

Google launches ChatGPT rival in US and UK

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Google has been scrambling to counter the threat posed to its money-making online search engine by Microsoft blazing ahead with the addition of generative artificial intelligence technology into its rival Bing.

Google on Tuesday invited people in the United States and Britain to test its AI chatbot, known as Bard, as it continues on its gradual path to catch

up with Microsoft-backed ChatGPT.

Bard, ChatGPT and other similar artificial intelligence apps churn out essays, poems or computing code on command and have taken the world by storm as the biggest new thing in tech since the advent of the iPhone.

Google CEO Sundar Pichai told staff that after testing Bard with 80,000 Google employees, the chatbot would be tested with the public in the United States and Britain as a "first step" before going out to more countries in other languages.

"As more people start to use Bard and test its capabilities, they'll surprise us," Pichai said in a memo to staff seen by AFP.

"Things will go wrong. But the user feedback is critical to improving the product and the underlying technology," added Pichai, who had faced some criticism within the company for rushing to catch up with Microsoft.

In the launch, people wishing to play with Bard can sign up on a waiting list at bard.google.com website, distinctly separate from the tech giant's search engine.

"We've learned a lot so far by testing Bard, and the next critical step in improving it is to get feedback from more people," Google vice presidents Sissie Hsiao and Eli Collins said in a blog post.

As exciting as chatbots can be, they have their faults, Hsiao and Collins cautioned.

'Constantly learning'

Google has so far proceeded more carefully in its rollout of generative

AI to consumers, in contrast to Microsoft's choice to swiftly make the products available despite reports of problems.

ChatGPT's OpenAI is backed by Microsoft, which earlier this year said it would finance the research company to the tune of billions of dollars.

Asked by AFP how its product was different from ChatGPT, Bard said that unlike its Microsoft-backed rival it was "able to access and process information from the [real world](#) through Google Search and keep my response consistent with [search results](#)."

The bot also underlined that it was still "under development, while ChatGPT has been released to the public. This means that I am constantly learning and improving, while ChatGPT is likely to remain relatively unchanged."

OpenAI recently released a long-awaited update of its AI technology that it said would be safer and more accurate than its predecessor.

Much of the new model's firepower, known as GPT-4, is now available to the general public via ChatGPT Plus, OpenAI's paid subscription plan and on an AI-powered version of Microsoft's Bing search engine.

Microsoft has said that its quick adoption of generative AI has seen usage of its Bing search engine increase in recent weeks, but it is still a clear underdog to Google, which captures about 85 percent of the global [search](#) engine market.

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