As early as the 9th century, a programmable music sequencer was invented by the Persian Banu Musa brothers, who described an automated mechanical flute player in the Book of Ingenious Devices.  
A study found that a few simple readability transformations made code shorter and drastically reduced the time to understand it.  
In 1801, the Jacquard loom could produce entirely different weaves by changing the "program" – a series of pasteboard cards with holes punched in them.  
Relatedly, software engineering combines engineering techniques and principles with software development.  
Text editors were also developed that allowed changes and corrections to be made much more easily than with punched cards.  
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.  
However, Charles Babbage had already written his first program for the Analytical Engine in 1837.  
Also, those involved with software development may at times engage in reverse engineering, which is the practice of seeking to understand an existing program so as to re-implement its function in some way.  
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.  
 Programmable devices have existed for centuries.  
 High-level languages made the process of developing a program simpler and more understandable, and less bound to the underlying hardware.  
Many factors, having little or nothing to do with the ability of the computer to efficiently compile and execute the code, contribute to readability.  
It is usually easier to code in "high-level" languages than in "low-level" ones.  
By the late 1960s, data storage devices and computer terminals became inexpensive enough that programs could be created by typing directly into the computers.  
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.