COBOL Programs Name Concepts

Absolutely! COBOL program naming conventions can vary by company or system, but there are many **common patterns** used across IT departments, especially in mainframe environments. Here’s a practical guide to what you’ll typically see:

**1. General Structure**

Most IT shops use a fixed-length or predictable format for COBOL program names, often **7 or 8 characters** (to fit legacy system constraints, like mainframe PDS member names).

**Typical format:**  
tttsssss or XXXNNNNN

* ttt or XXX — **Type or application code**
* sssss or NNNNN — **Sequence or function code**

**2. Prefixes by Type**

* PRO – Production programs
* DEV – Development programs
* TST – Test programs
* UTL – Utility programs
* BAT – Batch programs
* ONL – Online/interactive programs

**3. Application or System Codes**

Many organizations start the program name with a short **application identifier**, e.g.:

* PAY – Payroll
* INV – Inventory
* HRP – Human Resources Payroll
* GL – General Ledger
* ORD – Order Processing

**4. Function Suffixes**

The rest of the name describes the **function** or a unique ID. This could be:

* Numbers: PAYR001 (Payroll Report 1)
* Mnemonics: ORDENTR (Order Entry)
* Module type: GLUPDT (General Ledger Update)
* Process type: ARLOAD (Accounts Receivable Load)

**5. Examples**

| **Program Name** | **Meaning** |
| --- | --- |
| PAYR001 | Payroll Report 1 |
| INVUPDT | Inventory Update |
| ORDENTR | Order Entry |
| GLLOAD | General Ledger Load |
| TSTPAY1 | Test version of PAY1 |
| UTLCLNUP | Utility Cleanup |
| DEVORD2 | Dev Order Program 2 |

**6. Mainframe & JCL Considerations**

* **8 characters max** for PDS member names (hence most COBOL program names are ≤ 8 characters).
* Sometimes, names will match the corresponding **JCL job or PROC** for easier tracking.

**7. Other Practices**

* **Numeric suffixes** for related programs (ORD001, ORD002…).
* **Underscores** are rarely used due to mainframe constraints.
* Some teams use a **single letter** at the end to denote environments:
  + P = Production
  + T = Test
  + D = Development  
    (e.g., PAYR001P)

**8. Documentation & Standards**

Most organizations have an **internal document** listing required program naming standards. If you’re joining a team, always check for their specific guidelines.

**Summary Table**

| **Segment** | **Example** | **Purpose** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Type/App code | PAY, ORD, TST | Application/Type |
| Function/Seq | R001, UPDT, ENTR | Functionality/Seq |
| Suffix (opt.) | P, T, D | Environment (Prod/Test/Dev) |

**Quick Reference**

* 8 characters or less
* Start with system/app/type code
* Use meaningful mnemonics or numbers for function
* No special characters (spaces, underscores, etc.)
* Keep it consistent!