

IBM's 'Watson' to take on Jeopardy! champs

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It's man vs. machine as an IBM computer takes on two human champions of the popular US television quiz show Jeopardy! on Monday.

The IBM supercomputer, named "Watson," [is to play two games of Jeopardy!](#) over the next three days against Ken Jennings, who holds the show record of 74 straight wins, and Brad Rutter, winner of \$3.25 million in prize money.

In a practice match at IBM Research headquarters in upstate New York last month, Watson came out on top in terms of prize money, although the computer and the two human contestants correctly answered all of the 15 questions.

Watson, named for IBM founder Thomas Watson, has been under development at IBM Research labs since 2006.

The machine is the latest developed by IBM to challenge mankind -- in 1997, an IBM computer named "Deep Blue" defeated world chess champion Garry Kasparov in a six-game match.

Developing a [supercomputer](#) that can compete with the best human Jeopardy! players, however, involves challenges more complex than those faced by the scientists behind "Deep Blue," according to IBM researchers.

Jeopardy!, which first aired on US television in 1964, tests a player's

knowledge of trivia in a range of categories, from geography to politics to history to sports and entertainment.

A dollar amount is attached to each question and the player with the most money at the end of the game is the winner. Players have money deducted for wrong answers.

Watson, which is not connected to the Internet, plays the game by crunching through multiple algorithms at dizzying speed and attaching a percentage score to what it believes is the correct response.

Watson uses what IBM calls Question Answering technology to tackle Jeopardy! clues, gathering evidence, analyzing it and then scoring and ranking the most likely answer.

The winner of the [Jeopardy!](#) showdown is to receive \$1 million. Second place is worth \$300,000 and the third place finisher pockets \$200,000.

[IBM](#) plans to donate 100 percent of its winnings to charity. Jennings and Rutter plan to give 50 percent of their prize money to charity.

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