A Chronology of Computer History:

3000 BC: Dust abacus is invented, probably in Babylonia.

500 BC: Bead and wire abacus originates in Egypt.

200 AD: Saun-pan computing tray is used in China; soroban computing tray used in Japan.

1617: Scottish inventor John Napier uses bones to demonstrate division by subtraction and multiplication by addition.


1642: Blaise Pascal builds the first numerical calculating machine in Paris.

1780: American Benjamin Franklin discovers electricity.

1876: Telephone is invented by Alexander Graham Bell.

1921: Czech word robot is used to describe mechanical workers in the play R.U.R. by Karel Capek.


1933: First electronic talking machine, the Voder, is built by Dudley, who follows in 1939 with the Vocoder (Voice coder).

1946: ENIAC (Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer), with 18,000 vacuum tubes, is dedicated at the University of Pennsylvania. It was 8 by 100 feet and weighed 80 tons. It could do 5,000 additions and 360 multiplications per second.

1946: Term bit for binary digit is used for first time by John Tukey.

1953: First magnetic tape device, the IBM 726, is introduced with 100 character-per-inch density and 75 inches-per-second speed.

1954: FORTRAN is created by John Backus at IBM. Harlan Herrick runs the first successful FORTRAN program.

1958: LISP is developed on the IBM 704 at MIT under John McCarthy.

1959: COBOL is defined by the Conference on Data System Languages (Codasyl), based on Grace Hoppers Flow-Matic.


1962: APL (A Programming Language) is developed by Ken Iverson, Harvard University and IBM.

1964: BASIC (Beginners All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Language) is created by Tom Kurtz and John Kemeny of Dartmouth. First time-sharing BASIC program runs.

1965: First computer science Ph.D. is granted to Richard L. Wexelblat at the University of Pennsylvania.


1971: Floppy disks are introduced to load the IBM 370 microcode.

1971: Intel Corporation announces the first microprocessor, the Intel 4004, developed by a team headed by Marcian E. Hoff.

1975: MITS introduces the Altair personal computer, named after a Star Trek episode, A Voyage to Altair. The kit cost $397 for a 256 byte computer. The I/O consisted of switches and lights. It was designed by Ed Roberts and Bill Yates.
1975: Microsoft is founded after Bill Gates and Paul Allen adapt and sell BASIC to MITS for the Altair PC.

1977: Apple Computer is founded and introduces the Apple II personal computer.

1977: Apple, Commodore, and Tandy begin selling personal computers.

1978: Total computers in use in the U.S. exceed a half million units.


1980: Total computers in use in the U.S. exceed one million units.

1981: Commodore introduces the VIC-20 home computer, which sells over one million units.

1982: Microsoft licenses MS-DOS to 50 microcomputer manufacturers in the first 16 months of availability.

1982: Time Magazine names the computer its Man of the Year.

1983: Total computers in use in the U.S. exceed ten million units.

1984: Apple introduces the Macintosh computer.

1986: The number of computers in the U.S. exceeds 30 million.

1989: Intel announces the 80486 microprocessor and the I860 RISC/coprocessor chip. Both chips have over one million transistors.

1989: Apple introduces its long awaited portable Macintosh.

1989: The number of computers in the U.S. exceeds 50M units.

1989: The first 80486-based computers are introduced.

1990: Microsoft introduces Windows 3.0.

1991: Microsoft rolls out DOS 5.0 with great success.

1992: IBM releases OS/2 Version 2.0 and ships over 1M units.

1992: Microsoft introduces Windows 3.1 and ships nearly 10M units.

1992: Compaq announces several new lines of PCs and becomes a price trend setter.

1992: IBM follows Compaq's strategy and introduces aggressively priced PCs--also with good success.

1992: Intel says its next microprocessor will be called Pentium instead of 586.

1993: Compaq introduces the Presario, a PC family targeted for the home market.

1993: IBM announces OS/2 for Windows, which upgrades the Windows environment to OS/2.

1994: Macintoshes using the PowerPC start shipping.

1994: Intel introduces the 486DX4 clock-tripling microprocessor

1995: Microsoft release Windows 95

1995: Sony introduces PlayStation.


1998: Microsoft releases Windows 98

2001: Microsoft releases Windows XP