

The Split Ratio

A term, and the practice it names — fixed within the SDC canon.

Canonical lexical document. Version 1.0, May 2026.

Preface

About this document. This document fixes a term and the practice it names. It is a *lexical* document, not a position essay or a methodology — its work is to establish what *the split ratio* refers to, the sentence forms in which the phrase belongs, the collocations it accepts and refuses, and the practice that grows around it. The argument is short, and the form is closer to a dictionary entry than to an essay.

Where this sits in the corpus. The canon home is splitdomaincognition.org. This document is rendered at [/split-ratio/](#). The long-form articulation of SDC itself is in *Split-Domain Cognition*; the position argument is in *A Principle, Not a Pattern*; the operational methodology is in *Process*; the protocol for deriving a domain-specific variant is at [/derivation-protocol-v1/](#). The split ratio belongs to that frame: it names the degree to which a single artefact maintains the discipline.

Authority and version. Canonical, v1.0. May 2026. The website is the source of record. If this PDF and the website disagree, follow the website.

Use. Openly citable. See [Governance](#) for the one-person canon and how variants are admitted.

Author. Prayas Abhinav.

This document fixes a term and the practice it names. The term came together through several refinements, set aside for the reasons recorded here:

- *nisus ratio* — a Latin neologism in a vocabulary that otherwise stays in plain English; it read as out-of-family in SDC's syntactical context

- *tuning ratio* — confused the catchy word with the term; tuning is what the practitioner does, not what the relation is called
- *discipline ratio* — abstract, lossy; doesn't name the architectural move
- *split-domain ratio* — accurate but heavy; reads as an attribute of the discipline rather than as a separable concept
- *the SDC ratio* — too generic; could be misread as the ratio that defines SDC, which is false (SDC is the architecture; the split ratio is one declarative property of an artefact built under it)

What survives is recorded here.

The split ratio is an **SDC concept**. It belongs to the Split-Domain Cognition canon and sits alongside SDC's other foundational marks. Any instantiation of SDC inherits the ratio. The concept is not the property of any single project that builds on SDC; it travels with the discipline wherever the discipline travels.

The phrase

The split ratio.

Used with the definite article when referring to the relation as such. Used indefinitely when referring to a particular instance. The phrase is a noun phrase. It names a property of a single artefact: the degree to which the work holds two unlike cognitive domains apart.

Etymology

Split — from Middle Dutch *splitten*, to cleave or part, cognate with Old Frisian *splita* and Middle Low German *splīten*. The verb's primary sense is the clean separation of one thing into two — a wedge driven, a fibre divided, a path forked. In English, *split* arrives unburdened by metaphysical baggage: it does not pretend to elegance, and the architectural move it names is plain. Where the older Latin candidate (*nisus*) brought a

press, the Germanic word brings a cleaver. The SDC discipline is closer to the second: not a sustained leaning, but a clean line drawn where two unlike domains would otherwise blur.

Semantics

The split ratio names the degree to which a single artefact maintains SDC's split-domain discipline — the structural separation between language work and judgement work, or between any two unlike cognitive domains that the artefact's context puts at risk of collapse.

The ratio is expressed as a proportion **N:M** on a scale of ten, where **N** is the share of the work that holds the split and **M** is the share that conflates. The two poles are *split* and *conflated*. A high split ratio means the architecture is visible in the artefact — a reader can point to where description ends and verdict begins. A low split ratio means the moves blur — description and judgement are folded into the same sentence, and the reader has no place to disagree.

The split ratio is **self-rated**. Unlike an *alignment* declaration (which makes a structural claim that can be tested against the four-test protocol), the split ratio is a self-reflective frame: *this is how cleanly I am holding the discipline in this artefact, as honestly as I can read myself*. It is a journal entry, not an audit verdict. Other readers may disagree; that disagreement is itself useful information. The badge does not police; it makes the practitioner's own self-reading visible.

The endpoints of the scale are not configurable. The values 1 through 9 are the meaningful positions; 0 and 10 are excluded by design. A claim of 10:0 — *perfect split* — invites self-flattery and is structurally suspect (no real artefact achieves clean separation everywhere). A claim of 0:10 — *no split at all* — would mean the artefact carries no SDC discipline whatsoever, in which case the badge has no business being attached to it. The configurable range is 1:9 through 9:1.

Relation to existing terms in the SDC lexicon

SDC names the architecture. *Variants* name the domain-specific applications. The *forms of follow* (support, reference, alignment, derivation) name the modes by which an external project declares its relation to the canon. The split ratio names a different thing again: the *degree* to which a single artefact carries the discipline, claimed by its maker.

A piece of work might carry both an *alignment* declaration and a split ratio. The alignment declaration claims, structurally, that the work performs the separation. The split ratio adds the practitioner's honest reading of *how cleanly*. The two are independent and additive; declaring one does not commit you to declaring the other.

Linguistics of use

The phrase functions as a noun phrase. Use the definite article when referring to the relation as such; use indefinitely when referring to a particular instance. Plural: *split ratios*.

Canonical sentence forms

▮ *The split ratio of this essay is 7:3.*

The artefact-level self-report. The practitioner has read their own work and declares the proportion at which the discipline holds.

▮ *This paragraph conflates more than the rest of the piece.*

The local self-report. Within a single artefact, the ratio can vary by section; a 7:3 average can hide a 9:1 opening and a 4:6 middle.

▮ *Different artefacts carry different split ratios.*

The comparative claim. Two works by the same author may externally look similar and be doing different practices, because one holds the discipline and the other does not.

▮ *Tuning the split is the practice.*

The definitional claim. The practice is not arriving at a correct ratio; it is the ongoing work of noticing and adjusting.

Compatible collocations

- *holding the split* — sustaining the discipline against the pull of conflation
- *the drifting split ratio* — changing without the practitioner's volition, often under rhetorical pressure
- *reading the split* — the act of self-assessment
- *the close split ratio* — proportion near parity (the practice in danger of collapse)
- *the wide split ratio* — proportion far from parity (the practice held)
- *retuning the split* — restoring the discipline after drift

Incompatible collocations

- *the perfect split ratio* — implies 10:0 is a real position; it is not. No artefact is wholly split.
- *measuring the split ratio* — the ratio is self-read, not measured. *Reading, sensing, declaring* are the operative verbs.
- *the optimal split ratio* — refuses optimisation register. The ratio is to be honestly named, not maximised against any objective.
- *the average split ratio of the field* — refuses aggregation across practitioners. The ratio is a self-frame, not a benchmark.

Register

The phrase belongs in writing about practice, in self-report, in journals, and in conversation with others who are also cultivating the literacy. It does not belong in productivity tooling, in scoring rubrics, in employer-facing dashboards, or in any context that converts the self-frame into an external metric. The badge declares; it does not score.

Visibility — the badge

The split ratio's visualisation is a divided string. A horizontal line with eleven tick marks: the two anchors (*split, conflated*) and nine interior positions. A sepia bridge sits at the chosen position. The bridge moves toward whichever side the artefact tilts.

The badge's title word is **SPLIT** — the catchy word, the architectural move. The canonical term *split ratio* sits below the title in italic, so the term and the practice both travel with the badge. The numerical ratio **N:M** sits in the right corner.

The visual register is constrained even as the form is open. Operative verbs across every implementation: *reading, holding, retuning, sounding*. Refused verbs: *measuring, scoring, grading, optimising*. A bar chart, percentage display, dashboard gauge, or productivity meter would each import the optimisation register the term refuses.

Self-rating, not policing

The split ratio is, in its full meaning, a frame of self-attention. To declare one's split ratio is to claim a relation to the discipline in writing, where the writing itself is the act of holding the relation visible. The badge is a public surface for that private self-reading.

The badge does not need to be true to anyone but its declarer. A reader who finds the artefact's actual split lower than the declared ratio can say so — and that disagreement is a useful artefact of the discipline at work. But the badge is not a verdict and cannot be revoked by an arbiter. It is the practitioner's record of where they stand, today, in the holding of the architecture.

The practice the term names

The practice the term names is the cultivation of *self-reading* in the split-discipline register. The practitioner develops, over time, an ear for whether their own work is holding

the architectural commitment or quietly conflating it under aesthetic or rhetorical pressure. The ratio is the report of that listening, not its judge.

The story is the trajectory of split ratios across a body of work — across years, across kinds of artefact, across moments of carelessness and moments of careful holding. A practitioner who tracks their split ratio over time develops a sense of where the discipline holds them and where it slips. The badge on a single artefact is one entry in that longer record.

The practice does not consist of always claiming 9:1. It consists of being able to hear, of a given artefact, *what the split is*, and to say it without flattering oneself.

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