



# Basic Concepts

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## The History of Quality - Overview

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The quality movement can trace its roots back to medieval Europe, where craftsmen began organizing into unions called [guilds](#) in the late 13th century.

Until the early 19th century, manufacturing in the industrialized world tended to follow this craftsmanship model. The factory system, with its emphasis on product inspection, started in Great Britain in the mid-1750s and grew into the [Industrial Revolution](#) in the early 1800s.

In the [early 20th century](#), manufacturers began to include quality processes in quality practices.

After the United States entered [World War II](#), quality became a critical component of the war effort: Bullets manufactured in one state, for example, had to work consistently in rifles made in another. The armed forces initially inspected virtually every unit of product; then to simplify and speed up this process without compromising safety, the military began to use sampling techniques for inspection, aided by the publication of military-specification standards and training courses in [Walter Shewhart's](#) statistical process control techniques.

The birth of [total quality](#) in the United States came as a direct response to the quality revolution in Japan following World War II. The Japanese welcomed the input of Americans [Joseph M. Juran](#) and [W. Edwards Deming](#) and rather than concentrating on inspection, focused on improving all organizational processes through the people who used them.

By the 1970s, U.S. industrial sectors such as automobiles and electronics had been broadsided by Japan's high-quality competition. The U.S. response, emphasizing not only statistics but approaches that embraced the entire organization, became known as total quality management (TQM).

By the last decade of the 20th century, TQM was considered a fad by many business leaders. But while the use of the term TQM has faded somewhat, particularly in the United States, its practices continue.

In the few years since the turn of the century, the quality movement seems to have matured [beyond Total Quality](#). New quality systems have evolved from the foundations of Deming, Juran and the early Japanese practitioners of quality, and quality has moved beyond manufacturing into service, healthcare, education and government sectors.

### MP3 Audiocasts

Meet the Gurus of Quality - Join host Paul Palmes for a fascinating introduction to some of the formative figures of the modern quality movement.

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