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The History of Computers

Computers have become an incredibly important part of our everyday lives, controlling every part of the world and our personal lives. It is said that the average American spends 7 hours and 4 minutes looking at a screen each day, which is about ¼ of the day. This could mean scrolling on social media, doing work on the computer, looking at a screen to order food, or even a touchscreen in a car. But how did this all start? It may seem ludicrous now, but the world was once fully analog and people had to actually do math by hand, not on the calculator app. I for one could not imagine such a thing. Especially now in 2024, most kids and young people are glued to their phones, with no regard or knowledge of how they even came to be. In this paper I will be exploring how computer models developed over time, the influential figures that shaped computer science, and giving a timeline to help understand where this all fits in to history.

It all started with Charles Babbage, who I will introduce later in this paper, but he was the catalyst who in the early 1820s created the Difference Engine. It was a mechanical computer that could produce basic computations. It was steam powered and was used to solve numerical tables such as logarithms. Then in 1830 he created the Analytical Engine. Then came Hewlett-Packard, a company founded in a Palo Alto, California garage. Their first product was a HP 200A Audio Oscillator. It quickly became a very popular piece of test equipment for engineers all over the world.

Models through time

* <https://www.computerhistory.org/timeline/computers/>
* <https://www.bookyourdata.com/blog/computers-changed-history>

Influential figures

* <https://www.gcu.edu/blog/engineering-technology/famous-computer-scientists-throughout-history>

Timeline of events

* <https://www.computerhistory.org/timeline/1933/>