Expert programmers are familiar with a variety of well-established algorithms and their respective complexities and use this knowledge to choose algorithms that are best suited to the circumstances. Techniques like Code refactoring can enhance readability. Various visual programming languages have also been developed with the intent to resolve readability concerns by adopting non-traditional approaches to code structure and display. It is usually easier to code in "high-level" languages than in "low-level" ones. Normally the first step in debugging is to attempt to reproduce the problem. There exist a lot of different approaches for each of those tasks. This can be a non-trivial task, for example as with parallel processes or some unusual software bugs. A study found that a few simple readability transformations made code shorter and drastically reduced the time to understand it. While these are sometimes considered programming, often the term software development is used for this larger overall process - with the terms programming, implementation, and coding reserved for the writing and editing of code per se. Scripting and breakpointing is also part of this 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. In 1801, the Jacquard loom could produce entirely different weaves by changing the "program" - a series of pasteboard cards with holes punched in them. 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. When debugging the problem in a GUI, the programmer can try to skip some user interaction from the original problem description and check if remaining actions are sufficient for bugs to appear.

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. Sometimes software development is known as software engineering, especially when it employs formal methods or follows an engineering design process. Computer programmers are those who write computer software. The first compiler related tool, the A-0 System, was developed in 1952 by Grace Hopper, who also coined the term 'compiler'. 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, readability is more than just programming style. Various visual programming languages have also been developed with the intent to resolve readability concerns by adopting non-traditional approaches to code structure and display. After the bug is reproduced, the input of the program may need to be simplified to make it easier to debug. 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. Debugging is often done with IDEs. Standalone debuggers like GDB are also used, and these often provide less of a visual environment, usually using a command line. In the 1880s, Herman Hollerith invented the concept of storing data in machine-readable form.