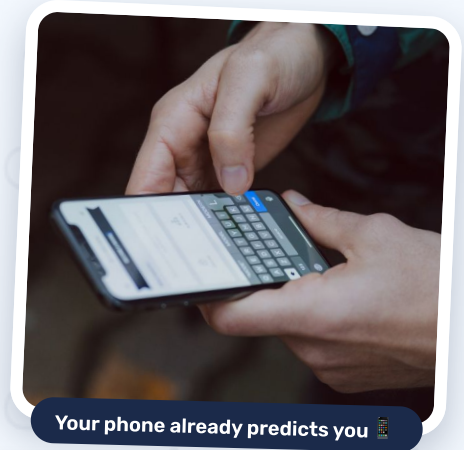


Autocomplete That Ate the Internet

ChatGPT talks like a person and writes like a pro – but inside, it's playing the world's fastest fill-in-the-blank game.



Your phone already predicts you

A student pastes a tangled science question into a chat box and taps enter. Before she can reach for her juice, three tidy paragraphs appear, ready to study. In that same second, the very same tool is writing a birthday poem in Tokyo and repairing computer code in Lima. One program is holding millions of conversations at once – and it does not understand a single word.

• • •
AS YOU READ, THINK ABOUT...

What is the difference between predicting words and truly understanding them?

● One Very Hungry Reader

Your phone already finishes your sentences. Type "I am on my" and it offers "way," because it has seen that exact pattern over and over. ChatGPT – a chatbot, a computer program you talk to by typing – works the same way, just enormously bigger. Instead of learning from your texts, it studied about 300 billion words from books, articles, and websites.

All of that reading taught it how human language flows. It learned that questions attract answers, that recipes come in steps, and that jokes need timing. Nobody programmed those rules by hand; the machine absorbed them from a mountain of text roughly the size of 3 million books, then packed everything it learned into its model – the giant set of patterns it guesses from.

● Blank After Blank

QUESTION

→

PREDICTION

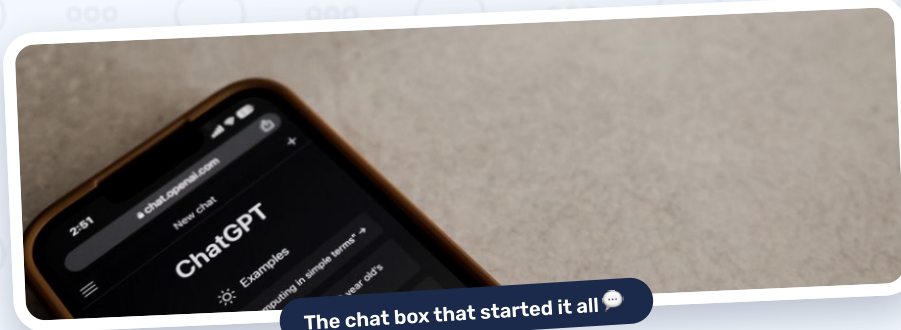
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ANSWER

When you type a prompt – the question or instruction you give the chatbot – ChatGPT breaks your sentence into tiny pieces. Then it calculates a mathematical guess for the single next word. It picks one, re-reads the whole sentence, and guesses the next word, and the next, at a pace of about 50 words every second.

That's the entire trick: a lightning-fast game of fill-in-the-blank. Each round runs the same loop – question, prediction, answer. Stack up enough good guesses and out comes a paragraph so smooth it feels like a person wrote it, in more than 50 languages.

● An Overnight Sensation



The chat box that started it all

When ChatGPT launched on November 30, 2022, it reached 1 million users in just 5 days. Two months later it had 100 million – at the time, the fastest-growing consumer app in history. Teachers, doctors, coders, and kids all rushed to try the same experiment: ask a machine anything.

Day 5 – 1,000,000 users ✓

Month 2 – 100,000,000 users ✓✓

Today – 700,000,000 every week ✓✓

The rush never stopped. Today more than 700 million people use ChatGPT every single week. It drafts emails before breakfast, untangles homework after school, and translates conversations across the planet all night long.

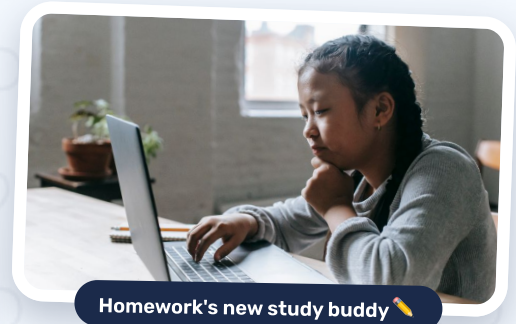
"One program is holding **millions of conversations** at once – and it does not understand a single word."

● Your Tireless Teammate

Here is the honest truth: ChatGPT does not think, feel, or understand anything at all. It is a brilliant pattern-matching machine – and sometimes a confident one that guesses wrong, so smart users double-check important answers with a trusted source. The machine predicts; the judging is still your job.

Used that way, it becomes a tireless teammate. It can explain a hard idea five different ways, brainstorm 20 project titles in seconds, or translate a letter to your grandmother instantly. The next great question it answers could be the one you ask.

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💬 Words to Know

chatbot (noun)

a computer program you talk to by typing, like texting a very well-read robot.

prompt (noun)

the question or instruction you type into a chatbot.

model (noun)

the giant set of patterns a program builds for itself after studying mountains of text.

⚡ Get to Know Facts

- 1 ChatGPT reached 1 million users in its first 5 days – and 100 million within 2 months of its November 2022 launch, the fastest-growing consumer app in history at the time.
- 2 More than 700 million people now use ChatGPT every single week.
- 3 The technology behind ChatGPT learned from about 300 billion words – a mountain of text roughly the size of 3 million books.