Integrated development environments (IDEs) aim to integrate all such help. Readability is important because programmers spend the majority of their time reading, trying to understand, reusing and modifying existing source code, rather than writing new source code. However, with the concept of the stored-program computer introduced in 1949, both programs and data were stored and manipulated in the same way in computer memory. However, because an assembly language is little more than a different notation for a machine language, two machines with different instruction sets also have different assembly languages. Computer programming or coding is the composition of sequences of instructions, called programs, that computers can follow to perform tasks. Some languages are more prone to some kinds of faults because their specification does not require compilers to perform as much checking as other languages. For example, COBOL is still strong in corporate data centers often on large mainframe computers, Fortran in engineering applications, scripting languages in Web development, and C in embedded software. Sometimes software development is known as software engineering, especially when it employs formal methods or follows an engineering design process. The first computer program is generally dated to 1843, when mathematician Ada Lovelace published an algorithm to calculate a sequence of Bernoulli numbers, intended to be carried out by Charles Babbage's Analytical Engine. Allen Downey, in his book How To Think Like A Computer Scientist, writes: Many computer languages provide a mechanism to call functions provided by shared libraries. Readability is important because programmers spend the majority of their time reading, trying to understand, reusing and modifying existing source code, rather than writing new source code. Assembly languages were soon developed that let the programmer specify instruction in a text format (e.g., ADD X, TOTAL), with abbreviations for each operation code and meaningful names for specifying addresses. Integrated development environments (IDEs) aim to integrate all such help. In the 9th century, the Arab mathematician Al-Kindi described a cryptographic algorithm for deciphering encrypted code, in A Manuscript on Deciphering Cryptographic Messages. The academic field and the engineering practice of computer programming are both largely concerned with discovering and implementing the most efficient algorithms for a given class of problems.

Trial-and-error/divide-and-conquer is needed: the programmer will try to remove some parts of the original test case and check if the problem still exists. Machine code was the language of early programs, written in the instruction set of the particular machine, often in binary notation. There are many approaches to the Software development process. Programmers typically use high-level programming languages that are more easily intelligible to humans than machine code, which is directly executed by the central processing unit. Unreadable code often leads to bugs, inefficiencies, and duplicated code. Computer programmers are those who write computer software. Languages form an approximate spectrum from "low-level" to "high-level"; "low-level" languages are typically more machine-oriented and faster to execute, whereas "high-level" languages are more abstract and easier to use but execute less quickly. However, because an assembly language is little more than a different notation for a machine language, two machines with different instruction sets also have different assembly languages. FORTRAN, the first widely used high-level language to have a functional implementation, came out in 1957, and many other languages were soon developed—in particular, COBOL aimed at commercial data processing, and Lisp for computer research. Techniques like Code refactoring can enhance readability.