

Inside ATARI® BASIC

A Fast, Fun, and Friendly Approach

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Training Director with
the Home Computer
Division of ATARI



Inside ATARI[®] BASIC

A fast, fun, and friendly approach

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Inside ATARI BASIC

This book is dedicated to

NAME\$*

for the varying degrees of help you gave me with no STRINGS attached

*NAME\$ is further defined on page 42.

Contents

Introduction, 1

Part 1: BASIC Programming

Key Concepts, 9

PRINT, 11

Writing a Program, 16

REMark Statements, 20

LISTing Programs, 21

POSITION or POS., 26

Operators, 28

Error Messages, 30

Math Tips, 33

Variables, 40

INPUT, 44

FOR/NEXT Loops, 45

GOTO, 50

IF/THEN, 52

ON/GOTO, 56

GOSUB and RETURN, 57

ON/GOSUB, 59

READ/DATA, 60

Hip Hip ARRAYS, 66

MATRIX Madness, 71

Part 2: Graphics, Color, and Sound

Fundamentals of Atari Graphics, 77

GRAPHICS Mode 0, 77

GRAPHICS Mode 1, 84

GRAPHICS Mode 2, 86

GRAPHICS Modes 3

Through 8, 95

Atari Color, 112

SETCOLOR, 113

Default Colors, 114

Color for GRAPHICS Modes 3

Through 8, 123

SOUND Advice, 128

POKEing Around, 132

Relationship Between Using

SETCOLOR and POKEing

Colors, 140

SETCOLOR and POKE Equivalent

Chart, 143

All the Way with GTIA, 150

Using ATARI Joysticks and

Paddle Controllers, 161

FUNCTIONS, 168

ERROR Messages, 175

Conclusion, 179

Index, 181

Introduction

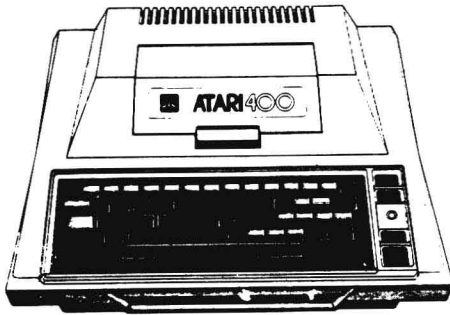
The purpose of this book is to introduce you to the key concepts of BASIC programming while inflicting as little pain as possible.

This is a workbook to be used along with an ATARI® Home Computer. When you complete this book you should not only have a beginner's understanding of the BASIC language, but also an introduction to ATARI Computer GRAPHICS and SOUND capabilities as well as other interesting ATARI Computer features.

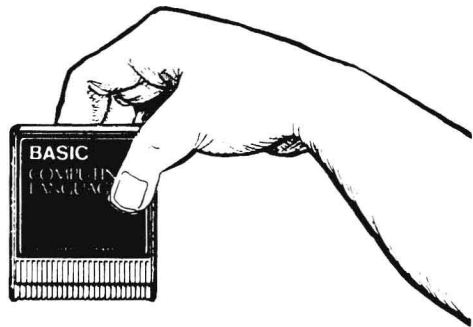
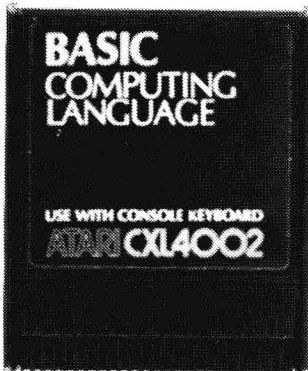
I have intentionally avoided flow charts, many unnecessary details, most exceptions to rules, and other traditional computer education approaches because, while they are necessary evils for the professional programmer, they can also have a tendency to alienate the beginner.

Professional programming requires exacting and tedious attention to detail, but learning how to do elementary programs on a home computer is more of an adventurous and enjoyable exploration of the man-machine relationship. It is simply "No-Big-Deal" if you make a mistake while learning how to operate a home computer. Those who learn from their mistakes and master this book should be chomping at the bit for more advanced information and methods. A few may even develop the dedication to become professionals. But, first things first—Welcome to ATARI BASIC.

This book is designed to be used with either the ATARI 400 Home Computer™ or The ATARI 800 Home Computer™



along with the
ATARI BASIC Cartridge.



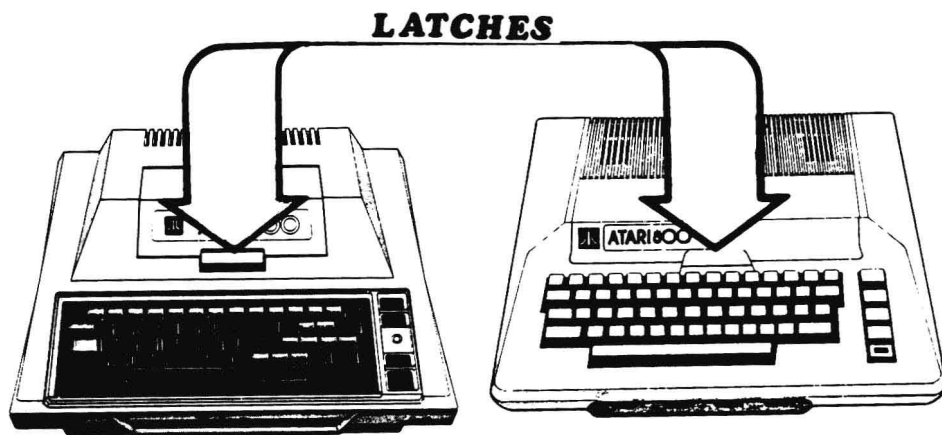
WHAT IS BASIC?

BASIC is a very popular computer language, which is easier to learn than most.

Part 1

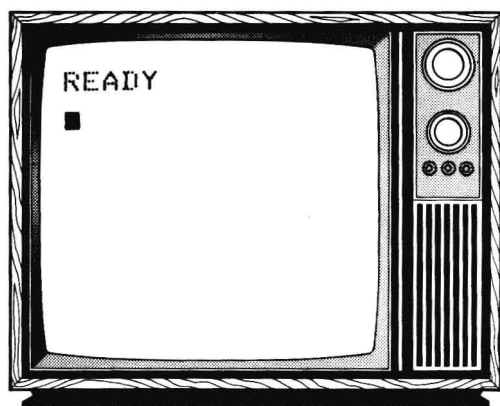
Basic Programming

To insert the BASIC cartridge, first open the cartridge door by pulling the latch down and toward you.

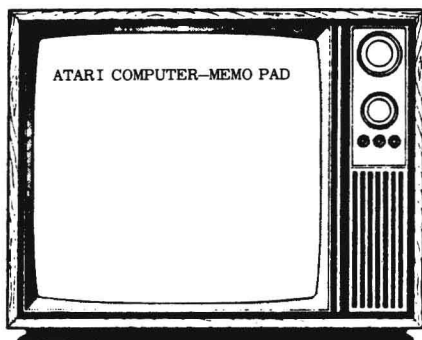


Next, with the label facing you, push the cartridge slowly but firmly down into the cartridge slot.

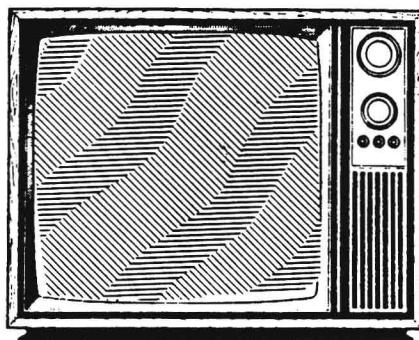
When you close the cartridge door, *turn the computer on* and your TV should look like this...



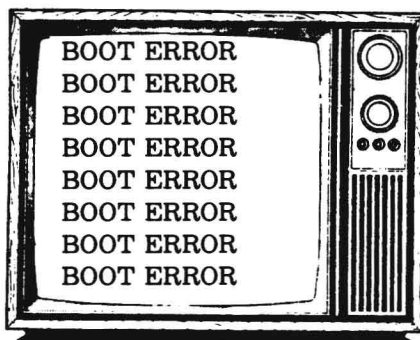
If you get any of these,



You might not have pressed the cartridge down firmly to the bottom of the slot.

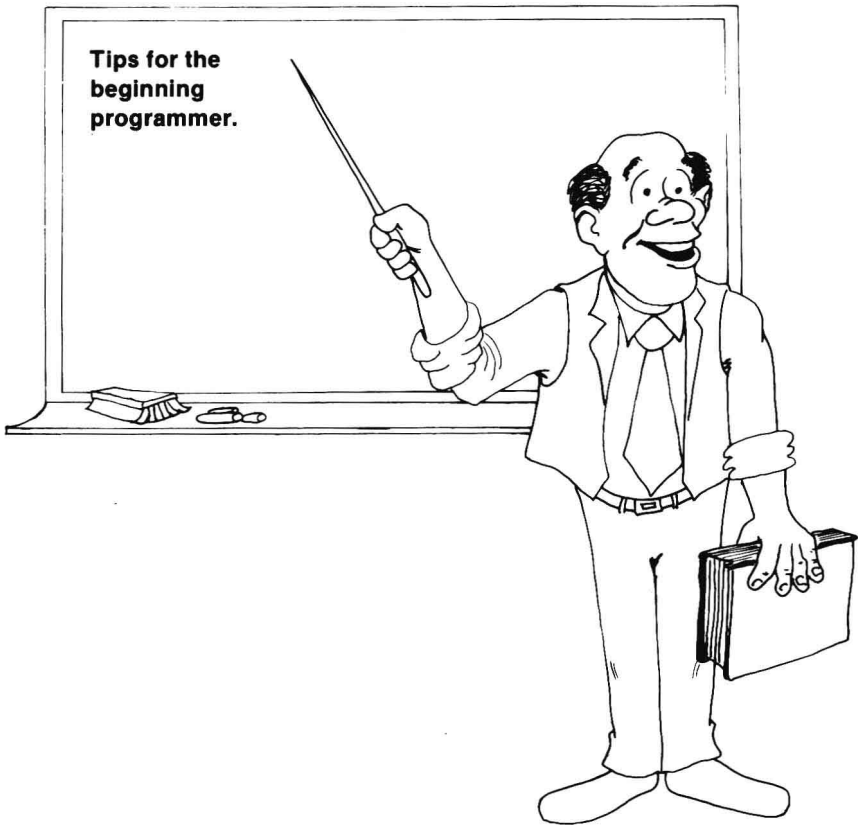


You probably do not have your computer's 2-3 switch and the TV turned to the same channel. Try switching channels and also check your computer switchbox on the back of the TV to make sure it's switched to "computer."



You probably have a disk drive connected and something elementary is wrong. For example, you could be using the wrong diskette or you might have left the disk drive door open. If you are just learning BASIC, you probably should turn the disk drive off. Turn the computer off, then on again. After introducing yourself to a little BASIC you can use your Disk Drive Manual to familiarize yourself with basic disk instructions. For starters work without a disk.

NOTE: For any other problems or complete system set-up instructions, consult your owner's guide.

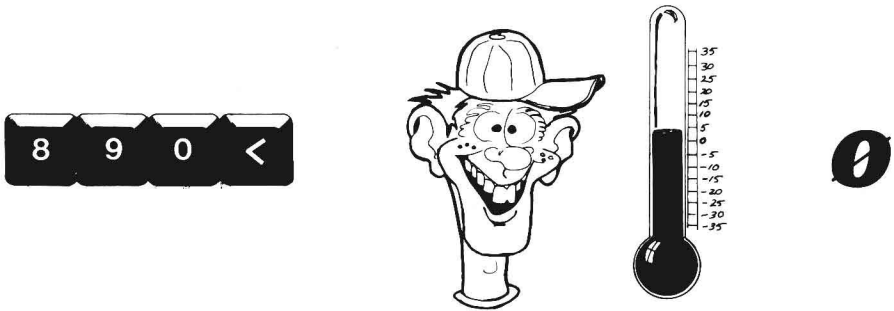


- Fear not! Nothing you can type will damage the computer or your TV.
- Making **ERRORS** is a natural part of learning to program. Everyone makes errors so you might as well get used to the idea.
- It is normal for your computer to use **UPPER-CASE** letters. It will not accept instructions written in lower-case letters.
- Also, when you get to the edge of the screen, just keep typing; the computer will automatically “wrap around” to the next line.

Since computers are very particular creatures, it is important that you do not confuse your zeros with the letter O. The zero is on top of the keyboard and the letter O happens to be very close to it.

So keep in mind...

These are ZEROS



And these are the LETTER O



If you look closely at a zero on the TV screen, you will see that it has an **S** shape in the center and the letter O does not. Most computer printers and many people listing programs cross the zero (Ø) to avoid confusion.

Key Concepts

Although your computer's keyboard is very much like a typewriter's keyboard, it has some special features. You need to learn about some of these features right away and others later.



Here are a few keys you should know about right away.
Try them out...



- 1** **DELETE BACK S** This key will rub out any letter you type by accident. Type a few letters then "BACKSPACE" over them to get the idea.
- 2** **SYSTEM RESET** This key will help if you get confused with what is happening on the screen. Until you get familiar with the keyboard, you might accidentally create a screen full of error messages or characters you don't understand. To clear up a confusing screen and start from scratch, press **SYSTEM RESET**.
- 3** When you press **RETURN** you are telling the computer that you are entering your information or answer.


Just a brief reminder:




NOTHING HAPPENS UNLESS YOU PRESS THE RETURN KEY
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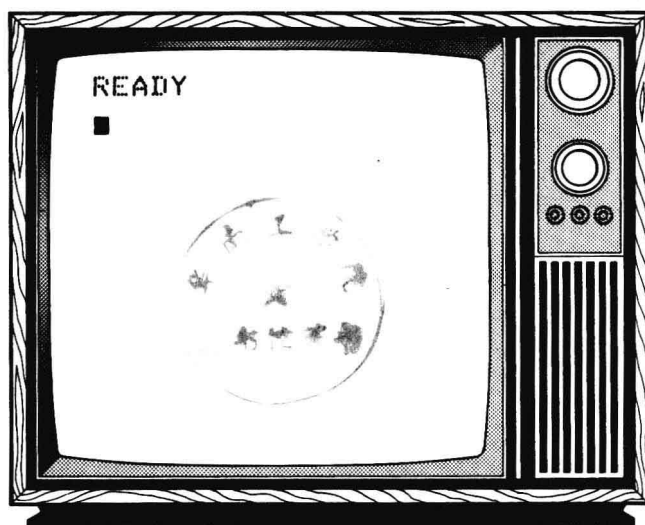
- 4 You will also be introduced to some *two-key combinations* which will require you to hold one key while pressing another. The first is the combination needed to print quotes. HOLD DOWN the

 key and PRESS the  key at the same time.

- 5 The  key puts you into INVERSE VIDEO . Press it and type something. Press it again and you're back to normal.

- 6 The  key gives you lower case. Press it and type some lower-case letters. *To get out of lower case, you have to hold*  *and press*  .

NOTE: Inverse video and lower-case letters will be handy later, but as mentioned before, you should work in standard UPPER CASE when learning.



When your computer says READY...

What your computer is ready to do is take your orders.

You will soon find, in fact, that the trick to writing BASIC programs is learning what orders to give your computer.

One of the most common instructions you will use is obtained by typing the letters...

PRINT

which tells the computer that you want to print something on the screen.

*When you type PRINT and press the **RETURN** key, you're telling the computer to print a blank line.*