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COMPUTER GENERATIONS

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By: Your Name

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First-Generation (1948-1951)

First-generation computers were very large (one machine could occupy an entire room). Information was given to the computer by **punching** holes into cards and then "feeding" these cards into the computer. Output could be printed or recorded on punched cards. First-generation machines had small **memory capacities** even though they were so large. The computers used thousands of vacuum tubes (elements that work like a light bulb). The *vacuum tubes* generated such a large degree of heat that the machines required special air-conditioning systems.

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Second-Generation (1958-1964)

During this period vacuum tubes were replaced with tiny solid-state transistors. These computers produced less heat, worked more **quickly and reliably**, and had larger storage capacities than first-generation machines. Input and output could be recorded on magnetic tape as well as on punched cards.

Third-Generation (1964-1970)

Third-generation computers introduced the *integrated circuit* (IC) to computing. ICs replaced transistors; they consist of thousands of small circuits impressed on a silicon chip that was, in 1965, only one quarter square inch in size. The use of ICs meant faster processing speeds, lower costs, and

To do footers, click on VIEW and choose HEADER AND FOOTER. Now, go to the bottom the page. In the box, type your name in the left, tab twice, and

increased storage capacity. During this period, minicomputers were developed, which enabled **small businesses** to have computers. IBM and Digital Equipment Corporation developed important third-generation computers.

Fourth-Generation (1970-Present)

Large-scale integrated circuits were developed. These circuits compress increasing numbers of microelectronic components into less space. A single silicon chip could exceed the speeds and storage capacities of machines that used *hundreds of thousands* of ICs. Fourth-generation machines could operate 10,000 times faster than first-generation machines. The large-scale integrated circuit was used to develop the microcomputer.

Fifth-Generation

Some analysts believe that with the development of both artificial intelligence and supercomputers, we are beginning a new generation. *Artificial intelligence* (AI) has introduced new goals to computer technology. AI developers try to imitate important aspects of human thinking. Supercomputers, the **largest and fastest** computers available, are capable of performing hundreds of millions of calculations in a single second. Supercomputers used to be used by only a few major companies, government agencies, and universities. Today, they are more readily available and cheaper.