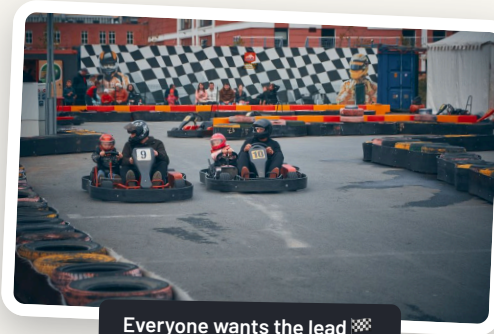


The Great Chatbot Race ///

ChatGPT got famous first – but a whole starting grid of rivals is racing to become your favorite AI helper.



Everyone wants the lead 🏁

On a packed morning train, a tourist asks Gemini to translate a menu, while the man beside her plans dinner with Meta AI right inside WhatsApp. Two seats back, an accountant asks Claude to sum up a long report, and an office worker asks Copilot to turn her notes into slides. Four people, four different chatbots – and not one of them is ChatGPT. Welcome to the starting line of the greatest race in tech.



AS YOU READ, THINK ABOUT...

Why might it be good for you that so many companies are building chatbots?

01 The Famous Front-Runner

When ChatGPT launched on November 30, 2022, it was the first chatbot – a computer program you talk to by typing – that most people had ever tried. It grew so famous so fast that many people started calling every AI (artificial intelligence) helper "ChatGPT," the way people say "Kleenex" for any tissue. Today OpenAI, the company behind it, says more than 1 billion people use ChatGPT every week.

But being first is not the same as being alone. Within 4 months, Microsoft, Anthropic, and Google had all rushed onto the track with chatbots of their own. Each one is a rival – a competitor trying to win the same prize: your questions. And the gap is closing: according to the web-traffic tracker Similarweb, ChatGPT got about 73 of every 100 visits to major chatbot websites in August 2025, but only about 55 by August 2026.

02 Meet the Giants

Google answered with Bard in March 2023, then renamed it Gemini in 2024. Its biggest advantage is location: Gemini lives inside tools people already use, like Google Search, Gmail, and Android, which runs on more than 3 billion devices. In August 2026, Google said more than 1 billion people use the Gemini app every month.

Meta used the same strategy, building Meta AI into WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook, where more than 1 billion people were using it monthly by late 2025; it also shares its Llama AI models free for developers to build on. Microsoft, a close partner of OpenAI, used that technology to build Copilot into Windows and Word, and in 2024 it added a Copilot key to new keyboards – which Microsoft called the first big change to the Windows keyboard in nearly 30 years. These giants don't need you to find their chatbots. Their chatbots are already waiting where you are.

THE STARTING GRID *numbered by launch date*

1 ChatGPT

OpenAI 🇺🇸 · 2022

2 Perplexity

Perplexity 🇺🇸 · 2022

3 Copilot

Microsoft 🇺🇸 · 2023

4 Claude

Anthropic 🇺🇸 · 2023

5 Gemini

Google 🇺🇸 · 2023

6 Meta AI

Meta 🇺🇸 · 2023

7 Grok

xAI 🇺🇸 · 2023

8 Vibe

Mistral 🇫🇷 · 2024

9 DeepSeek

DeepSeek 🇨🇳 · 2025

03 The Fast Challengers

Smaller companies are racing too, each with its own strength. Perplexity, a start-up founded in 2022, calls itself an answer engine: it searches the web for you and shows numbered links to every source. Anthropic, a company started in 2021 by former OpenAI researchers who said they wanted to put AI safety first, built Claude, which many people use for writing and computer coding. xAI, the company Elon Musk founded in 2023, built Grok, which reads live posts on X to answer questions about breaking news and is designed to reply with humor; its name comes from a 1961 science-fiction novel and means "to understand deeply."

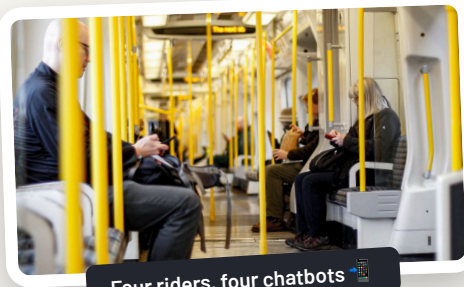
Then, in January 2025, a surprise challenger roared in from China. DeepSeek, a Chinese start-up, released a free chatbot and said its final training run cost less than \$6 million, a tiny fraction of what rivals spend. On January 27, as DeepSeek's app shot to No. 1 on the U.S. App Store, the chipmaker Nvidia lost almost \$600 billion in stock-market value — the total worth of all its shares — in a single day, the biggest one-day drop for any company in U.S. history. Meanwhile in France, Mistral AI launched its chatbot Le Chat ("the cat") in 2024 — today it's called Vibe — proving the race had gone global.

"The race is far from over, and you get to choose who wins."

04 Why Rivals Help You

Under the hood, all these chatbots work the same basic way: each one learns patterns from hundreds of billions of words, then predicts the best next word. What makes them different is what they study, how their makers teach them to behave, and where they live — your phone, your email, or your favorite chat app. That's why one might shine at math while another writes a better story. But every one of them can get facts wrong, and companies may keep what you type, so never share private information like your address or passwords.

Competition is good news for you: when companies race, they improve faster, add free features, and work harder to earn your trust — and no single company gets to control how everyone finds answers. One important rule: most chatbots are made for teens and adults, with many requiring users to be at least 13 and some 18, so younger kids should use AI only with a parent or teacher. The smartest move is to treat chatbots like tools in a toolbox: pick the right one for the job, and double-check anything important. The race is far from over, and you get to choose who wins.



Four riders, four chatbots

Words to Know

rival (noun)

someone competing with you for the same prize.

chatbot (noun)

a computer program you talk to by typing or speaking.

answer engine (noun)

a tool that searches the internet and gives you an answer along with links to its sources.

Get to Know Facts

- 1** Every chatbot can make mistakes — even in front of the whole world. In one of the first public demos of Google's Bard, in February 2023, it gave a wrong answer about a space telescope, and Google's parent company lost about \$100 billion in stock-market value in a single day.
- 2** On its first day in 2022, Perplexity answered just 3,000 questions. By May 2025, it was answering about 30 million every day.
- 3** Microsoft, Google, Meta, and Amazon together plan to spend more than \$700 billion in 2026 — about \$2 billion every day — much of it on data centers, giant buildings packed with computers that power AI.