Software development (also known as **application development**, **software design**, **designing software**, **software application development**, **enterprise application development**, or **platform development**[1]) is the development of a [software](#) product. The term "software development" may be used to refer to the activity of [computer programming](#), which is the process of writing and maintaining the source code, but in a broader sense of the term it includes all that is involved between the conception of the desired software through to the final manifestation of the software, ideally in a planned and structured process.[2] Therefore, software development may include research, new development, prototyping, modification, reuse, re-engineering, maintenance, or any other activities that result in software products.[3]

Software can be developed for a variety of purposes, the three most common being to meet specific needs of a specific client/business (the case with [custom software](#)), to meet a perceived need of some set of potential users (the case with [commercial](#) and [open source software](#)), or for personal use (e.g. a scientist may write software to automate a mundane task). **Embedded software development**, that is, the development of [embedded software](#) such as used for controlling consumer products, requires the development process to be integrated with the development of the controlled physical product.

The need for better [quality control](#) of the software development process has given rise to the discipline of [software engineering](#), which aims to apply the systematic approach exemplified in the [engineering](#) paradigm to the process of software development.