New languages are generally designed around the syntax of a prior language with new functionality added, (for example C++ adds object-orientation to C, and Java adds memory management and bytecode to C++, but as a result, loses efficiency and the ability for low-level manipulation). 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.

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. Trade-offs from this ideal involve finding enough programmers who know the language to build a team, the availability of compilers for that language, and the efficiency with which programs written in a given language execute. In 1801, the Jacquard loom could produce entirely different weaves by changing the "program" – a series of pasteboard cards with holes punched in them. 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. 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. High-level languages made the process of developing a program simpler and more understandable, and less bound to the underlying hardware. They are the building blocks for all software, from the simplest applications to the most sophisticated ones. Whatever the approach to development may be, the final program must satisfy some fundamental properties. The Unified Modeling Language (UML) is a notation used for both the OOAD and MDA. A similar technique used for database design is Entity-Relationship Modeling (ER Modeling). By the late 1960s, data storage devices and computer terminals became inexpensive enough that programs could be created by typing directly into the computers. Programming languages are essential for software development.

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. They are the building blocks for all software, from the simplest applications to the most sophisticated ones. Following a consistent programming style often helps readability. Machine code was the language of early programs, written in the instruction set of the particular machine, often in binary notation. 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. It affects the aspects of quality above, including portability, usability and most importantly maintainability. Sometimes software development is known as software engineering, especially when it employs formal methods or follows an engineering design process. Unreadable code often leads to bugs, inefficiencies, and duplicated code. In the 9th century, the Arab mathematician Al-Kindi described a cryptographic algorithm for deciphering encrypted code, in A Manuscript on Deciphering Cryptographic Messages. Provided the functions in a library follow the appropriate run-time conventions (e.g., method of passing arguments), then these functions may be written in any other language.