**BASIC**

**BASIC** (an acronym for Beginner's All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Code) is a family of high-level programming languages. The original **BASIC** was designed in 1964 by John George Kemeny and Thomas Eugene Kurtz at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, USA to provide computer access to non-science students. Many versions of **BASIC**, with widely differing features and syntax, emerged during the 1960s and 70s.

The introduction of the **Altair 8800** in 1975 led Gates and Allen to form Microsoft to make a **BASIC** interpreter for that platform. They were most familiar with **BASIC-PLUS** from the PDP-11, and patterned their new **BASIC** on that version. Many now-common features, like the LEFT/RIGHT/MID string handling, come from **BASIC-PLUS**. From that point on, Microsoft **BASIC** has been the standard by which all are measured.

The Atari 8-bit machines were originally game consoles but switched to be home computers while they were being designed. This led to a need for **BASIC** on the platform. Atari licensed MS **BASIC**, but could not get it to fit into an 8kB ROM, which was all that was available at the time. They turned to Shepardson Microsystems, who produced **Atari BASIC** to fill this need. **Atari BASIC** had many differences from the MS **BASIC**s of the era, and the Atari was always unique in this regard.

**Atari BASIC** was very slow, much slower than **BASIC** running on other home computers that were (otherwise) slower than the Atari. This led to a profusion of new **BASIC**s for the platform, perhaps unlike any other 8-bit machine of the era. The release of **Turbo-BASIC XL** in 1985 was something like a bomb going off, largely replacing **Atari BASIC** wholesale. There was really nothing similar in the Commodore or Apple II markets, where there were lots of basics but most remained obscure.

Development continues; **Altirra Basic**, **Basic++** and **FastBasic** were all written in the 2010s, and they will likely not be the last.

**Basic versions for Atari 8 bit computers in order of production year**

- **Atari BASIC**
- **Microsoft Basic I**
- **Microsoft Basic II**
- **OSS Basic A+**
- **OSS Basic XL**
- **OSS Basic XE**
- **OSS Integer Basic**
- **Turbo-BASIC XL**
- **Hypra-Soft-Basic**
- **Altirra Basic**
- **U-Basic**
- **CTH-FastBasic**
- **Advan Basic**
- **Basic++**
- **FastBasic**

**Basic related**

- Ken's Super **BASIC** - loadable extensions for **Atari BASIC**, no longer available.
- **Enhancements to Basic 2.1**
- **TURBAN**; TURboBAFc Nifty. Smartest IDE for **BASIC** for the Atari.
Basic references

- Atari Basic Differences
- The Battle of The Basic's by Tom Hunt 1992
- Some thoughts on the "Ultimate Basic"