

2.1 Designing a Program

CONCEPT: Programs must be carefully designed before they are written. During the design process, programmers use tools such as pseudocode and flowcharts to create models of programs.

In [Chapter 1](#) you learned that programmers typically use high-level languages to write programs. However, all professional programmers will tell you that a program should be carefully designed before the code is actually written. When programmers begin a new project, they never jump right in and start writing code as the first step. They begin by creating a design of the program.

After designing the program, the programmer begins writing code in a high-level language. Recall from [Chapter 1](#) that each language has its own rules, known as syntax, that must be followed when writing a program. A language's syntax rules dictate things such as how key words, operators, and punctuation characters can be used. A syntax error occurs if the programmer violates any of these rules.

If the program contains a syntax error, or even a simple mistake such as a misspelled key word, the compiler or interpreter will display an error message indicating what the error is. Virtually all code contains syntax errors when it is first written, so the programmer will typically spend some time correcting these. Once all of the syntax errors and simple typing mistakes have been corrected, the program can be compiled and translated into a machine language program (or executed by an interpreter, depending on the language being used).

Once the code is in an executable form, it is then tested to determine whether any logic errors exist. A *logic error* is a mistake that does not prevent the program from running, but causes it to produce incorrect results. (Mathematical mistakes are common causes of logic errors.)

If there are logic errors, the programmer *debugs* the code. This means that the programmer finds and corrects the code that is causing the error. Sometimes during this process, the programmer discovers that the original design must be changed. This entire process, which is known as the *program development cycle*, is repeated until no errors can be found in the program. [Figure 2-1](#) shows the steps in the process.

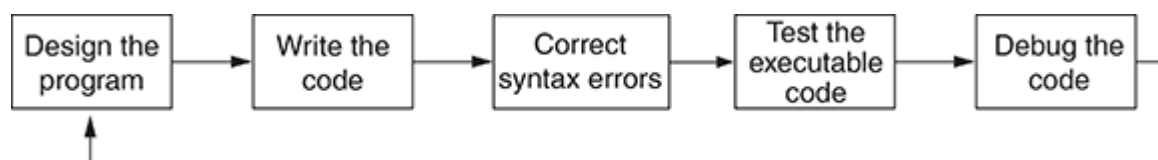


Figure 2-1 The program development cycle

This book focuses entirely on the first step of the program development cycle: designing the program. The process of designing a program is arguably the most important part of the cycle. You can think of a program's design as its foundation. If you build a house on a poorly constructed foundation, eventually you will find yourself doing a lot of work to fix the house! A program's design should be viewed no differently. If your program is designed poorly, eventually you will find yourself doing a lot of work to fix the program.

Designing a Program

The process of designing a program can be summarized in the following two steps: