The purpose of programming is to find a sequence of instructions that will automate the performance of a task (which can be as complex as an operating system) on a computer, often for solving a given problem.  
Many applications use a mix of several languages in their construction and use.  
In 1206, the Arab engineer Al-Jazari invented a programmable drum machine where a musical mechanical automaton could be made to play different rhythms and drum patterns, via pegs and cams.  
The source code of a program is written in one or more languages that are intelligible to programmers, rather than machine code, which is directly executed by the central processing unit.  
However, Charles Babbage had already written his first program for the Analytical Engine in 1837.  
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.  
Proficient programming thus usually requires expertise in several different subjects, including knowledge of the application domain, specialized algorithms, and formal logic.  
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.  
They are the building blocks for all software, from the simplest applications to the most sophisticated ones.  
Ideally, the programming language best suited for the task at hand will be selected.  
Programming languages are essential for software development.  
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.  
Methods of measuring programming language popularity include: counting the number of job advertisements that mention the language, the number of books sold and courses teaching the language (this overestimates the importance of newer languages), and estimates of the number of existing lines of code written in the language (this underestimates the number of users of business languages such as COBOL).  
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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.