

Google will let artificial intelligence reply to your email

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Google is putting a different twist on the concept of "automated reply" with a new tool that aims to write artificially intelligent responses to your email.

The technology is part of an update to Google's Inbox app for managing and organizing email. The feature announced Tuesday is the latest example of Google's effort to teach machines how to take over some of the tasks typically handled by humans.

The most conspicuous example so far has been Google's 6-year-old project developing cars that can drive without a human steering the wheel. Google also has been using an artificial intelligence program called "RankBrain" to help determine the pecking order in its influential Internet search results.

In this instance, Google says it has created a program that identifies which incoming emails merit quick responses and then figures out the appropriate wording. Up to three choices will be offered as a reply before it's sent. The responses that people select are supposed to help Google's computers learn which ones work best.

Google expects its new "smart reply" option to be particularly popular when people are checking emails on smartphones equipped with smaller, touch-screen keyboards.

The new feature is available to all consumers who use the free version of

Inbox, as well as the more than 2 million businesses who pay for Google's suite of applications designed for work.

Google unveiled Inbox a year ago as a more sophisticated alternative to its popular Gmail service. The Mountain View, California, company hasn't said how many people have installed Inbox. Gmail has more than 400 million worldwide users, according to the research firm comScore.

Google is part of a recently formed parent company, Alphabet Inc.

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