

In 1801, the Jacquard loom could produce entirely different weaves by changing the "program" – a series of pasteboard cards with holes punched in them. Programs were mostly entered using punched cards or paper tape. A study found that a few simple readability transformations made code shorter and drastically reduced the time to understand it. 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). Debugging is a very important task in the software development process since having defects in a program can have significant consequences for its users.

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Programmable devices have existed for centuries. A study found that a few simple readability transformations made code shorter and drastically reduced the time to understand it. 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. By the late 1960s, data storage devices and computer terminals became inexpensive enough that programs could be created by typing directly into the computers. 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. Many factors, having little or nothing to do with the ability of the computer to efficiently compile and execute the code, contribute to readability. However, Charles Babbage had already written his first program for the Analytical Engine in 1837. Scripting and breakpointing is also part of this process. Many programmers use forms of Agile software development where the various stages of formal software development are more integrated together into short cycles that take a few weeks rather than years. 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. In 1801, the Jacquard loom could produce entirely different weaves by changing the "program" – a series of pasteboard cards with holes punched in them. Proficient programming usually requires expertise in several different subjects, including knowledge of the application domain, details of programming languages and generic code libraries, specialized algorithms, and formal logic. Popular modeling techniques include Object-Oriented Analysis and Design (OOAD) and Model-Driven Architecture (MDA). 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. Integrated development environments (IDEs) aim to integrate all such help. It is usually easier to code in "high-level" languages than in "low-level" ones. This can be a non-trivial task, for example as with parallel processes or some unusual software bugs. Compilers harnessed the power of computers to make programming easier by allowing programmers to specify calculations by entering a formula using infix notation.