

## Welcome First-time Users!

It's easy for first-time and novice users to become overwhelmed by USA Trade<sup>®</sup> *Online's* (<http://www.usatradeonline.gov>) massive databases of merchandise trade data, not to mention the variety of options available to help analyze the data. This page lays out the basics and carries you through five easy steps to self-sufficiency.

### So, What Exactly is in this Database?

USA Trade *Online* contains merchandise import and export data between the United States and all our **trading partners**. **Commodities** are classified by **Harmonized System** (HS) codes, which are defined on the two-, four-, six-, and ten-digit levels. Additionally, **unit of measure(s)** and **customs districts** detail are available. You'll also find **annual data** going back 13 years and **monthly data** since 2002.

The Beyond 20/20 software, Vista 2.3, powering USA Trade *Online* presents data in spreadsheet format. Here's the exciting part: *YOU* determine what type of data (called "dimensions") populates the rows and columns using the **Selection Criteria!** A simple table might look like this:

Commodity	01 Live Animals		
Time	2004	2003	2002
Measures	Value	Value	Value
Country	↓		
World Total	516,581,804	791,012,339	644,019,332
United Arab Emirates	87,644,564	58,701,549	67,578,466
Canada	74,835,188	96,936,552	123,009,882
Mexico	68,153,091	69,766,258	141,384,391
Japan	67,077,430	74,761,876	55,733,803
United Kingdom	63,059,977	71,144,981	70,704,586
Ireland	48,264,577	40,746,245	42,723,470
France	23,096,453	15,931,723	20,383,548
Australia	6,266,511	202,611,235	6,661,032

In the upper-left, you'll see header labels in gray boxes. In the above example, "Commodity," "Time," and "Measures" (value) are in the columns, while the "Country" dimension is your row variable. You can manipulate these tables by **clicking and dragging** the different dimensions.

### Now, Where Do I Start?

#### **Step 1 – Data Source Selection**

This is your first stop after choosing "Click here to access the trade data" from USA Trade *Online's* homepage. This is where you select an initial table format. Although there are a number of formats listed (eight for imports and eight for exports), you aren't bound to the default settings of a particular table. Using your **Selection Criteria** and other **Reporting Features** you can manipulate the rows and columns to create

your desired table format. A word of caution though, you won't be able to switch to exports if you initially select one of the import table options. First, figure out whether you want to look at imports or exports and then take a guess at the table format you want. We recommend beginners select one of the Standard Report options, and test the additional formats (which have pre-selected dimensions) when you're more acclimated with the site.

## **Step 2 – Commodity Selection**

Now it's time to start focusing in on the merchandise you plan to analyze. It's easy to become overwhelmed with 24,000 import commodities and 18,000 export commodities to choose from, but fortunately USA Trade *Online* comes complete with a full-text searchable database. Don't be alarmed if you can't find what you're looking for with a simple search! The nomenclature used to classify both exports and imports can be unexpected at times, typically a result of a particular product's unique history. For example, the machines we have come to know as personal computers were originally classified as "Nuclear Reactors" (Section 84 of the HS code). Fortunately, **Census Bureau Commodity Specialists** (301-763-3041) are available to help you find the classification you need to perform your research.

For starters, you can select a commodity using the search function or else drill down through the list of two-digit items until you find what you want (you can do this by clicking on the small, yellow folders to the left of the commodity listing). If you selected anything other than a Standard Report (either imports or exports) in *Step 1*, you'll need to click "Clear All" (to clear the pre-selected options), before making your commodity selection.

## **Step 3 – View Your Report**

Simply click the "View Report" link in the upper left-hand corner of your screen – *and viola!* – a table similar (in layout) to the example displayed above will appear! Yes, it's that easy.

USA Trade *Online* is extremely user-friendly, but it can't read your mind... *yet!* Chances are you won't see exactly what you're looking for right away. You will need to determine the data dimensions you want (*Step 4*) and play around with different charting and graphing options (*Step 5*) to complete your analysis.

## **Step 4 – Selection Criteria**

Now you can play around with the different dimensions – **commodity, country, district, measure, and time** – to satisfy your research needs.

## **Step 5 – Reporting Options and Other Fun Features**

There are a wealth of reporting features and options available to better organize your data and make it visually appealing. For example, you can **sort** your results in ascending and descending order, employ various **charting options**, **calculate** percent changes, and much more!

## **There You Have It – Five Easy Steps and a lot of Possibility!**

Take some time to experiment with all the different features until you feel satisfied with the results. If the tables start getting too confusing, go to "Data Selection" and start over.

**And, most importantly, have fun!**