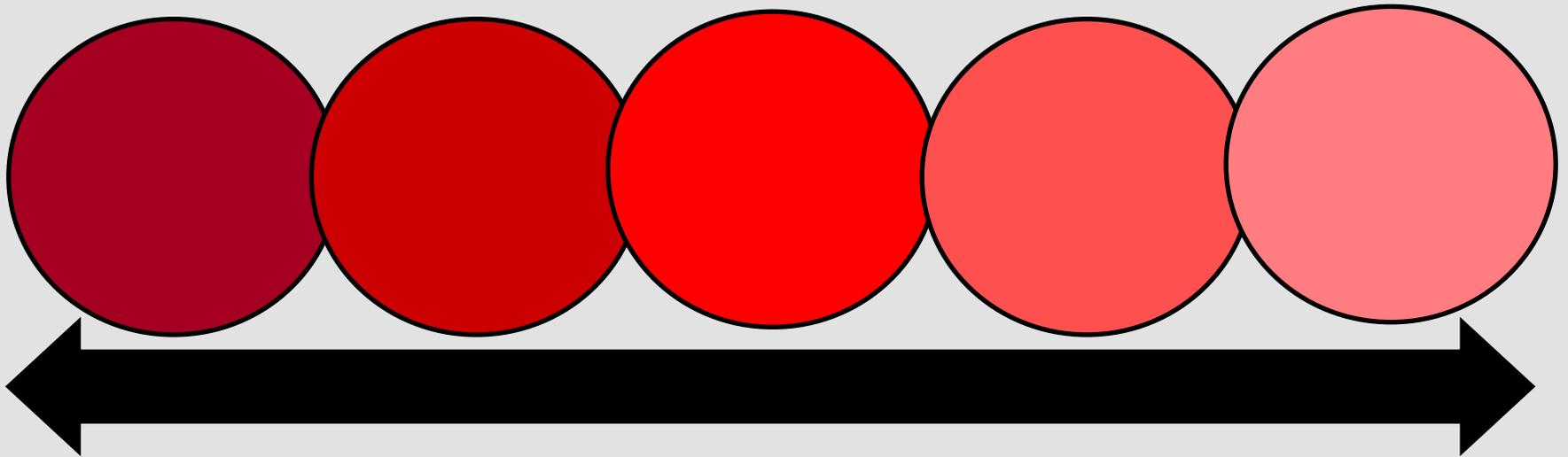


We can use different words to talk about the different  
SHADES of “*COLD!*”

Let's think about different words for **HOT**!

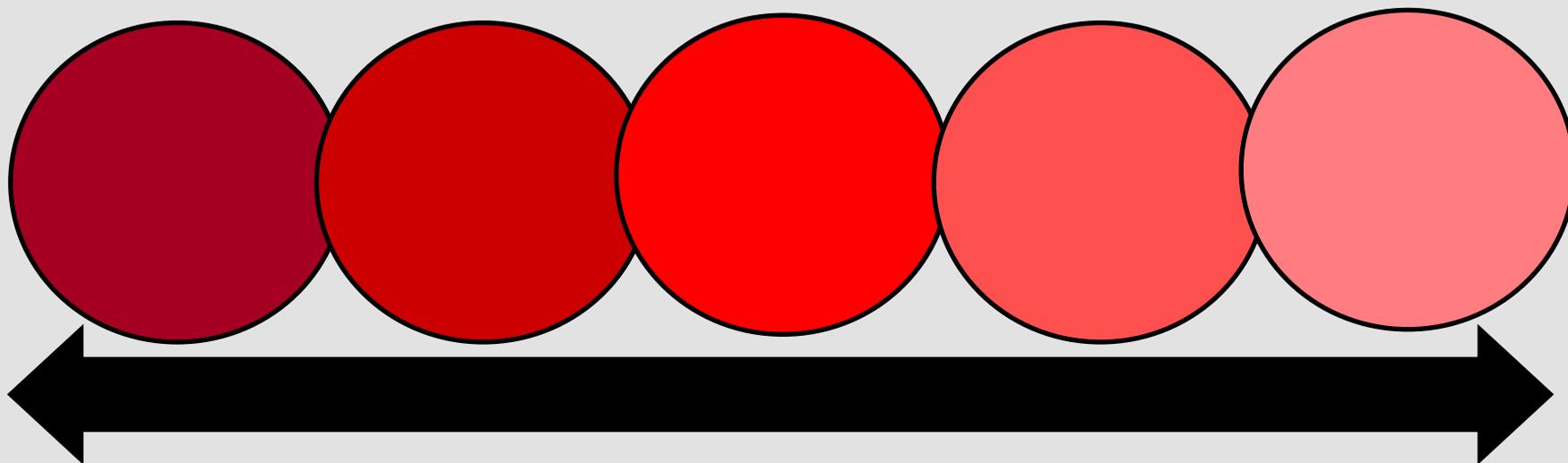


# Different Shades



We can use different words to talk about the different  
SHADES of "*HOT!*"

# Different Shades



average

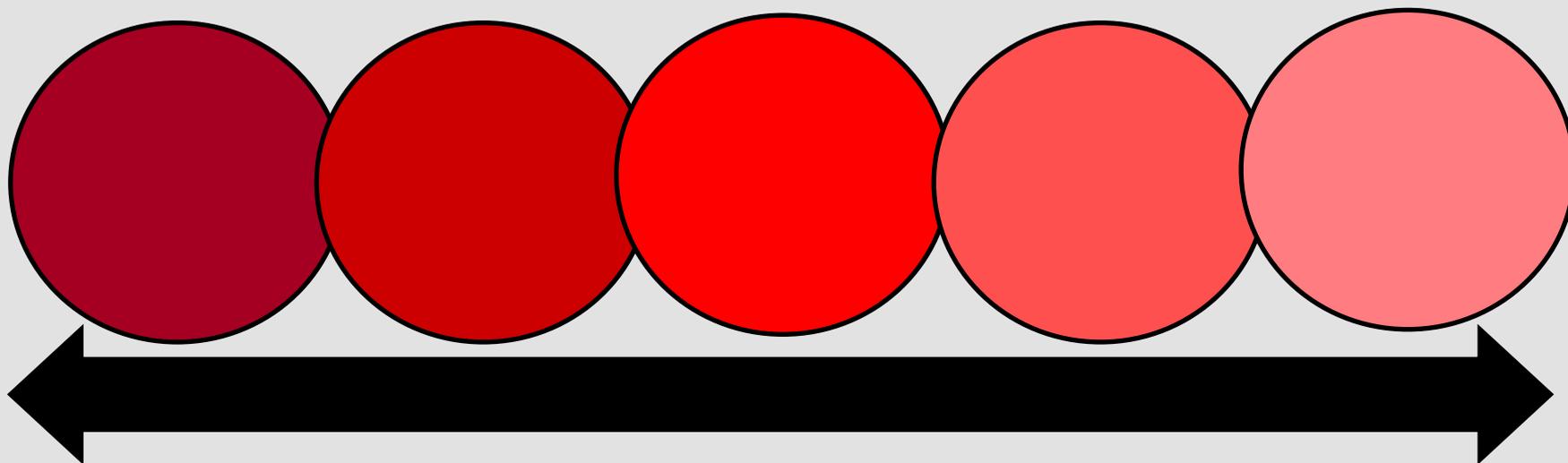
huge

big

large

enormous

# Different Shades



upset

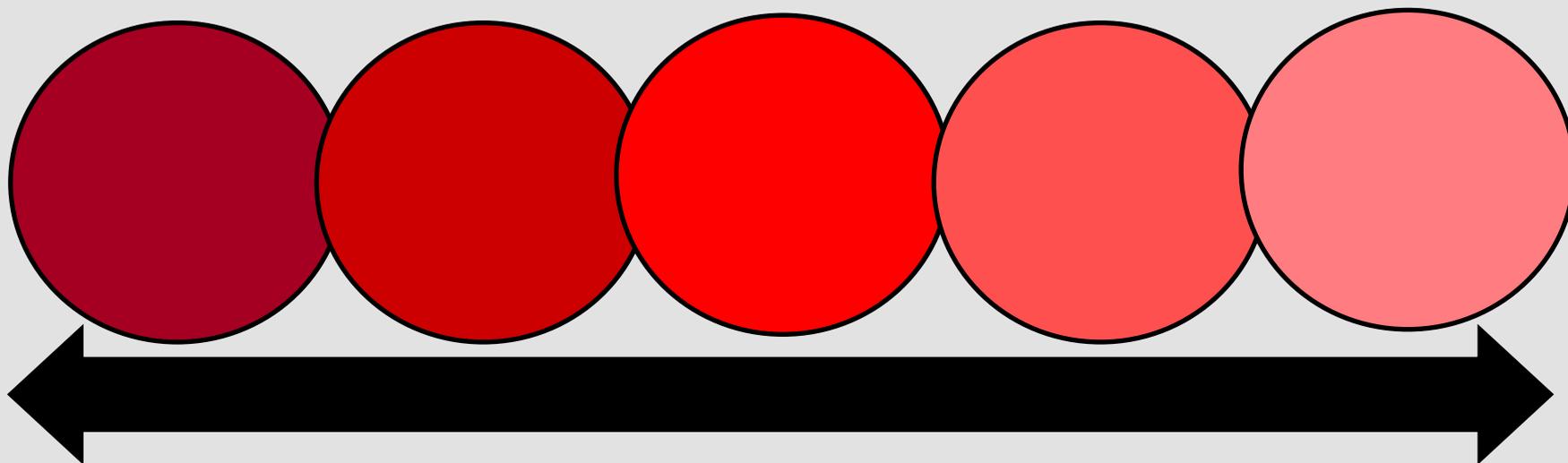
furious

frustrated

angry

livid

# Different Shades



content

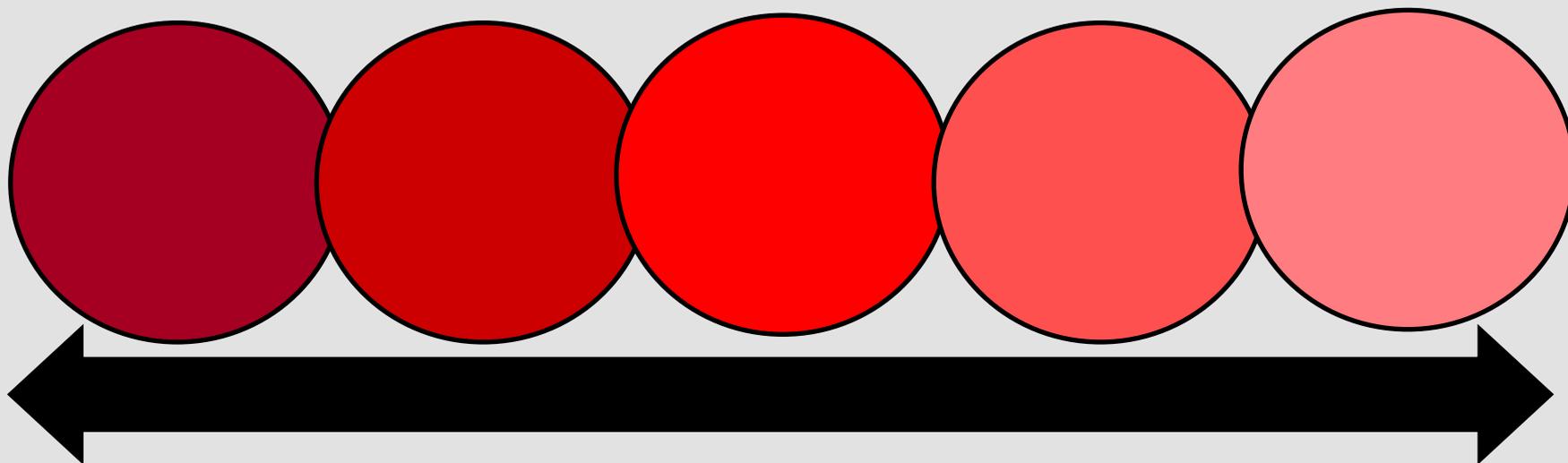
excited

happy

pleased

overjoyed

# Different Shades



walk

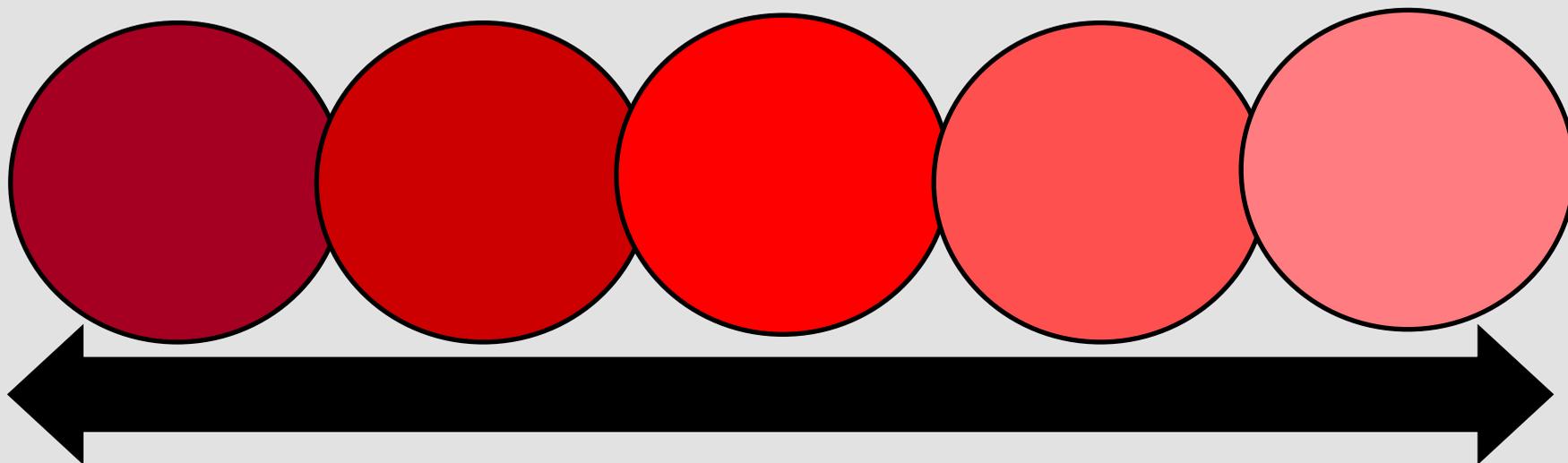
run

skip

jog

sprint

# Different Shades



shriek

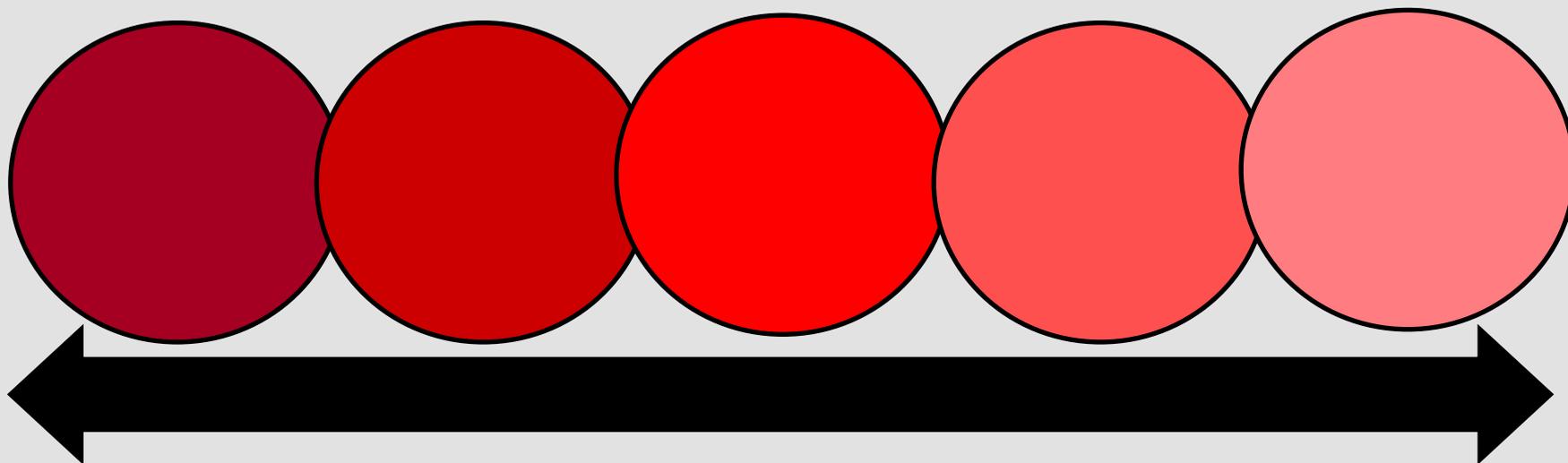
shout

yell

talk

scream

# Different Shades



frail

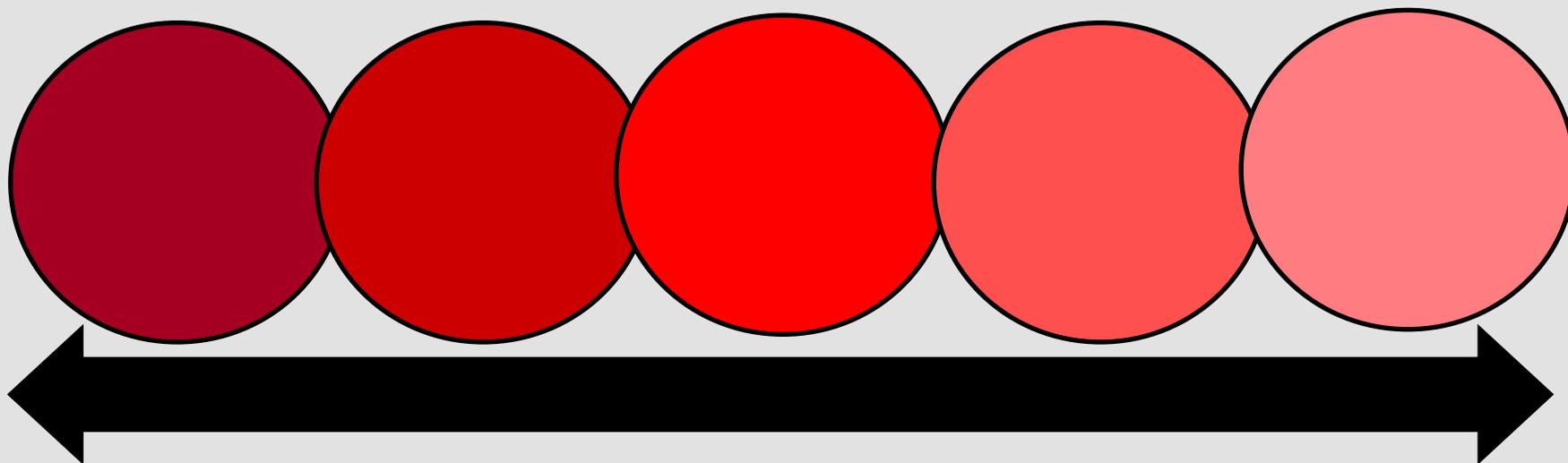
wimpy

scrawny

weak

feeble

# Different Shades



okay

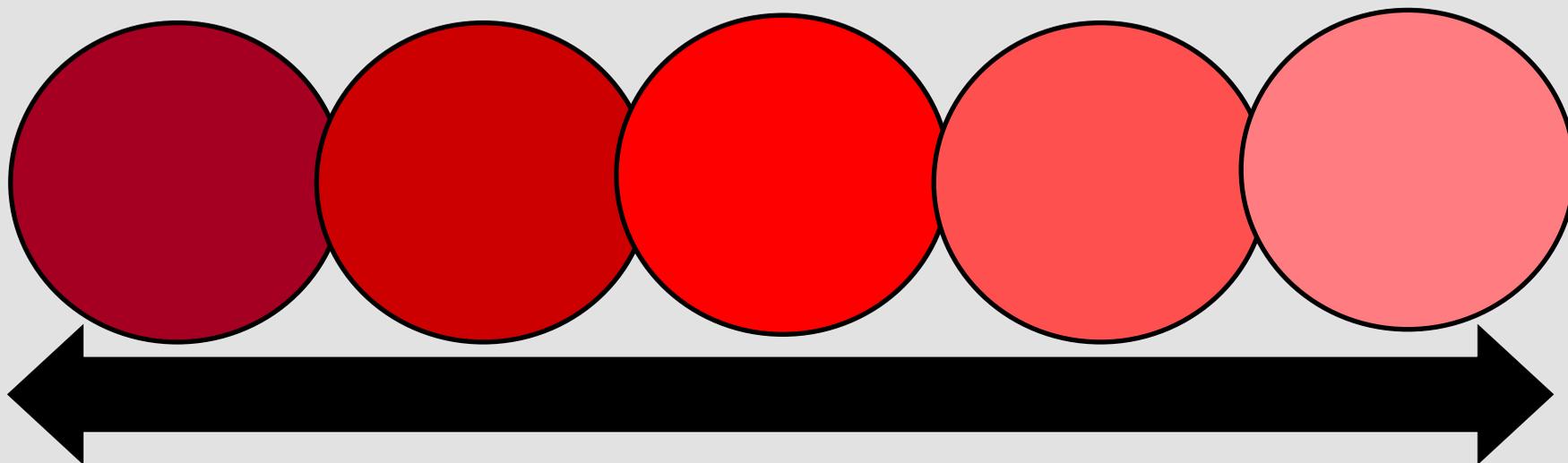
terrible

Horrendous

bad

awful

# Different Shades



tiny

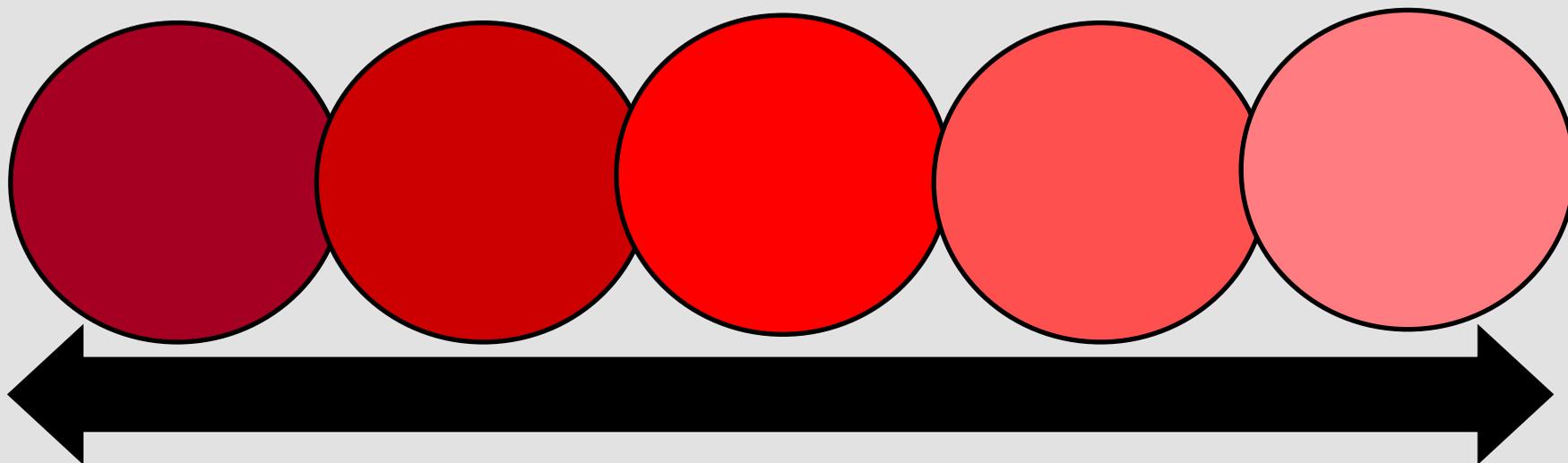
average

small

little

miniscule

# Different Shades



love

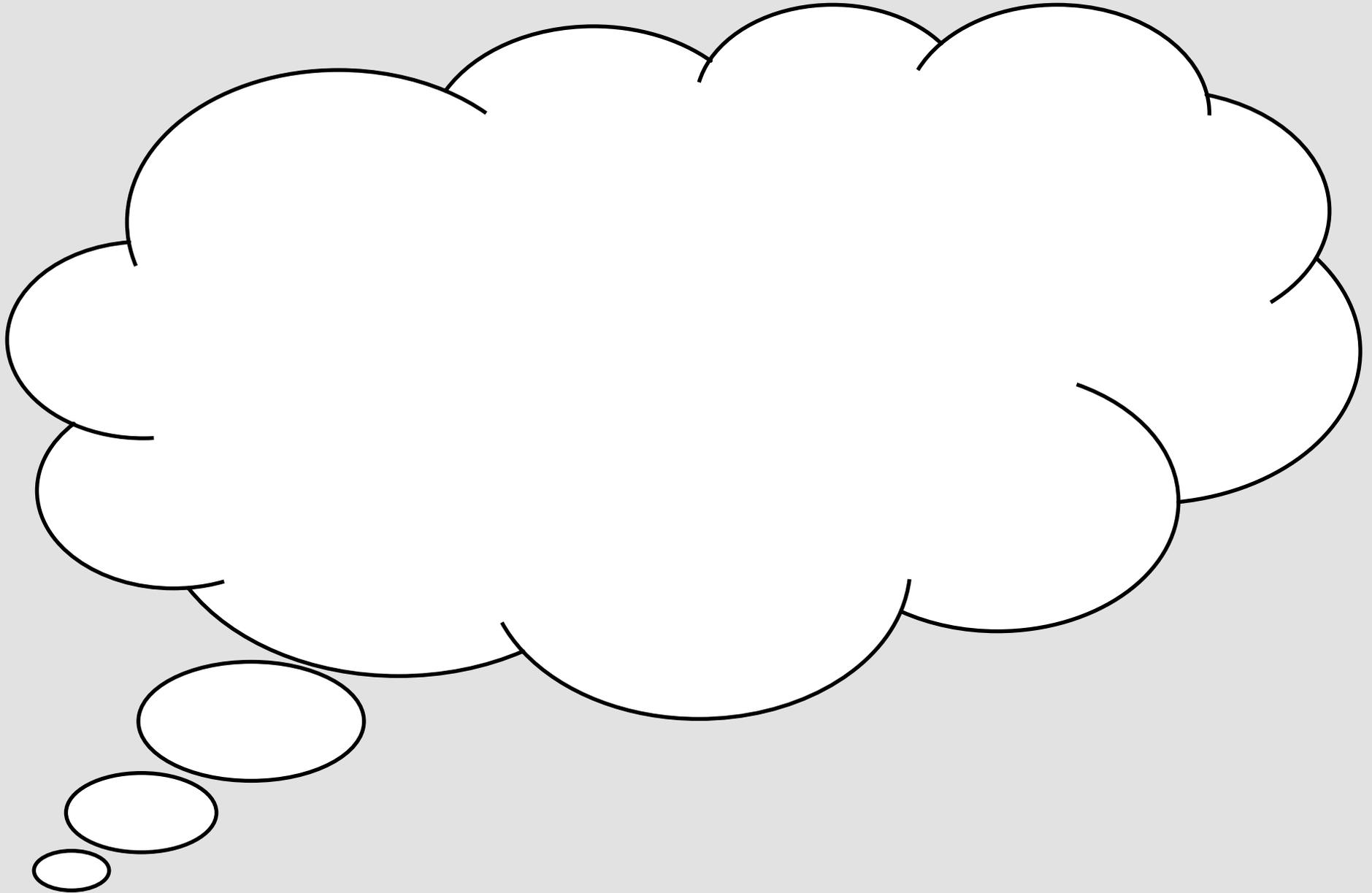
like

adore

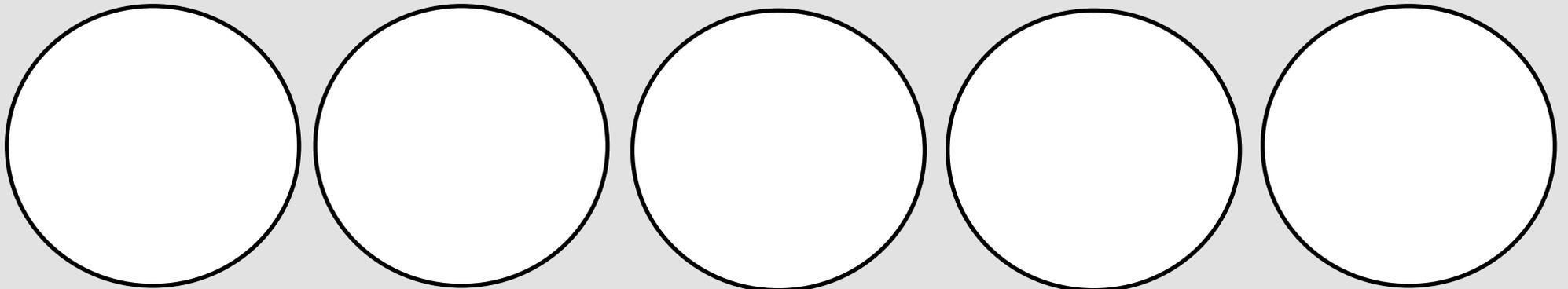
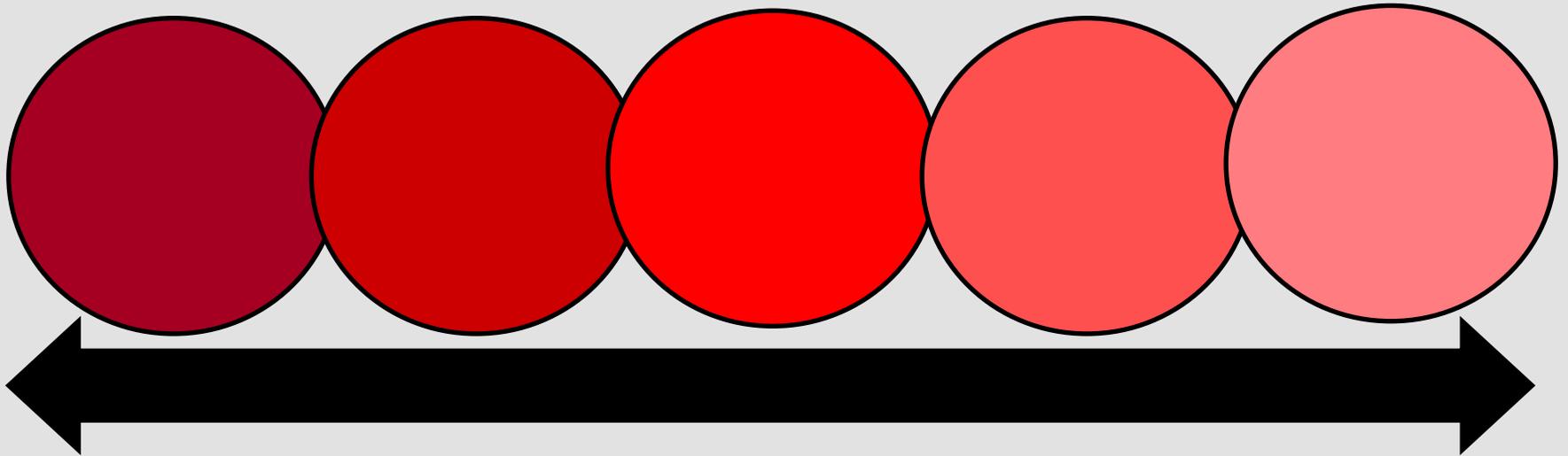
tolerate

admire

Let's think about different words for \_\_\_\_\_!



# Different Shades



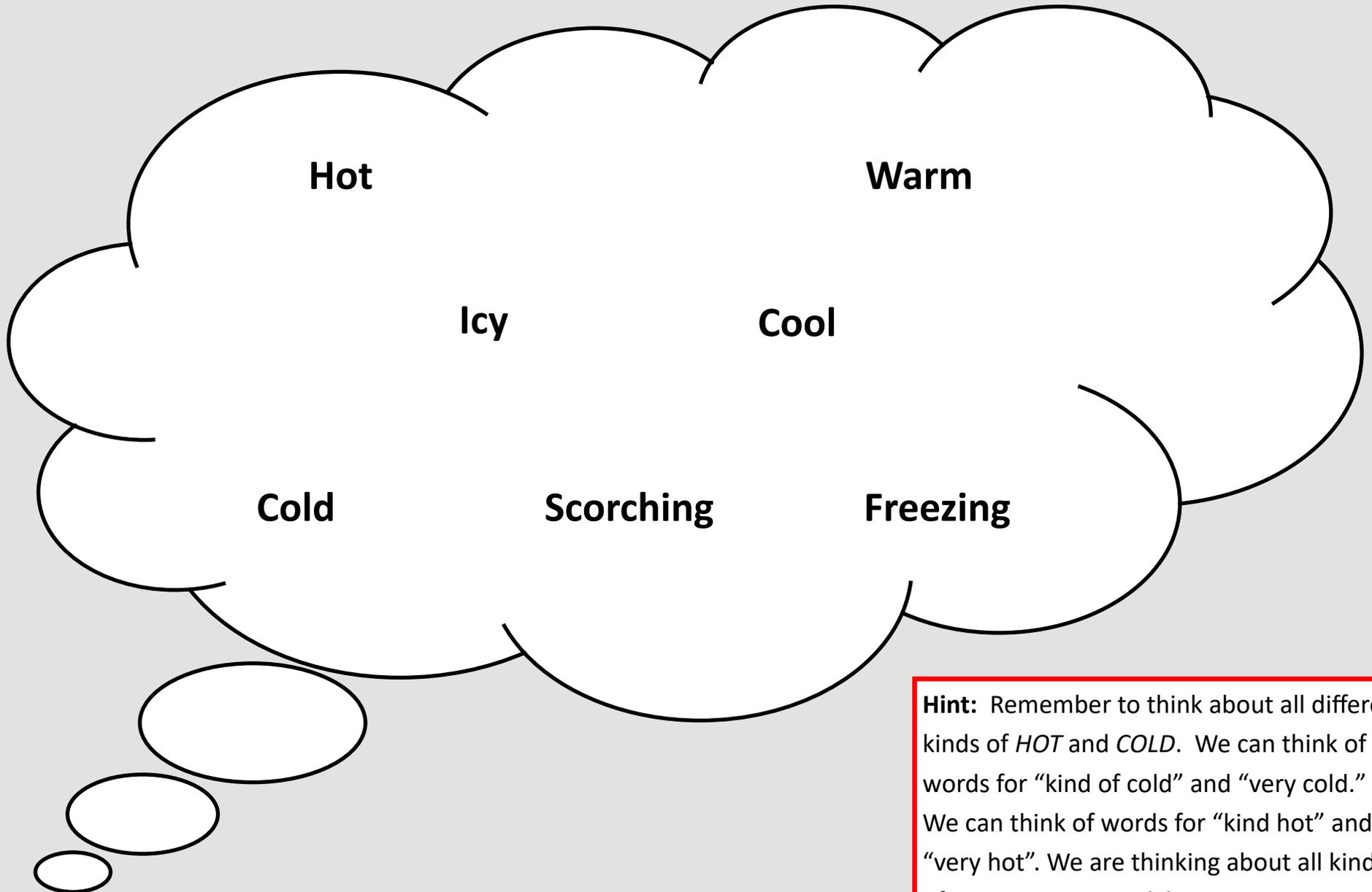
# Different Shades Between Opposites



We can also sort words by intensity using antonyms  
(opposites).

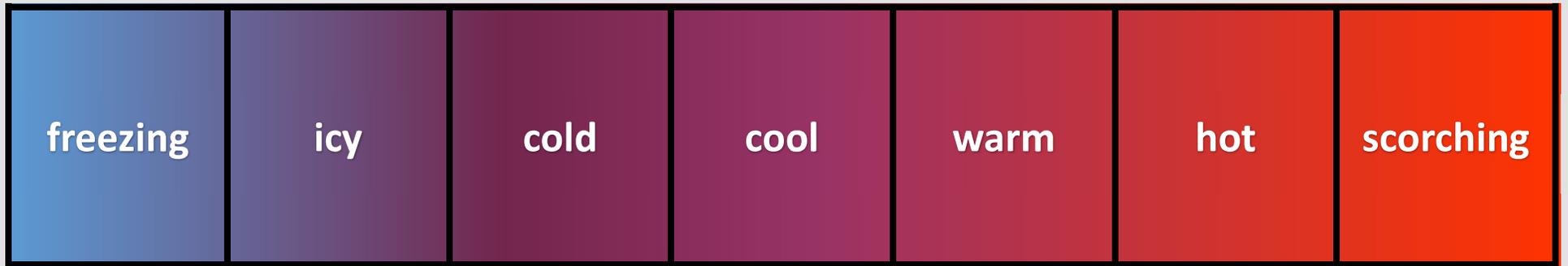
Think about how the colors slowly change until **BLUE** turns into  
**RED**. Antonym pairs can do the same thing!

# Let's think about different words for ***Hot*** and ***Cold!***



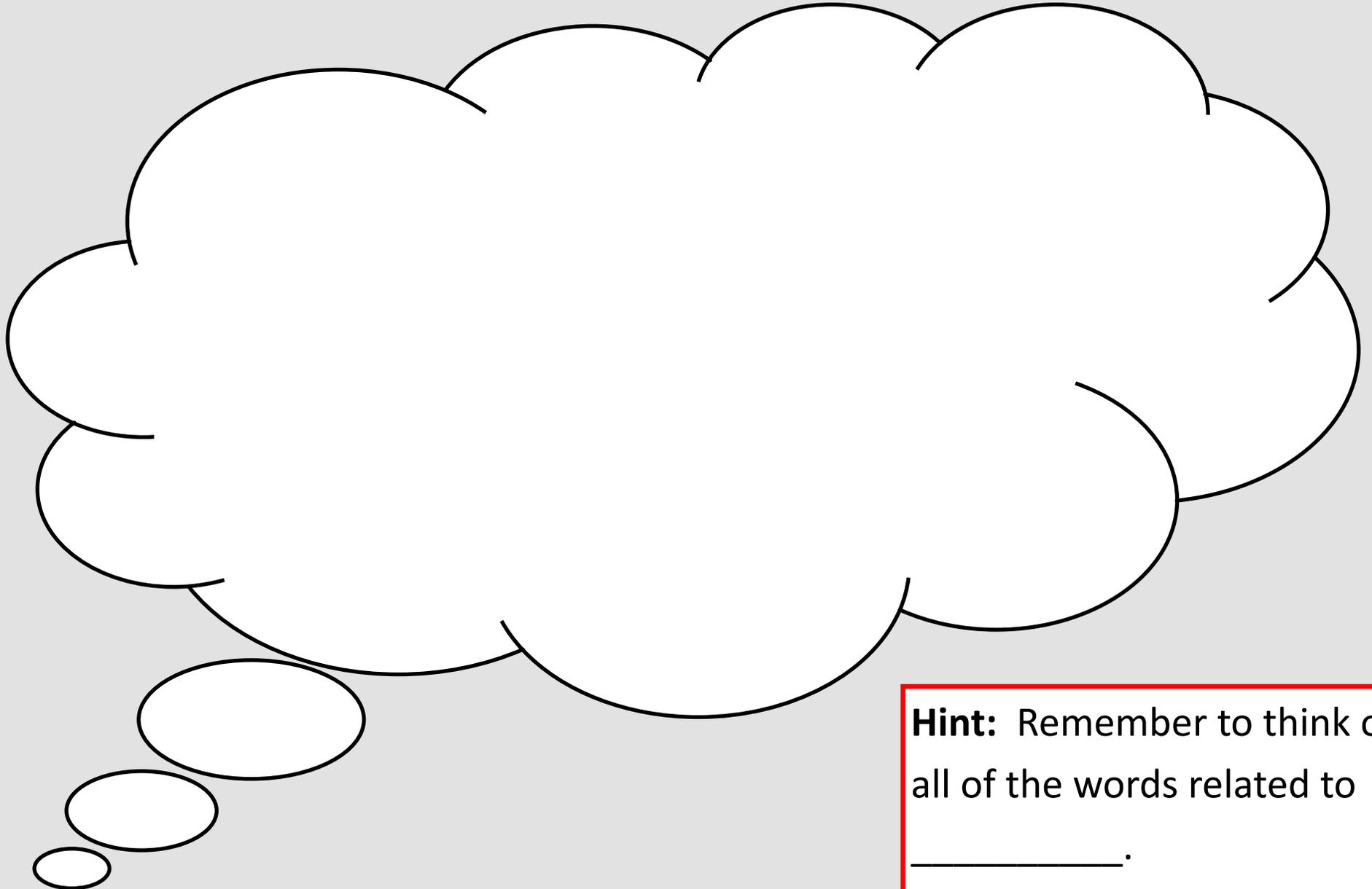
**Hint:** Remember to think about all different kinds of *HOT* and *COLD*. We can think of words for “kind of cold” and “very cold.” We can think of words for “kind hot” and “very hot”. We are thinking about all kinds of temperature words!

# Different Shades Between Opposites



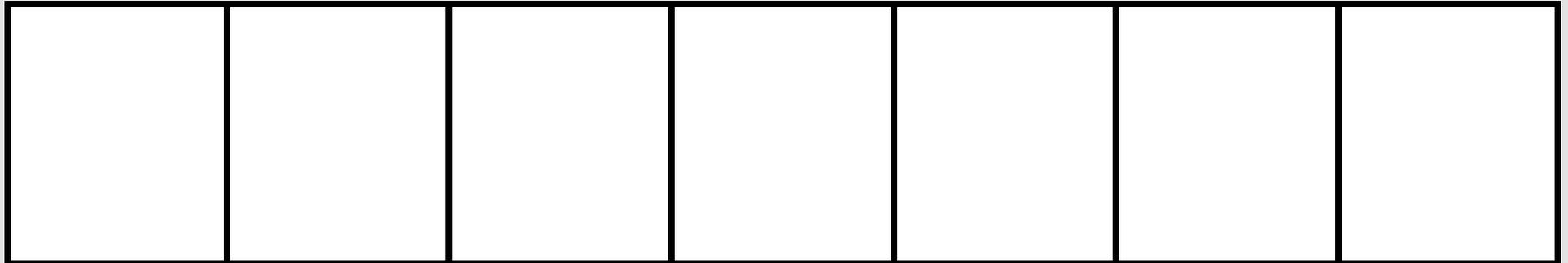
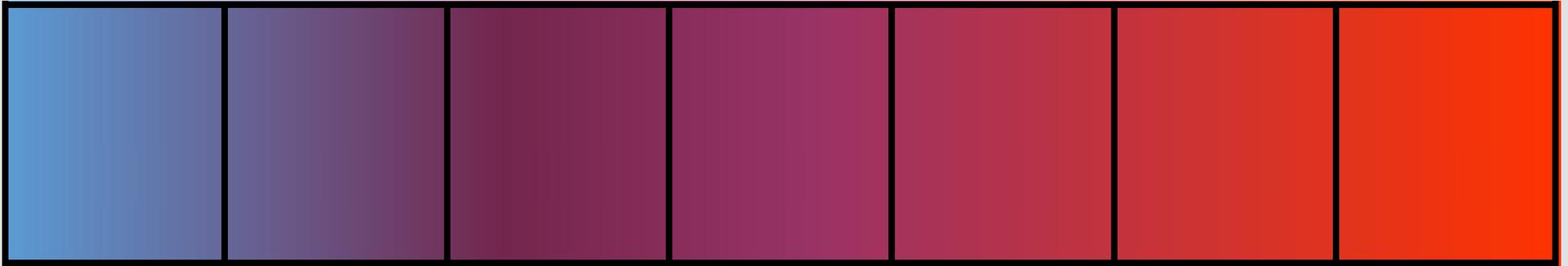
The words slowly change from one extreme to another.  
Let's Practice! Let's think of some opposite word pairs!

Let's think about different words for \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_!



**Hint:** Remember to think of all of the words related to \_\_\_\_\_.

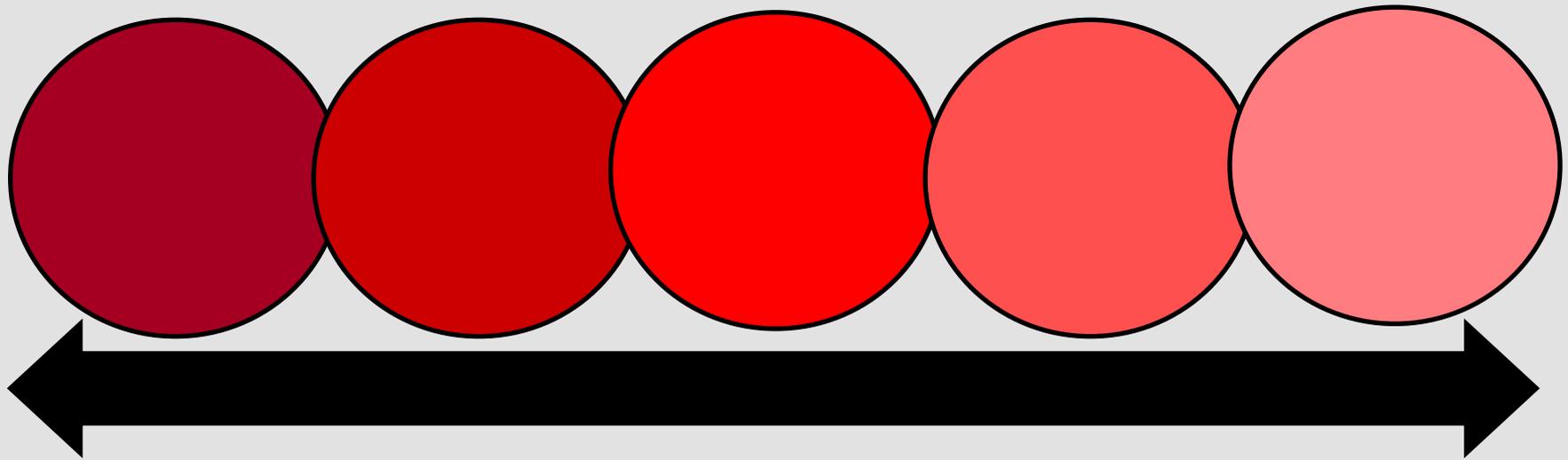
# Different Shades Between Opposites



The words slowly change from one extreme to another.  
Let's Practice! Let's think of some opposite word pairs!

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Created by: Bill Bolden M.A., CCC-SLP