

**How to Read Call Numbers**

Last updated 5/31/2011.

Libraries use classification systems to organize the books and videos on the shelves. Most public libraries use the **Dewey Decimal Classification System (DDC)** and most academic libraries (including JSRCC Libraries) use the **Library of Congress Classification System (LC)**.


You may be more familiar with the Dewey Decimal system which uses only numbers to arrange materials on the shelves. The LC system uses a combination of letters and numbers to arrange materials on the shelves.

These classification systems allow each book and video in the library to be assigned a unique **call number**. A call number is like an address; it indicates where the book is located on the library shelves.

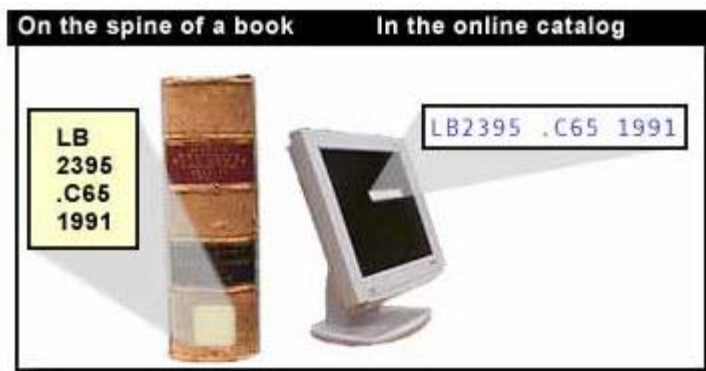
**Anatomy of a Call Number**

Read call numbers line by line:

<p><b>LB</b> <b>2395</b> <b>.C65</b> <b>1991</b></p>	<p>Read the first line in alphabetical order: A, B, BF, CD...L, LA, LB, LC, M, ML...</p> <p>Read the second line as a whole number: 1, 2, 3, 45, 100, 101, 1000, 2000, 2430.. (Some call numbers include a decimal number after the whole number on the second line. Any number after a decimal point is read as a decimal number)</p> <p>The third line is a combination of a letter and numbers: Read the letter alphabetically, Read the number as a decimal: .C65= .65 C724 = .724 (Some call numbers have more than one combination letter-number line.)</p> <p>The last line is the publication date, read in chronological order: 1987, 1989, 1998, 2000</p>
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 <p>Title: <i>What You Need to Know About Developing Study Skills, Taking Notes &amp; Tests, Using Dictionaries &amp; Libraries</i></p> <p>Author: Coman, Marcia J.</p> <p>Call number LB 2395.C65 1997</p>	<p>The first two lines describe the subject of the book: LB2395 = Methods of study in higher education</p> <p>This line often represents the author's last name: .C65 = Coman</p> <p>The year the book was published</p>	<p><b>LB</b> <b>2369</b> <b>.C65</b> <b>1997</b></p>
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A call number label is attached to each book and video spine or front cover. Every item record in the library catalog also includes a call number. When searching the library catalog, you want to be sure to jot down the complete LC call number in order to locate the item on the shelf.



If you haven't narrowed down your topic for a research assignment but have a general subject in mind, you can also browse the shelves if you know the beginning *Library of Congress classification* letters for that subject (e.g., BF – Psychology books; L - Education; PS – American Literature; R – Medicine) .

