

# NY Times is the new sponsor of a rock-paper-scissors supercomputer

March 9 2011, by Katie Gatto



(PhysOrg.com) -- You probably played at least a few games of Rock-Paper-Scissors as a kid. In this game you pretty much have three options, and each of them has both an item to beat, and an item lose to lose to. Rock beats scissors, scissors cut paper and paper covers rock. All you have to do is choose and see how it falls out. It all seems so simple.

So simple that you need a [supercomputer](#) to win it. The New York Times has created a "[You vs. The Computer](#)" game of Rock-Paper-Scissors that pits your ability to play the game versus the supercomputer.

The computer has two different modes: The novice mode and the veteran mode. On the novice mode the system has no access to the data about previously stored games. It simply adapts to your style of [game](#) play and it makes a set of educated guesses about what you are going to do next. Then it takes its best guess and declares what it thinks will be the winning move. When you play on the the veteran mode, the system has not only your own play style data to work from, but it also has access to data from thousands of games that it has played against other real people. That data is used in a process of recall and comparison to determine what its next move should be. If you want to get an idea of how the system makes these determinations just click on the "See what the computer is thinking" and you will be able to see what the common responses are.

For the record, this reporter beat it first time out, in a set of 20, on the veteran level, and I'll tell you how to do it too. Since the system makes its prediction based on your past moves, and data on other strategy, the best way to beat it is to be unpredictable. Throw strategy out the window and indulge your random side for a while.

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