Turing Test Encyclopedia Article

Turing Test

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Turing Test

The Turing test was developed by British mathematician **Alan Turing** as a means of assessing the capabilities of a computer to process information like a human brain. Turing devised a subjective test to answer the question "Can machines think?"

In a 1950 paper entitled "Computing Machinery and Intelligence," Turing argued that computers would, in time, be programmed to acquire abilities that would rival human intelligence. This would be possible if the operations in the human brain were executed in a computational manner. The Turing test arose from this paper.

In the test, a human questioner is placed in an isolated environment. In the original Turing test, the human used a computer **terminal** that was, in turn, connected to two unseen terminals. One of these unseen terminals was under human control, while the other was controlled by computer software. The task of the interrogator is to pose questions and to use the answers to distinguish between a computer and a human. If a distinction cannot be made, then the computer is considered intelligent.

Over the years, the number of questions submitted for use in the Turing test has increased to over 9,000. Some of these questions are:

- Are you a computer?
- How old are you?
- What is your favorite flavor of ice cream?
- Do you believe in life after love?
- What do you like to do in your spare time?

With time, the Turing test has broadened in its application. Now a machine passes the Turing test if it can convince the interrogator that it is human; another human need not be part of the test.