

History of computers: A brief timeline in the 19th Century

By Timothy Williamson published December 01, 2021

The history of computers goes back over 200 years. At first theorized by mathematicians and entrepreneurs, during the 19th century mechanical calculating machines were designed and built to solve the increasingly complex number-crunching challenges.

Here's a brief history of computers, from their primitive number-crunching origins to the powerful modern-day machines that surf the Internet, run games and stream multimedia.



19TH CENTURY COMPUTERS

1801: Joseph Marie Jacquard, a French merchant and inventor invents a loom that uses punched wooden cards to automatically weave fabric designs. Early computers would use similar punch cards.

1821: English mathematician *Charles Babbage* conceives of a steam-driven calculating machine that would be able to compute tables of numbers. Funded by the British government, the project, called the "**Difference Engine**" fails due to the lack of technology at the time, according to the University of *Minnesota*

1848: *Ada Lovelace*, an English mathematician and the daughter of poet Lord Byron, writes the world's first computer program. According to *Anna Siffert*, a professor of theoretical mathematics at the *University of*

Münster in Germany, Lovelace writes the first program while translating a paper on *Babbage's Analytical Engine* from French into English. "She also provides her own comments on the text. Her annotations, simply called "notes," turn out to be three times as long as the actual transcript," *Siffert* wrote in an article for The Max Planck Society. "*Lovelace* also adds a step-by-step description for computation of *Bernoulli* numbers with *Babbage's* machine — basically an algorithm — which, in effect, makes her the world's first computer programmer." *Bernoulli* numbers are a sequence of rational numbers often used in computation.


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