

# A Brief (and Pretty Incomplete) History of Programming Languages

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## HISTORY OF PROGRAMMING LANGUAGES



- “Prehistory”
- The 1940s: von Neumann and Zuse
- The 1950s: The first programming language
- The 1960s: An explosion in programming languages
- The 1970s: Simplicity, abstraction, study
- The 1980s: Consolidation and new directions
- The 1990s: The explosion of the World Wide Web
- The 21st century

- Cuneiform writing used in the **Babylon**, founded by Hammurabi around **1790 BC**
  - poems, stories, contracts, records, astronomy, **math**



Famous Babylonian math tablet (Plimpton 322) involving Pythagorean triples,  $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$  – with a mistake! (or **bug**)

- Weird math (base 60!)
  - two characters to express a (base-60) digit
  - decimal point not specified (must be figured out from context)

## WRITTEN LANGUAGE TO DESCRIBE COMPUTATIONAL PROCEDURES

*A cistern.*

*The length equals the height.*

*A certain volume of dirt has been excavated.*

*The cross-sectional area plus this volume comes to 110.*

*The length is 30. What is the width?*

*You should multiply the length, 30, by ...*

— Translation by Donald Knuth

- No variables
- Instead, numbers serve as a running example of the procedure being described
  - “This is the procedure”
- Programming is among the earliest uses to which written language was put
  - Programming languages design has tried to get as close to that as possible from the very beginning...

- Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Khwārizmī, or **Mohammed Al-Khorezmi** for short (Baghdad, 780–850)
  - One little book: “The Compendious Book on Calculation by Completion and Balancing”
    - Compilation and extension of known rules for solving quadratic equations and other problems
    - Used as a mathematics text in Europe for **eight hundred years**
  - The book is considered the foundation of **algebra**
  - Invention of the notions of **algorithms** and **data structures**
- Earlier algorithms:
  - Euclid (300 BC): an algorithm for computing the **GCD of two numbers**
  - Eratosthenes (about same time): one of the most efficient algorithms for finding small primes (the **sieve of Eratosthenes**)
- Alexander de Villa Dei (1220): Canto de Algorismo = algorithms in Latin verse
- Natural language (even poetry!) plus math rather than programming languages

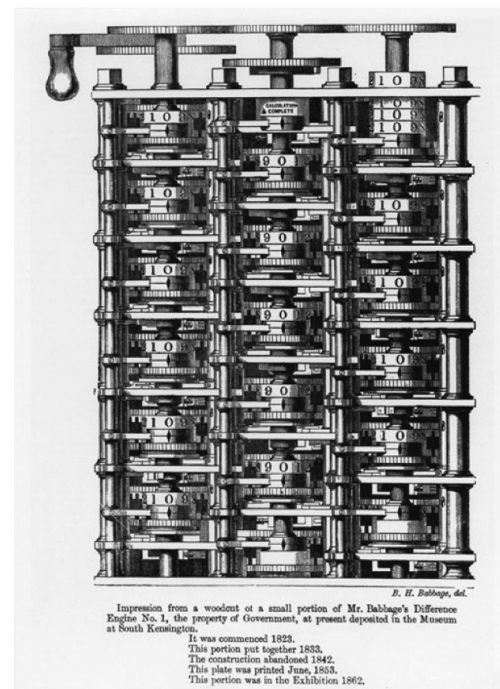
## THE FIRST PROGRAMMING ENVIRONMENTS



- **Jacquard loom** (early 1800s) translated card patterns into cloth designs
- **Charles Babbage's Analytical Engine** (1830s & 40s)
  - First programmer: **Augusta Ada King, Countess of Lovelace** (today commonly known as **Ada Lovelace**)

*The engine can arrange and combine its numerical quantities exactly as if they were letters or any other general symbols; and in fact might bring out its results in algebraic notation, were provision made.*

  - Programs were **punched cards** containing **data** and **operations**



# THE 1940S: VON NEUMANN AND ZUSE

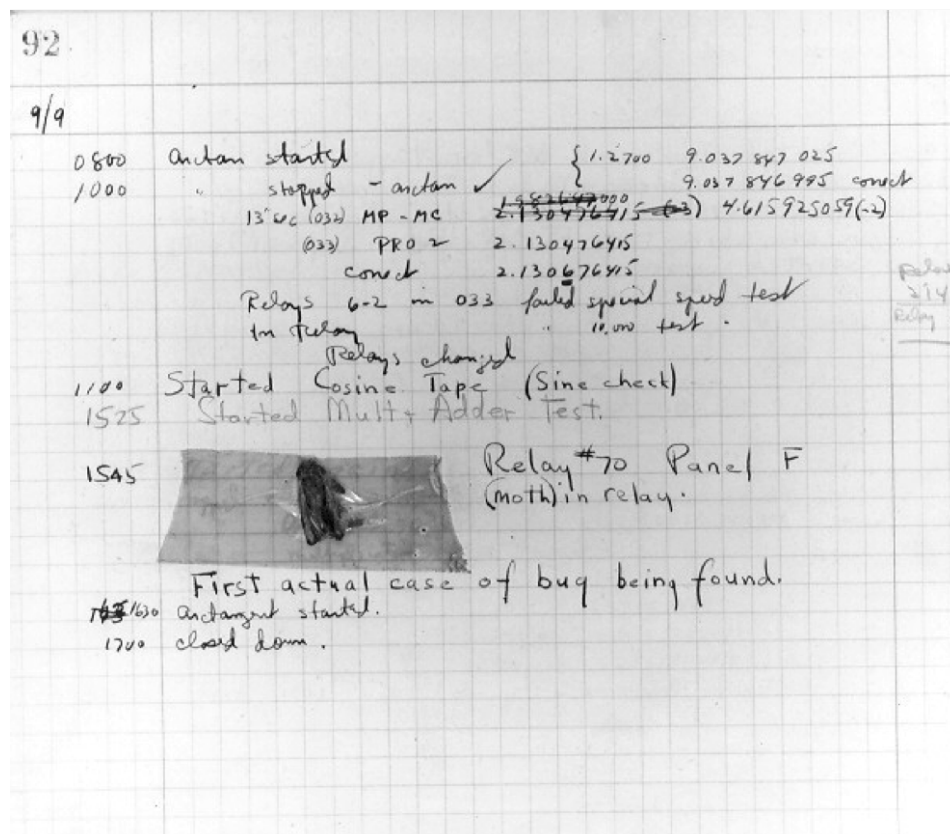


- Harvard Mark I (1943) – Howard Aiken (IBM), Grace Hopper (Navy) → first electro-mechanical computer
  - Harvard Mark II: **First computer bug**
- ENIAC (1946) – Presper Eckert, John Mauchly (U. Penn.) → First electronic computer
- Programming was manual, with switches and cables
- **John von Neumann** led a team that built computers with stored programs and a central processing unit (as we know them today)
- **Konrad Zuse** designed the first programming language as we know it (**Plankalkul** = program calculus)
  - In Germany, in isolation because of the war; work finally published in 1972
  - Advanced data type features: floating point, arrays, records
  - Invariants for correctness
  - Rather cumbersome notation

$$A[7] := 5 \times B[6] \rightarrow \begin{array}{c|c} & \begin{array}{c} 5 \quad * \quad B \Rightarrow A \\ 6 \quad \quad 7 \quad \text{(subscripts)} \\ S \quad \quad 1.n \quad 1.n \quad \text{(data types)} \end{array} \end{array}$$

- Never implemented

## THE FIRST COMPUTER BUG!





- **FORTRAN** (1957, John Backus)
  - FORMula TRANslator – designed for scientific programming
  - Many new features over time: FORTRAN II, FORTRAN IV, FORTRAN 66, FORTRAN 77 (structured programs, char's), Fortran 90 (arrays, modules), Fortran 2003 (objects), Fortran 2008 (concurrent programming)
  - *Very* efficient compilation into fast machine code
- **COBOL** (1960, Adm. Grace Hopper)
 

*Mathematical programs should be written in mathematical notation, data processing programs should be written in English statements — G. Hopper, 1953*

  - Committee sponsored by US Department of Defence
  - Biggest contribution was the idea that programs should be written in a way that is easily understood
  - Adopted widely by businesses for record-keeping applications
  - Record structure, separation of data from execution part, versatile formatting of output using “pictures”
  - ANSI standards (1968, 1974, 1985)

## FORTRAN EXAMPLE



```

IMPLICIT INTEGER (A-Z)
DIMENSION ORD(N),POPLST(2,20)
INTEGER X,XX,Z,ZZ,Y
INTEGER A(N)
NDEEP=0
U1=N
L1=1
DO 1 I=1,N
1  ORD(I)=I
2  IF (U1.LE.L1) RETURN
3  L=L1
  U=U1
4  P=L
  Q=U
  X=A(ORD(P))
  Z=A(ORD(Q))
  IF (X.LE.Z) GO TO 5 ....
5
    
```



```

ENVIRONMENT DIVISION.
CONFIGURATION SECTION.
SOURCE-COMPUTER.  IBM-4381.
OBJECT-COMPUTER.  IBM-4381.

DATA DIVISION.
WORKING-STORAGE SECTION.
01 INPUT-FIELD.
05 INPUT-VALUE PIC 99 VALUE ZERO.
01 CALCULATION-FIELD.
05 SUM-VALUE      PIC 9(03) VALUE ZERO.
05 AVERAGE-VALUE PIC 9(03)V99 VALUE ZERO.
01 OUTPUT-FIELD.
05 EDIT-FIELD PIC ZZ9.99 VALUE ZERO.

PROCEDURE DIVISION.
1000-MAIN.
    PERFORM 2000-INPUT-ADD 10 TIMES.
    DIVIDE 10 INTO SUM-VALUE GIVING AVERAGE-VALUE.
2000-INPUT-ADD. ...
    
```

## THE 1950S: THE FIRST LANGUAGES (CONT'D)



- **Algol 60**
  - General, expressive language; most current imperatives are derivatives
  - Introduced many modern concepts
 

structured programming	reserved keywords	type declarations
recursion	stack	call-by-value
user defined types	free-format	dynamic arrays
  - **Stack-based run time environment**
  - Great success and also great failure (ahead of its time, too complex, lack of I/O, lack of support from IBM) → entrenchment of Fortran
- **LISP** (John McCarthy, MIT)
  - LISt Processing → the main data structure is the (singly linked) list
  - Untyped, messy language, but good for problems we solve by trial and error (**quick prototyping**) → used in the past in many AI applications
  - Historically inefficient on Von Neumann machines
  - Main processing unit: the recursive function → influenced the modern functional languages such as ML, Miranda, Haskell
  - Contemporary variants include Common Lisp, Scheme, Emacs Lisp



```

procedure Absmax(a) Size:(n, m) Result:(y) Subscripts:(i, k);
  value n, m;
  array a;
  integer n, m, i, k;
  real y;
comment The absolute greatest element of the matrix a, of size
  n by m is transferred to y, and the subscripts of this element
  to i and k;
begin
  integer p, q;
  y := 0; i := k := 1;
  for p:=1 step 1 until n do
  for q:=1 step 1 until m do
    if abs(a[p, q]) > y then
      begin y := abs(a[p, q]);
        i := p; k := q
      end
  end
end Absmax

```

## LISP EXAMPLE



```

(defun mapcar (fun list)
  "Applies FUN on every element of LIST and returns the
  list of results (iterative version)."
```

```

  (let ((results nil))
    (dolist (x list)
      (setq results (cons (apply #'fun x) results)))
    (reverse results)))

(defun mapcar (fun list)
  "Applies FUN on every element of LIST and returns the
  list of results (recursive version)."
```

```

  (cons (apply #'fun (car list))
        (mapcar fun (cdr list))))

```





- Hundreds of languages were developed
- **PL/1** (1964)
  - Combined features of FORTRAN, COBOL, Algol 60 and more!
  - Translators were slow, huge, and unreliable
  - Some say it was ahead of its time. . .
- **Algol 68** → still ahead of its time!
- **Simula** (or what would be called today Object-oriented Algol)
- **BASIC**
- etc.

## THE 1970S: SIMPLICITY, ABSTRACTION, STUDY



- **Algol-W** then **Pascal** (Nicklaus Wirth and C.A.R. Hoare) → small, simple, efficient (reaction against the 60s), ideal for teaching
- **C** (Dennis Ritchie)
  - Constructed as a portable assembler to build Unix for various architectures
  - But also has modern features (structured programming, data structures, etc.)
  - The primary API for Unix (Mac OS, Linux, etc.) is still C!
- **Euclid** (University of Toronto, 1977)
  - Main goal → formal program verification
  - extends Pascal to include abstract data types
- **Scheme** (1978, MIT) → simplified, cleaner Lisp





```
#include <stdio.h>
main(t,_,a)
char*a;
{return!0<t?t<3?
main(-79,-13,a+
main(-87,1-_,
main(-86, 0, a+1 )
+a)):
1,
t<_?
main(t+1, _, a )
:3,
main ( -94, -27+t, a )
&&t == 2 ?_
<13 ?
main ( 2, _+1, "%s %d %d\n" )
:9:16:
t<0?
t<-72?
main( _, t,
"@n',#/'*{}w+/w#cdnr/+,{}r/*de}+,*{**+,/w{%+,/w#q#n+,/#{l,+,/n{n+,/+##n+,/#;\
#q#n+,/+k#;*,/'r : 'd*'3,){w+K w'K:'+'e#';dq# 'l q#'+d'K#!/+k#;\
q# 'r}eKK#}w'r}eKK{nl}'/##;#q#n')(){#}w')(){nl}'/+#n';d}rw' i;# }{nl}!/n{n#'; \
r{#w'r nc{nl}'/#{l,+'K {rw' iK{;[{nl}]/w#q#\
\
n'wk nw' iwk{KK{nl}!/w{% 'l##w# ' i; :{nl}'/*{q#'ld;r'}{nlwb!/*de}'c ;;\
{nl}'-{r}w'/'+,}##*}#nc,' #nw'/' +kd'+e}+;\
#'rdq#w! nr'/' ) }+}{rl#'{n' ' )# }'+}##(!!/" )
:
t<-50?
_==*a ?
putchar(31[a]):
main(-65,_,a+1)
:
main(( *a == '/' ) + t, _, a + 1 )
:
0<t?
main ( 2, 2 , "%s")
/*a==2/211
```

## THE 1980s: CONSOLIDATION & NEW DIRECTIONS



- **ML** → mostly functional language (like Lisp) with cleaner (math-like) syntax
- **Prolog** (Université Aix Marseille)
  - PROgrammation en LOGique / PROgramming in LOGic → describes the problem at hand as known facts and inference rules
  - Notable industrial uses: IBM Watson, Apache UIMA, and the... Buran space plane
- Objects 'r' Us:
  - **Smalltalk** → the purest example of object-oriented language
  - **C++** → extend a popular language (C) with strongly typed object system
  - **Eiffel** → object-oriented Pascal



- 1990s

- **Java** → eliminate the non-object-oriented features of C++
- **Haskell** → purely functional programming language

```
quicksort [] = []  
quicksort (x:xs) = quicksort [y|x <- xs, y < x] ++ [x] ++  
                   quicksort [y|x <- xs, y >= x]
```

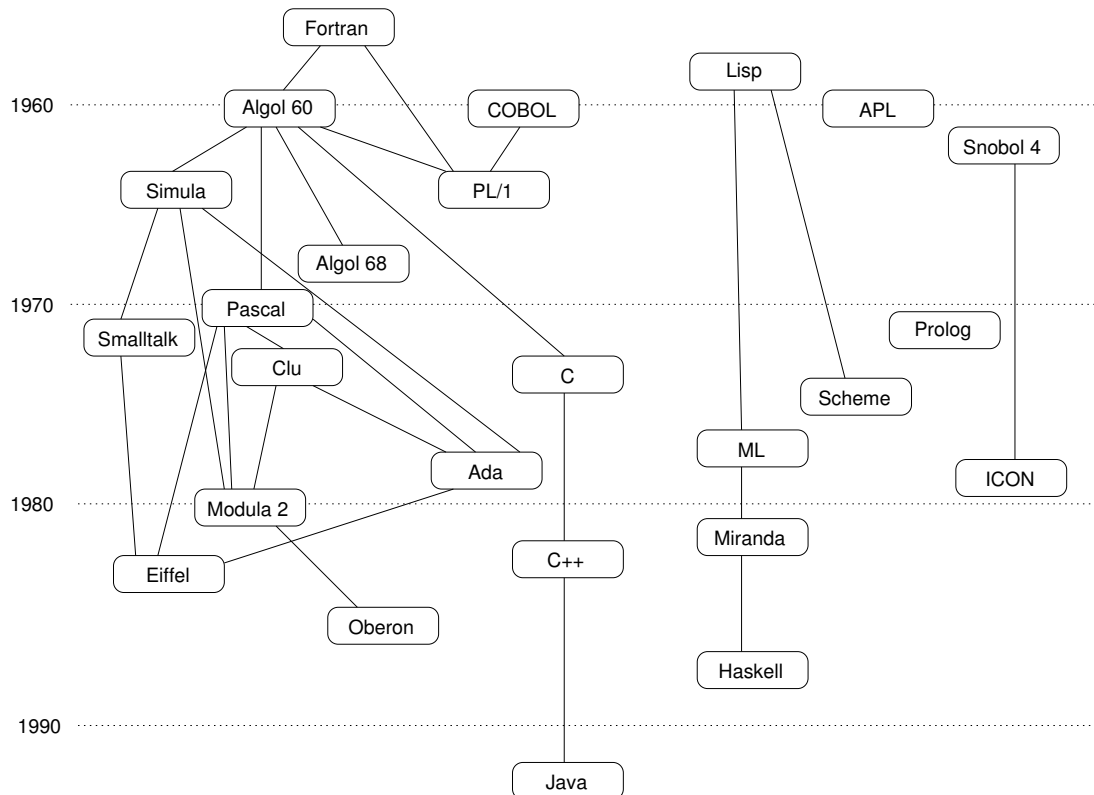
- 2000s

- **Multi-paradigm language** (procedural, object-oriented, functional, etc.)
  - First mainstream such a language: **Python**
- **Languages for the Web**
  - Java applets
  - Languages within Web pages (PHP, server-side includes)
- Emphasis on **cross-platform development**
  - Develop on PC, run on cell phones, game consoles, and toasters

## WHERE ARE WE NOW



- Computing devices are ubiquitous, and so is the Internet and Web
- C and C++ are the most widely used system programming languages
- Java had peaked. . . and then came Android
- Most students learn C / C++ or Java
- Web 2.0 programming (PHP, etc.)
- COBOL and Java are used for business applications
- Fortran is the main language on supercomputers
  - We already have Object-Oriented Fortran!
  - C++ is growing
- Several non-mainstream (but cleaner) languages rising (Ruby, Python, Haskell) → but who knows what the future has in store
  - Object-Oriented COBOL?



## BRAIN<sup>F\*\*K</sup>

- A Brain<sup>F\*\*K</sup> program has an implicit byte pointer, called “**the pointer**”, which is free to move around within an array of 30,000 bytes, initially all set to zero
- The pointer is initialized to point to the beginning of this array
- The Brain<sup>F\*\*K</sup> programming language consists of eight commands, each of which is represented as a single character
  - > Increment the pointer
  - < Decrement the pointer
  - + Increment the byte at the pointer
  - Decrement the byte at the pointer
  - . Output the byte at the pointer
  - , Input a byte and store it in the byte at the pointer
  - [ Jump past the matching ] if the byte at the pointer is zero
  - ] Jump to the matching [

```
>+++++++[<++++++>-]<.>++++++[<++++>-]<+.+++++. .++
+. [-]>++++++[<++++>-] <.#>+++++++[<++++>-]<.>+++
+++++[<++++>-]<.+ .----- .----- [-]>+++++ [ <++++
>-]<+. [-]+++++++.
```