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› Cobol: A Self-Instruction Manual by James A. Saxon

**Prentice-Hall B0000CMAXN**

# COBOL: A Self-Instruction Manual

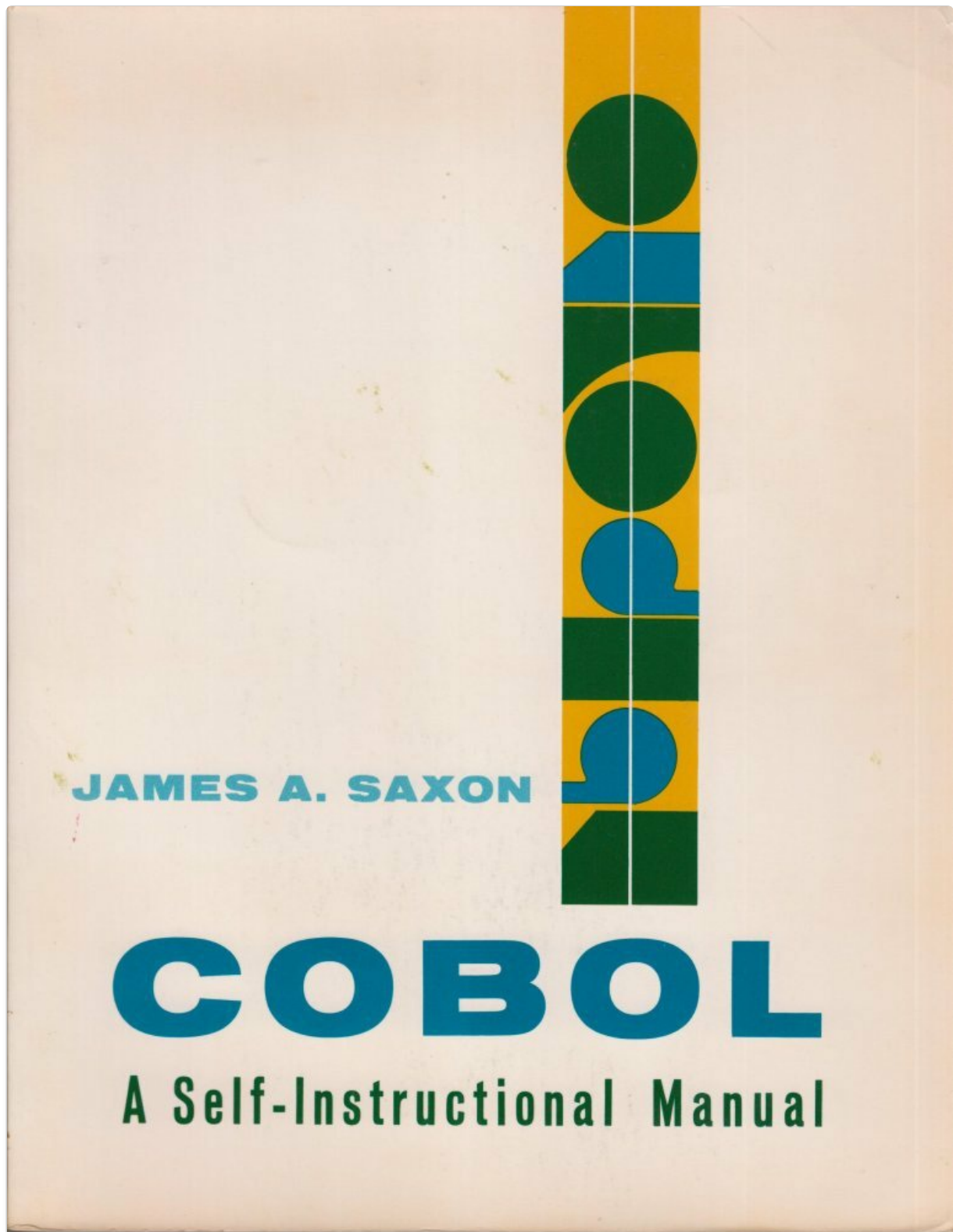
**BY JAMES A. SAXON**

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## Introduction

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This manual serves as a comprehensive guide for individuals seeking to learn the COBOL programming language through self-study. It is designed to introduce fundamental concepts, syntax, and practical applications of COBOL, enabling learners to develop a solid understanding of the language and its use in business data processing.



This image displays the front cover of the 'Cobol: A Self-Instruction Manual'. The cover features the title 'COBOL' in large blue letters, with 'A Self-Instructional Manual' below it in green. The author's name, 'JAMES A. SAXON', is also visible. A vertical design element with green and blue geometric shapes on a yellow background runs along the right side of the cover.

### How to Use This Manual (Setup)

To maximize your learning experience with this self-instruction manual, follow these guidelines:

- **Sequential Study:** It is recommended to read the chapters in the order presented. Each chapter builds upon the knowledge acquired in previous sections.
- **Active Engagement:** Do not merely read the text. Actively engage with the material by writing down

notes, tracing program logic, and attempting all exercises.

- **Practice Exercises:** The manual includes numerous examples and practice problems. Work through these diligently to reinforce your understanding of COBOL syntax and concepts.
- **Review:** Periodically review previously covered material to ensure retention and to connect new concepts with foundational knowledge.

## Learning COBOL Concepts (Operating)

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This section outlines the core areas of COBOL programming covered in this manual:

- **COBOL Program Structure:** Understand the four divisions of a COBOL program: Identification, Environment, Data, and Procedure.
- **Data Division:** Learn about data types, data description entries, and file definitions.
- **Procedure Division:** Master COBOL verbs for data manipulation, arithmetic operations, input/output, and control flow.
- **File Handling:** Explore sequential, indexed, and relative file processing techniques.
- **Debugging Techniques:** Develop skills to identify and resolve errors in COBOL programs.

Each concept is presented with clear explanations and illustrative code examples to facilitate understanding.

## Review and Practice (Maintenance)

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Consistent review and practice are crucial for mastering COBOL. This manual encourages the following maintenance activities for your learning:

- **Regular Self-Assessment:** Utilize the end-of-chapter questions and exercises to test your knowledge.
- **Re-implement Examples:** Type out and run the provided code examples yourself to gain hands-on experience.
- **Develop Small Programs:** Challenge yourself to write simple COBOL programs based on real-world scenarios to apply learned concepts.
- **Consult Reference Materials:** As you progress, refer to official COBOL language specifications or other advanced texts to deepen your understanding.

## Common Challenges and Solutions (Troubleshooting)

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Learning a programming language can present challenges. Here are common issues and suggested solutions:

- **Syntax Errors:** Carefully re-read the COBOL syntax rules for the statement causing the error. Pay attention to periods, hyphens, and reserved words.
- **Logic Errors:** Trace your program's execution step-by-step with sample data. Use `DISPLAY` statements to output variable values at different points to understand program flow.
- **Data Handling Issues:** Ensure that data types and sizes in the Data Division correctly match the data being processed. Incorrect picture clauses are a common source of errors.
- **File I/O Problems:** Verify file names, access modes, and record structures. Ensure files exist and

have appropriate permissions.

If you encounter persistent difficulties, revisit the relevant sections of the manual or seek clarification from online COBOL communities or educational resources.

## Specifications

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## Warranty Information

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## Support

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For inquiries regarding the content of this manual, errata, or general information about Prentice-Hall publications, please refer to the publisher's official website or contact information typically found within the book's front matter. Specific technical support for COBOL programming is beyond the scope of this manual's publisher support.