

Library of Congress: How to Read Library of Congress Call Numbers

The (LC) library of Congress classification system is a call number method used to shelve books. LC call numbers can be confusing since they frequently contain a letter or letters followed by whole numbers and then a letter followed by decimal numbers. In reading a call number, begin at the top line and read from left to right; then proceed to the next line reading again from left to right.

Rule: Books are arranged in alphabetical order by the letter in the first line.

Starting with the letters (s) at the top of the call number, books are arranged *Alphabetically*

A	AC	AG	AZ	B	BC	BT
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Rule: Books having the same letter(s) on the top line are all shelved together by the number group that follows the letters. These number are arranged *Numerically*

F	F	F	F	F	F
1	21	75	101	175	200

Rule: *Single* letters come before *double* letters. Double letters come before *triple* letters

B 104	BF 105	KL1612	KLA3
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Rule: If the top lines are the same, compare the second lines, start with letters.

HD835	HD835	HD835	HD835
.E4	.P3	.S26	.T5

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Rule: When *both* the *letter(s)* and the *number group* that follows are the same, then books are shelved Alphabetically:

QM	QM	QM	QM	QM	QM	QM
.23	.23	.23	.23	.23	.23	.23
.A	.B	.C	.D	.E	.F	.G

Rule: If all the above things (*the first letter, the following number group and the second letter*) are identical, the books are shelved by the next number group. The numbers are arranged Decimally, not numerically

QM	QM	QM	QM	QM	QM	QM
.23	.23	.23	.23	.23	.23	.23
.E6543	.E778	.E88	.E9	.E99	.E995	.E9999

Additional Example: 4 line call number

QM	QM	QM	QM	QM	QM
.23	.23	.23	.23	.23	.23
.E65	.E65	.E65	.E65	.E65	.E65
.A25	.C6	.F88	.F9	.H92	.K2

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Rule for Dates: A call number may include a year. This often happens when new editions of a book are published. If the entire rest of the call numbers are identical, books are shelved in chronological order according to the date

(Date example)

QH388.2 .C34 1990	QH388.2 .C34 1993
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Rules for Volumes, Copies , designations and Numbers: Volumes numbers and copies may appear as part of a call number.

(Copy example)

BF173 H333	BF173 H333 C.2	BF173 H333 C.3	BF173 H333 C.4
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(Number example)

QA1 A413 No.101	QA1 A413 No.102	QA1 A413 No/103	QA1 A413 No. 104
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(Location Destination example)

Ref BF7607 P82 1994	Math BF7607 P82 1994	Sci BF76.7 P82 1994
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(Volume example)

QD415 N48 v.17	QD415 N48 v.18	QD415 N48 v.19	QD415 N48 v.20
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