

Welcome First-time Users!

It's easy for first-time and novice users to become overwhelmed by **USA Trade® 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 **QuickStart Guide** 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 export and import data between the United States and all its [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](#) and [customs district](#) detail are available. You'll also find [annual data](#) going back 13 years and [monthly data](#) since 2002. [State export data](#) is available back to 2002, while [port-level](#) statistics are available beginning in 2003.

The software which powers USA Trade *Online* - Beyond 20/20's Perspective 4.0 - 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:

Figure A. Sample table

Commodity	0902 Tea, Whether Or Not Flavored				
Measures	Value				
Time	June 2007	May 2007	April 2007	March 2007	February 2007
Country	↑ ↓	↑ ↓	↑ ↓	↑ ↓	↑ ↓
World Total	24,519,629	24,307,594	23,859,018	24,935,627	19,090,392
Argentina	5,024,858	4,533,858	3,462,498	3,516,975	2,305,164
China	4,572,658	4,743,598	3,633,920	4,183,343	3,222,302
Federal Republic of Germany	3,262,763	4,116,795	3,843,861	2,797,050	2,053,522
India	1,893,602	1,681,640	1,838,078	2,054,597	1,910,308
Japan	1,718,314	958,465	1,890,258	1,088,643	1,028,543
Canada	1,506,724	1,762,292	1,678,657	1,679,384	1,722,637
United Kingdom	1,486,325	980,511	1,582,001	2,727,355	1,576,850
Sri Lanka	1,429,425	1,079,506	2,099,236	1,292,908	1,163,815
Indonesia	794,603	967,236	836,311	801,782	681,703
Malawi	507,582	363,742	484,646	522,158	198,748

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 [set dimension order](#) or by [dragging and dropping](#) 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, 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. You won’t be able to switch to exports (*merchandise going out of the United States to foreign countries*) if you initially select one of the import tables (*arrivals of merchandise to the United States from foreign countries*). First, figure out whether you want to look at imports or exports and then take a guess at the table format you want. (*The formats offering port-level detail are offered after the non-port options.*) We recommend beginners select one of the Standard Report (Monthly, Annual, or Cumulative Year-to-Date or “YTD”) options, and test the additional formats (which have pre-selected data dimensions) when you’re more acclimated with the site. [Tell me more...](#)

Step 2 – [Commodity Selection](#)

USA Trade *Online* provides a full-text searchable database, therefore quotes go around phrases and Boolean operators should not be used. Don’t be alarmed if you can’t find what you’re looking for with a simple search! In addition to typing in a word or phrase describing your desired commodity, you can enter a product’s **Harmonized System (HS)** or **North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS)** code directly into the search engine. Please note that the commodity nomenclature used to classify both imports and exports can be unexpected at times, typically a result of a product’s unique history. Fortunately, **Census Bureau Commodity Specialists are available at 301-763-3041** to help you find the classification you need to perform your research.

To get started, you can use the **search function** or you can drill down through the **expandable list of Codes** until you find what you want, or by using the various options for **selecting multiple commodities**. The  icons to the left of the two-digit HS or 3-digit NAICS listing on your Commodity Selection screen are your key to more data detail. If you selected anything other than a Standard Report (*either imports or exports*) in Step 1, you’ll need to click the  icon under the header “ALL” to clear the pre-selected options, before making your commodity selection. [Tell me more...](#)

Step 3 – [View Your Report](#)

Simply click the  link in the upper left-hand corner of your screen – *and voila!* – 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](#), [measure](#), [time](#), and (depending on which tables you selected), [state exports](#), [district](#) or [port](#) – to satisfy your research needs. Information on each dimension is detailed in our online manual, simply click on any of the hyperlinks above to learn more.

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! These features are explained in the [Report Features](#) and [Report Options](#) sections of our online manual.

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, click on the  **Reports** icon to and start over. Don't forget about the pull-down menus available in the help section to guide you along the way.