

# Decoding Call Numbers

REF.  
Z  
696  
.04  
1973

## Having trouble locating material in the library?

Libraries generally use one of two classification systems to organize materials on shelves:

1. Library of Congress Classification System (LC)
2. Dewey Decimal Classification System

Most colleges and universities, including the Learning Resources Center at Eastern Shore Community College, use Library of Congress call numbers.

## What is a call number?

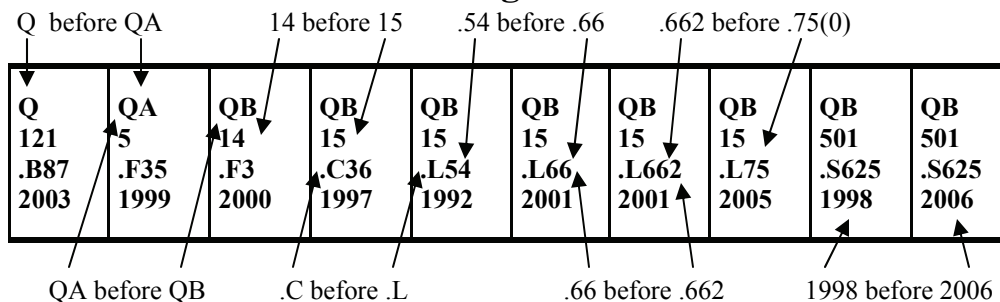
Call numbers in LC classification are alphanumeric “addresses” that group material by subject or classes. There are 21 main classes of the LC Classification System. Call numbers are found on the spine or lower left corner of the cover of books, audiobooks, videos and DVDs. Call numbers found in ESCC’s library catalog (VCCSLinc) will help you locate material on library shelves. The college’s URL is [www.es.vccs.edu](http://www.es.vccs.edu).

## What do the parts of a call number mean?

Read call numbers line by line. Some call numbers are preceded by a location prefix. In this case, REF. indicates that the book is shelved in the Reference Collection.

- The first line, read alphabetically, refers to the general subject area. → Z
- The second line, read as a whole number, narrows the subject area. → 696
- The cutter line(s) is a combination of a letter and decimal number. → .04
- The last section of a call number is usually the date; however, some call numbers include lower lines to describe volumes or parts of sets. Dates are arranged chronologically. → 1973

## How are call numbers arranged on the shelf?



## How can I learn more?

A detailed explanation of the subject categories in the Library of Congress Classification System may be viewed at [www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsolcco](http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsolcco). If additional help locating material is needed, just ask!

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