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the startup and created his own AI chatbot, Grok. Is ChatGPT better than a search engine? ChatGPT is an AI chatbot created to converse with the user. A search engine indexes web pages on the internet to help search information. One is not better than the other, as each suits different purposes. When searching for as much up-to-date, accurate information as possible, your most reliable option is a search engine. It will provide you with pages upon pages of sources you can peruse. Also, ChatGPT has officially replaced Google Search for me - here's why! In November 2024, OpenAI already unveiled ChatGPT Search, a feature within the ChatGPT app that lets users search the web for timely, up-to-date information, complete with citations linked to sources. With ChatGPT Search, you can enter your sentence as your train of thought takes you, and the AI will understand the meaning of your query by leveraging its NLP capabilities. This means you can spend less time crafting a tailored search query but still get exactly what you want. If you are looking for a platform that can explain complex topics in an easy-to-understand manner, then ChatGPT might be what you want. If you want the best of both worlds, plenty of AI search engines combine both. The search experience is available on the ChatGPT website, desktops, and mobile apps for all ChatGPT Plus, Team users, and SearchGPT waitlist users. What is SearchGPT? SearchGPT is an experimental offering from OpenAI that functions as an AI-powered search engine that is aware of current events and uses real-time information from the Internet. The experience was a prototype. OpenAI integrated the best features directly into ChatGPT with ChatGPT Search. Upon launching the prototype, users were given a waitlist to sign up for. However, shortly after, OpenAI closed its waitlist. Those users were given priority access to ChatGPT Search when it launched. What is ChatGPT Search? In November, OpenAI unveiled ChatGPT Search, a feature that lets users search the web directly within ChatGPT for timely, up-to-date information, complete with citations linked to sources. The tool can be called on manually or activated whenever a user prompt could benefit from web-based information. What are ChatGPT's limitations? Despite its impressive capabilities, ChatGPT still has limitations. Users sometimes need to reword questions multiple times for ChatGPT to understand their intent. A bigger limitation is a lack of quality in responses, which can sometimes be plausible-sounding but are verbose or make no practical sense. Also: Police are using AI to write crime reports. What could go wrong? Instead of asking for clarification on ambiguous questions, the model guesses what your question means, which can lead to poor responses. Generative AI models are also subject to hallucinations, which can result in inaccurate responses. Does ChatGPT give wrong answers? As mentioned above, ChatGPT, like all language models, has limitations and can give nonsensical answers and incorrect information, so it's important to double-check the answers it gives you. Also: 8 ways to reduce ChatGPT hallucinations OpenAI recommends you provide feedback on what ChatGPT generates by using the thumbs-up and thumbs-down buttons to improve its underlying model. You can also join the startup's Bug Bounty program, which offers up to \$20,000 for reporting security bugs and safety issues. Can ChatGPT refuse to answer my prompts? AI systems like ChatGPT can and do reject inappropriate requests. The AI assistant can identify inappropriate submissions to prevent unsafe content generation. Also: 6 things ChatGPT can't do (and another 20 it refuses to do) These submissions include questions that violate someone's rights, are offensive, are discriminatory, or involve illegal activities. The ChatGPT model can also challenge incorrect premises, answer follow-up questions, and even admit mistakes when you point them out. These guardrails are important. AI models can generate advanced, realistic content that can be exploited by bad actors for harm, such as spreading misinformation about public figures and influencing elections. Does ChatGPT plagiarize? Yes, OpenAI scraped the internet to train ChatGPT's models. Therefore, the technology's knowledge is influenced by other people's work. Since there is no guarantee that ChatGPT's outputs are entirely original, the chatbot may regurgitate someone else's work in your answer, which is considered plagiarism. Also, technically speaking, if you, as a user, copy and paste ChatGPT's response, that is an act of plagiarism because you are claiming someone else's work as your own. This act could have repercussions based on the rules enforced by your workplace or educational institution. Is there a ChatGPT detector? In short, the answer is no, not because people haven't tried, but because none do it efficiently. In January 2023, OpenAI released a free tool to detect AI-generated text. Unfortunately, OpenAI's classifier tool could only correctly identify 26% of AI-written text with a "likely AI-written" designation. Furthermore, it provided false positives 9% of the time, incorrectly identifying human-written work as AI-produced. Also: I tested 7 AI content detectors - they're getting dramatically better at identifying plagiarism The tool performed so poorly that, six months after its release, OpenAI shut it down "due to its low rate of accuracy." Despite the tool's failure, the startup claims to be researching more effective techniques for AI text identification. Other AI detectors exist on the market, including GPT-2 Output Detector, Writer AI Content Detector, and Content at Scale's AI Content Detection tool. ZDNET tested these tools, and the results were underwhelming; all three were unreliable sources for spotting AI, repeatedly giving false negatives. Here are ZDNET's full test results. What is GPT-4? GPT-4 is OpenAI's language model, much more advanced than its predecessor, GPT-3.5. GPT-4 outperforms GPT-3.5 in a series of simulated benchmark exams and produces fewer hallucinations. What is GPT-4o? GPT-4o is OpenAI's latest, fastest, and most advanced flagship model. As the name implies, GPT-4o has the same intelligence as GPT-4. However, the "o" in the title stands for "omni," referring to its multimodal capabilities, which allow the model to understand text, audio, image, and video inputs and output text, audio, and image outputs. Also: 6 ways OpenAI just supercharged ChatGPT for free users The model is 50% cheaper in OpenAI's API than GPT-4 Turbo while still matching its English and coding capabilities and outperforming it in non-English language, vision, and audio understanding -- a big win for developers. What is ChatGPT o1? In September 2024, OpenAI unveiled its o1 models, which are capable of more advanced reading, making them ideal for math, science, and coding. For example, it scored 83% on the International Mathematics Olympiad (IMO) qualifying exam. For comparison, GPT-4o correctly solved only 13% of problems. Also: What are o1 and o1-mini? OpenAI's mystery AI models are finally here! ZDNET's David Gewirtz put o1 - preview to the test and was impressed by its ability to tackle several complex tasks with lots of detail, including writing a WordPress plugin, rewriting a string function, finding an annoying bug, and more. What are the best ChatGPT alternatives? Although ChatGPT gets the most buzz, other options are just as good -- and might even be better suited to your needs. ZDNET has created a list of the best chatbots, all of which we have tested to identify the best tool for your requirements. Also: Claude AI can now analyze PDFs - here's how to try it Despite ChatGPT's extensive abilities, other chatbots have advantages that might be better suited for your use case, including Copilot, Claude, Perplexity, Jasper, and more. What are GPTs? OpenAI once offered plugins for ChatGPT to connect to third-party applications and access real-time information on the web. The plugins expanded ChatGPT's abilities, allowing it to assist with many more activities, such as planning a trip or finding a place to eat. Also: My two favorite ChatGPT Plus features and the remarkable things I can do with them However, on March 19, 2024, OpenAI stopped letting users install new plugins or start new conversations with existing ones. Instead, OpenAI replaced plugins with GPTs, which are easier for developers to build. With the latest update, all users, including those on the free plan, can access the GPT Store and find 3 million customized ChatGPT chatbots. Unfortunately, there is also a lot of spam in the GPT store, so be careful which ones you use. What is Microsoft's involvement with ChatGPT? Microsoft was an early investor in OpenAI, the AI startup behind ChatGPT, long before ChatGPT was released to the public. Microsoft's first involvement with OpenAI was in 2019 when the company invested \$1 billion. The company invested another \$2 billion in the years after. In January 2023, Microsoft extended its partnership with OpenAI through a multiyear, multi-billion dollar investment. Also: ChatGPT vs. Copilot: Which AI chatbot is better for you? Neither company disclosed the investment value, but unnamed sources told Bloomberg that it could total \$10 billion over multiple years. In return, OpenAI's exclusive cloud-computing provider -- Microsoft Azure, powers all OpenAI workloads across research, products, and API services. Microsoft has also used its OpenAI partnership to revamp its Bing search engine and improve its browser. On February 7, 2023, Microsoft unveiled a new Bing tool, now known as Copilot, that runs on OpenAI's GPT-4, customized specifically for search. How does Copilot compare to ChatGPT? Copilot uses OpenAI's GPT-4, which means that since its launch, it has been more efficient and capable than the standard, free version of ChatGPT, which was powered by GPT 3.5 at the time. At the time, Copilot boasted several other features over ChatGPT, such as access to documents, use GPTs, and access the GPT Store and Voice Mode. After the upgrade, ChatGPT reclaimed its crown as the best AI chatbot. What is Gemini and how does it relate to ChatGPT? Gemini is Google's AI chat service, a rival to ChatGPT. On February 6, 2023, Google introduced its experimental AI chat service, which was then called Google Bard. Also: ChatGPT vs. Microsoft Copilot vs. Gemini: Which is the best AI chatbot? Over a month after the announcement, Google began rolling out access to Bard first via a waitlist. Now, the tool is available to the public. The biggest perk of Gemini is that it has Google Search at its core and has the same feel as Google products. Therefore, if you are an avid Google user, Gemini might be the best AI chatbot for you. What is Apple's involvement with OpenAI? At Apple's Worldwide Developer's Conference in June 2024, the company announced a partnership with OpenAI that will integrate ChatGPT with Siri. With the user's permission, Siri can request ChatGPT for help if Siri deems a task is better suited for ChatGPT. This feature has not yet been released to users. You may have already picked up on the buzz surrounding ChatGPT. But what exactly is this latest tool in the world of generative artificial intelligence (AI)? In this article, we'll introduce ChatGPT and the technology that powers it. We'll also cover its features and limitations, as well as present some tips on how it should (and potentially should not) be used. For hands-on practice using ChatGPT, explore Vanderbilt University's ChatGPT: Master Free AI Tools to Supercharge Productivity Specialization. What is ChatGPT? ChatGPT is an artificial intelligence chatbot from OpenAI that enables users to "converse" with it in a way that mimics natural conversation. As a user, you can ask questions or make requests in the form of prompts, and ChatGPT will respond. The intuitive, easy-to-use, and free tool has already gained popularity as an alternative to traditional search engines and as a tool for AI writing, among other things. What does GPT stand for? The "GPT" in ChatGPT is short for generative pre-trained transformer. In the field of AI, training refers to the process of teaching a computer system to recognize patterns and make decisions based on input data, much like how a teacher gives information to their students, then tests their understanding of that information. A transformer is a type of neural network trained to analyze the context of input data and weight the significance of each part of the data accordingly. Since this type of model learns context, it's commonly used in natural language processing (NLP) to generate text similar to human writing. (In AI, a model is a set of mathematical equations and algorithms that a computer uses to analyze data and make decisions. Read more about some common machine learning models here.) While older AI chatbots could answer questions with detailed responses, ChatGPT uses a dialog format, which allows it to answer follow-up and clarifying questions, as well as recognize and reject inappropriate or dangerous requests (such as questions about illegal activity). Read more: ChatGPT-3.5 vs. 4: What's the Difference? How to use ChatGPT to augment your work With a thorough understanding of the features, limitations, and risks associated with generative AI, it becomes a powerful tool to save time and energy. Knowing how to effectively communicate with ChatGPT, or any generative AI model, is called prompt engineering. Watch this video from Vanderbilt University's popular Prompt Engineering Specialization to see prompt engineering in action: New use cases are emerging every day; here are just a few ways you might incorporate ChatGPT (or another generative AI model) into your day-to-day work: 1. Conduct research. While ChatGPT lacks some of the critical functionality of Google and other search engines (particularly in making attribution easy to see and access), it can be a useful starting point for conducting research. Here are two examples: 2. Beat writer's block. If you've ever experienced difficulty getting started on a writing project while staring at a blank page, you're not alone. Depending on the source of your writer's block and what you're trying to achieve, you may be able to use ChatGPT to overcome inertia. Get your creativity flowing with generated writing prompts. Build an outline or structure from key points you want to include. Generate a first paragraph to build upon. (You can go back and revise or delete it later.) Find that word that's on the tip of your tongue. 3. Strengthen an existing piece of writing. You can input an existing piece of text into ChatGPT and ask it to identify uses of passive voice, repetitive phrases or word usage, or grammatical errors. This could be particularly useful if you're writing in a language for which you're not a native speaker. Read more: How to Use ChatGPT to Write Your Resume. 4. Write and debug code. ChatGPT isn't just for use with text as prose. You can also use it to: Explain the functionality of unfamiliar input code. Generate boilerplate code to build off of. Identify bugs within existing code. Add comments to existing code for improved readability and collaboration. Identify edge cases where your code might fail. 5. Generate keywords for blog posts or marketing campaigns. ChatGPT's use of a transformer model (the "T" in ChatGPT) makes it a good tool for keyword research, as it can generate related terms based on context and associations (compared to the more linear approach of more traditional keyword research tools). You can also input a list of keywords and classify them based on search intent. 6. Summarize long documents or explain complex concepts. ChatGPT can quickly summarize the key points of long articles or sum up complex ideas in a way that's easier to understand. This could be a time saver if you're trying to get up to speed in a new industry or need help with a tricky concept while studying. How does ChatGPT work? ChatGPT uses natural language processing (NLP), an AI technology that deals with understanding, analyzing, and generating human-like language. The large language model (LLM) was trained using a combination of two major inputs: 1. A massive volume of sample text pulled from web pages and program code. 2. Conversations provided by real humans, who demonstrated the desired responses to provided prompts, then ranked outputs from the model based on the quality of the response. Providing occasional feedback from humans to an AI model is a technique known as reinforcement learning from human feedback (RLHF). Leveraging this technique can help fine-tune a model by improving both safety and reliability. Features and limitations of ChatGPT (and other generative AI) ChatGPT represents an exciting advancement in generative AI, with several features that could help accelerate certain tasks when used thoughtfully. It also comes with limitations. Understanding both the features and limitations is key to leveraging this technology for the greatest impact. Features of ChatGPT Some of ChatGPT include the ability to: Generate human-like text that mimics the style and structure of the input data. Generate a response to a given prompt or input text. This could include writing a story or answering a question. Generate text in multiple languages. Modify the style of generated text (formal or informal, for example). Ask clarifying questions to better understand the intent of input data. Respond with text that is consistent with the context of a conversation, such as offering follow-up instructions or understanding references made to previous questions. Other generative AI models can perform similar tasks with images, sounds, and video. Limitations and risks of ChatGPT While ChatGPT is a powerful tool, it has its limitations. To start, these types of transformer models lack common sense reasoning ability. This can translate to a limited ability to handle complexity, nuance, and questions around emotions, values, beliefs, and abstract concepts. These limitations can manifest in many ways: It does not understand the meaning of the text it generates. While some output from ChatGPT may sound humanlike, the model isn't human. This has a few implications. It may have a limited ability to handle nuance, ambiguity, or things like sarcasm or irony. Perhaps more problematic is the fact that it can generate text that sounds plausible but is incorrect or even nonsensical. What's more, it can't verify the veracity of its output. It can generate biased, discriminatory, or offensive text. Artificial intelligence models like ChatGPT are only as good as their input data. This model was trained on large amounts of text data from across the internet, including biased input. If the data used to train the model is biased, this can show up in the generated text and lead to offensive or biased responses. Learn more about AI ethics and why it matters. Responses can be rooted in outdated information. The model has limited knowledge of events after 2021 and is not connected to the wider internet. If you're using ChatGPT to produce code, for example, it could be pulling from outdated examples that no longer meet modern cybersecurity standards. Output can be formulaic (and sometimes lead to nonsensical answers, too). ChatGPT can generate text that's similar to existing text and is known to overuse certain phrases. This can mean text that reads as flat and unimaginative, or in more extreme cases, could constitute plagiarism or a copyright infringement. The tool isn't always available. The exploding popularity of ChatGPT has led to some capacity issues. When the servers get overloaded, you may get a message that "ChatGPT is at capacity." This means that while some ChatGPT users may be able to access the platform's chat services, others might only have limited access -- or maybe none at all. Read more: Is AI Dangerous? Take advantage of generative AI tools thoughtfully and responsibly by following these five guidelines: 1. Always review and edit generated text for accuracy and quality. 2. Treat generative AI as a starting point rather than a finished product. 3. Use it for repetitive or time-consuming tasks that don't require creativity or originality. 4. Don't use any sensitive or private information as input data. 5. Leverage it in conjunction with other tools and techniques, including your own creativity, emotional intelligence, and strategic thinking skills. Get started with ChatGPT ChatGPT is already changing how many of us do our work. Build skills with generative AI and keep up with the rapidly changing work landscape with these courses on Coursera: For a beginner-friendly introduction to prompting, consider setting aside nine hours to complete Google's Prompting Essentials online course, in which you'll learn to effectively apply prompting techniques in your daily work. By the end, you'll earn credentials from Google to reflect your hard work. Keep exploring generative AI tools and ChatGPT with Prompt Engineering for ChatGPT from Vanderbilt University. Learn more about how these tools work and incorporate them into your daily life to boost productivity. To unlock the power of ChatGPT's free AI tools, try Vanderbilt University's ChatGPT: Master Free AI Tools to Supercharge Productivity Specialization. There, you'll learn how to leverage ChatGPT to boost your decision-making, analytics, and understanding of complex issues, as well as use it to plan, analyze, and enhance your workflows.