

The Turing test is a test invented by Alan Turing, where an interrogator initially had to determine which of two participants was a man and which was a woman. The man (A) and woman (B) are participants that stay in a room apart from the interrogator (C), who must determine which of the participants is the man and which is the woman. C does this by the hand of asking (written) questions. A must try to cause C to make the wrong identification, while B must try to help C make the right identification (Turing, 1950). Turing then suggested that a machine takes the place of participant A in the game, and the interrogator must try to identify which of the two participants is the human. The results of this test is can then help answer the question: Can machines think? Turing, in his article, made the prediction that in about fifty years, it would be possible to program computers powerful enough to play the imitation game so well that an average interrogator will not have more than 70 percent chance of making the right identification after five minutes of questioning (Turing, 1950).

The article of Turing was written in 1950, so his prediction did not exactly come true. However, now in the year 2021, there are definitely some examples of computers that might pass the Turing test. One example is the Google Duplex, an AI assistant which has a function where it will book an appointment for the user (Pichai, 2018). The AI assistant will call for instance your hairdresser, and have a very human-like conversation with them to make an appointment: they even use filler words like “uhm”. Now since the Turing test is a written test, so both the appearance and the voice of the participants is not taken into consideration when trying to identify the human participant, the AI could be close to passing the test (because the only thing that is not necessarily very human-like is the robotic voice). However, this does not really mean that this Google Assistant can think: it can at best imitate a human very well, and it is programmed (by humans) to do so. So the Turing test might not good test to determine if machines can think, but determine if a machine is programmed well enough to imitate a human being so that it can trick an interrogator into thinking it is conversing with a another human, like with the Google Duplex.