



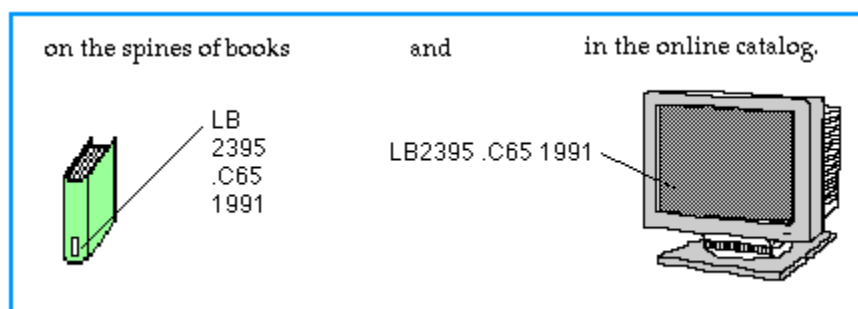
Understanding Library of Congress (LC) Call Numbers

Our catalog uses the Library of Congress classification system, an alphanumeric system which groups books by subject categories, or classes. Below, we explain what a call number is, how to read call numbers, the shelving and filing rules of call numbers, and LC classification.

What is a call number?

A call number is like an address; it tells you where the book is located on the shelf. Each book has its own unique call number which is attached to the spine or upper left hand corner of the cover (or envelope). A book's call number also appears in the catalog entry in the library's online catalog (OPAC).

Call numbers appear :



Note that the same call number can be written from top-to-bottom, or left-to-right.

Reading Call Numbers

The Mashantucket Pequot Research Library, like many research libraries in the U.S., use **Library of Congress Classification** for call numbers. This system uses a combination of letters and numbers to arrange materials by subjects.

The Library of Congress arranges materials by subject, or 'class' (see the last section below for more information on classes). The first section of the call number represents the subject of the book. The second section often represents the author's name, and the last section is the date of publication.

In the following example of a call number for the book "What you need to know about developing study skills" by Marcia J. Coman published in 1991. LB2395 is the subject (Methods of Study), .C65 represents the author's last name (Coman), and 1991 is the year of publication.

Read call numbers line by line:

Read the first line in alphabetical order:
A, B, BF, C, D ... L, LA, LB, LC, M, ML ...

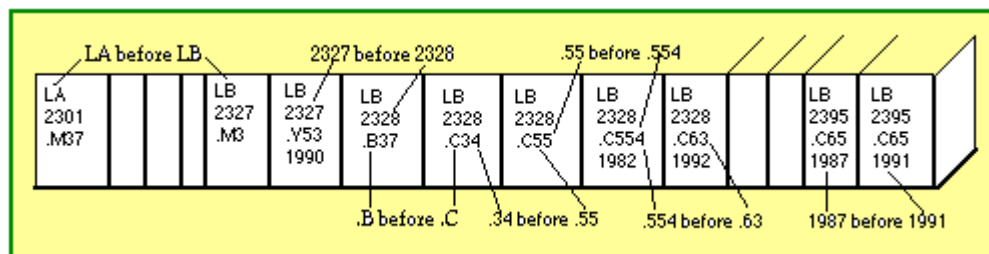
Read the second line as a whole number:
1, 2, 3, 45, 100, 101, 1000, 2000, 2430 ...

The third line is a combination of a letter and numbers.
Read the letter alphabetically.
Read the number as a decimal, e.g. .C65 = .65 .C724 = .724
(Some call numbers have more than one combination letter-number line.)

This is the year the book was published.
Chronological order: 1985, 1987, 1991, 1992 ...

Putting Call Numbers in Shelf Order

To understand how call numbers are put in order in Library of Congress Classification, again look at each section of the call number.



What does the call number mean?

Remember that Library of Congress Classification arranges materials by subjects. The first sections of the call number represent the subject of the book. The letter-and-decimal section of the call number often represents the author's last name. And, as you recall, the last section of a call number is often the date of publication.

example:

Title: *What You Need to Know About Developing Study Skills, Taking Notes & Tests, Using Dictionaries & Libraries*

Author: Coman, Marcia J.

Call number LB2395 .C65 1991

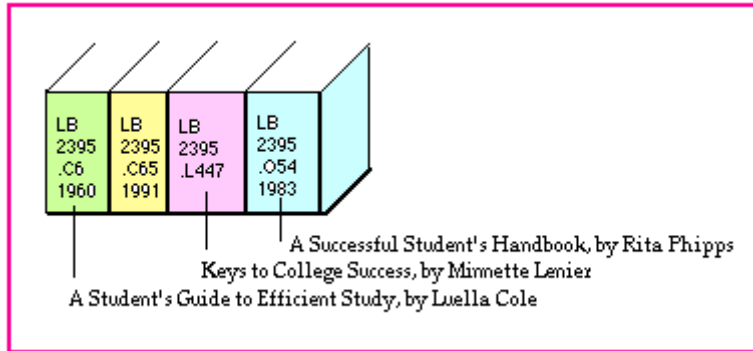
The first two lines describe the subject of the book.
LB2395 = Methods of Study, in Higher Education

This line often represents the author's last name.
.C65 = Coman

The year the book was published.

Why is this important to know?

Because books are classified by subject, you can often find several helpful books on the same shelf, or nearby. For example, within the same call number LB2395, there are other guides for college study.



Shelving/Filing Rules of LC Call numbers

Single letters are filed before double letters:

Q	QC	QL	R	RA
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The second part of a call number is made up of a number that may have one or more digits. This line is read numerically. A call number with a smaller number is shelved before one that has a larger number. Some of these numbers may be divided by a point: these are also read numerically (smaller numbers are shelved before larger numbers).

QA 70.5	QA 75	QA 76	QA 76.15	QA 76.16	QA 76.17	QA 76.2	QA 76.25	QA 77
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The third part is the trickiest part of the call number. This part of the call number is called the "cutter". The numbers in this part are treated like decimals.

Follow these general rules when dealing with cutter numbers:

- Treat the letter of the cutter number alphabetically. For example, cutter numbers beginning with **.B** are shelved before those starting with **.E**.
- Smaller first digits after the letter are shelved before larger ones. For example, all cutter numbers beginning with **.E3** would be shelved before all cutter numbers beginning with **.E4**, and those would be shelved before cutters beginning with **.E8**.

- Smaller second, third, etc. digits are shelved before larger ones. For example, cutters beginning with **.E35** are shelved before cutters beginning with **.E39**. Likewise, for the third number: **.E353** is shelved before **.E355** and **.E359**.
- Items with only one digit after the letter are shelved before items with multiple digits beginning with the same number(s). So, the cutter number **.E3** is shelved before **.E35**, which is shelved before **.E359**.

QL 60 .B5	QL 60 .D66	QL 60.4 .F35	QL 60.5 .E359	QL 60.5 .E39	QL 70 .E393	QL 70 .E4	QL 70 .F66	QL 70 .K7	QL 70 .K777	QL 83.15 .S39
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Sometimes there are TWO cutter numbers in a call number. The first cutter, in these cases, is related to the subject of the work. The second cutter is related to the author. The shelving order of the second cutter follows the same four rules described above.

QE 787 .C59 C66	QE 787 .C59 S27	QE 862 .D5 L22	QE 862 .D5 L35	QE 862 .D5 L457	QE 862 .D5 L46	QE 862 .D5 M37	QL 84.4 .E8 B62	QL 84.5 .I4 B63
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Sometimes, the top of the call number has the item's location: "REF" for Reference Collection, etc. The final lines of the call numbers may include copy numbers, issue numbers, volume indicators and other annotations such as supplement or index specifiers. For example, the call numbers below are shelved in Reference:

REF QL 45 .A6 2001 c.1	REF QL 45 .A6 2001 c.2	REF QL 46 .D55 1999 v.1	REF QL 46 .D55 1999 v.2
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Library of Congress Subject Classification

Since Library of Congress Classification arranges materials by subjects, knowing the letter(s) for your subject area gives you a place to start browsing the shelves. Which letters represent your subject? Here is an overview of the Library of Congress Classification Table.

- A = General Works (encyclopedias, dictionaries, yearbooks)
- B = Philosophy, Psychology, Religion
- C = Auxiliary Sciences of History
- D = History, General & Old World
- E-F = History, American
- G = Geography, Anthropology, Recreation
- H = Social Sciences
- J = Political Science
- K = Law
- L = Education
- M = Music
- N = Fine Arts
- P = Language and Literature
- Q = Science
- R = Medicine
- S = Agriculture

T = Technology
U = Military Science
V = Naval Science
Z = Bibliography, Library Science

A detailed breakdown of the various subclasses is available online here:

<http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsolcco/>

To recap, a call number is a subject formula that groups materials by subject categories, or classes. Each class is identified by a letter. Classes are broken down into subclasses by adding more letters. These subclasses, in turn, are more finely delineated by numbers. Using the scheme, books are grouped together on the shelf, making it easier for you to browse the library's holdings on a specific topic. For a detailed breakdown of the subject categories, see the [Library of Congress Classification Outline](#) .

In the Mashantucket Pequot Research Library, many of our books are classed in E and F (American History). [Here is a breakdown of classes E and F.](#)

This web page was adapted and revised from the [American Museum of Natural History Library](#)