

# The Blizzard Challenge 2008

## Evaluating corpus-based speech synthesis on common databases

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February 1, 2008

In order to better understand and compare research techniques in building corpus-based speech synthesizers on the same data, the Blizzard Challenges 2005, 2006, and 2007 were held. We are now pleased to make this announcement of the fourth challenge: Blizzard Challenge 2008. The basic challenge is to take the released speech data, build synthetic voices, and synthesize a prescribed set of test sentences. The sentences from each synthesizer are then evaluated through extensive listening tests. For the Blizzard Challenge 2008, we are planning to release two databases. We ask participants to submit voices for both databases where possible. However, we will allow submissions for a single database.

**UK English database:** The Centre for Speech Technology Research (CSTR), University of Edinburgh, UK ([www.cstr.ed.ac.uk](http://www.cstr.ed.ac.uk)) will release a 15 hour UK English speech database of a male speaker (standard Southern British English accent). Participation in the Blizzard Challenge 2008 is currently the only way to obtain this data. The license allows participants to retain the data for research purposes after the Challenge has finished. Additional resources, including a pronunciation dictionary and Festival utterance structures, are available to participants under additional license terms, if required.

**Mandarin Chinese database:** The National Laboratory of Pattern Recognition, Institute of Automation, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing, China, will release a 6.5 hour Mandarin Chinese database of a female speaker (Beijing dialect). A lexicon can be provided and we hope also to offer Festival utterance structures (without phoneme alignment).

**Blizzard 2008 workshop:** The results will be presented at a workshop, which we hope will be a satellite of INTERSPEECH 2008 in Brisbane, Australia ([www.interspeech2008.org](http://www.interspeech2008.org)). A condition of participation will be submission of a paper to this workshop. Accepted papers will be presented at the workshop, and published on the Blizzard website.

**Blizzard website:** The website at [http://www.synsig.org/index.php/Blizzard\\_Challenge](http://www.synsig.org/index.php/Blizzard_Challenge) contains further information, including the full rules of participation.

**Registration:** Interested parties should register their intention to participate as soon as possible, by mailing [blizzard@festvox.org](mailto:blizzard@festvox.org). They should identify a contact person in their team, and provide email and postal addresses. A registration fee of 750USD per participant will be required to offset the costs of running the challenge and paying listeners; we believe this is excellent value for money! Instructions for payment of this fee will be sent to registered participants.

**Licenses:** the licenses for the released data can be found via the Blizzard website. Data will be released to each participant once the appropriate license(s) have been agreed to, but no sooner than February 18th 2008. The procedures for this are given on the Blizzard website.

**Mailing list:** please join the [blizzard-discuss](mailto:blizzard-discuss) mailing list. Instructions are on the Blizzard website.

### Provisional timeline

Feb	18	2008	Earliest database release date (7 weeks for voice building)
Apr	7	2008	Test sentences released (1 week for synthesis)
Apr	14	2008	Deadline for submitting synthesized speech
Apr	21	2008	Evaluation system goes live (8 weeks for evaluation)
June	16	2008	End of Evaluation (2 weeks for statistical analysis)
June	27	2008	Results distributed to teams (4 weeks for writing paper)
July	25	2008	Satellite workshop papers due (3 week paper review period)
Aug	15	2008	Notification of acceptance
Sep	22	2008	Presentation of results at the satellite workshop in Brisbane (tentative)
Sep	22-26	2008	Interspeech 2008 in Brisbane

**Further Information:** For further information please contact [blizzard@festvox.org](mailto:blizzard@festvox.org).

A description of the challenge was published at Interspeech 2005:  
<http://www.festvox.org/blizzard/bc2005/IS051946.PDF>