

# DEWEY DECIMAL CLASSIFICATION

Library Monitoring Rubric - 1.1  
Librarian Growth Rubric - Standards 7-9  
School Library Guide - Section 6.7



The School Library uses the Dewey Decimal System to organize our non-fiction shelves. Any given item can have a long Dewey Decimal number (also called the "call number"), such as 595.789/BRO. The reason these numbers get so long is because each digit helps narrow down to the specific subject that the book is about.

## THE DEWEY SYSTEM FIRST ORGANIZES ALL BOOKS INTO 10 MAIN SUBJECT CLASSES

- 000 Generalities
- 100 Philosophy and Psychology
- 200 Religion
- 300 Social Science
- 400 Language
- 500 Natural Science and Mathematics
- 600 Technology (Applied Sciences)
- 700 Arts
- 800 Literature
- 900 Geography and History

Within each class, Dewey call numbers continue to get more and more specific. The example given above, (595.789/BRO), is a book about butterflies. To get to the subclass for butterflies, the Dewey number grows like this:

- 500 Natural Science
- 590 Zoological Sciences
- 595 Other Invertebrates
- 595.7 Insects
- 595.78 Lepidoptera
- 595.789 Butterflies

Finally, since more than one book about butterflies could have the number 595.789, we also add to the end the first three letters of the author's last name (or, if no author is given, then the first three letters of the title). In our example, the author is James P. Brock, so BRO is added to the end of the Dewey call number to get 595.789/BRO.

Shelving Items in "Dewey Order" In the Dewey Decimal System, books are filed digit by digit, not by whole number. This means, for example, that our book at 595.789/BRO would come after 595.0123 and before 595.9.

With Dewey decimal numbers, it doesn't matter how long the number is. Items get shelved in order of the numbers, as if they all had the same number of digits.

Here is another example - the Dewey call numbers below are in proper Dewey order:  
331 → 331.01 → 331.016 → 331.02 → 331.041 → 331.0413 → 331.042 → 331.1 → 331.198 → 331.2

And again, after the decimal numbers come the letters from the author's name (or title). When two books have the same number, then they go in alphabetical order by the letters.

Here is an example of Dewey order with decimal numbers and letters:  
641/Bet → 641.5/Cor → 641.5/Wol → 641.555/Ray → 641.594/Mun → 641.5945/Foo →  
641.596/Mon

Another way to think of it is if all the numbers were the same length (zeros have been added):  
331.0000 → 331.0100 → 331.0160 → 331.0200 → 331.0410 → 331.0413 → 331.0420 → 331.1000

This same list of decimal numbers and letters with zeros added:  
641.0000/Bet → 641.5000/Cor → 641.5000/Wol → 641.5550/Ray → 641.5940/Mun →  
641.5945/Foo

## FICTION

There are some collections that are shelved alphabetically. Fiction is shelved alphabetically by the author's full last name.

Fly Girl by Sherri Smith would be labeled as FIC SMITH and shelved in S in alphabetical order.

FIC SAWYER → FIC SMITH → FIC STEVENS → FIC STEWART

If there are multiple books by the same last name, then the books should be shelved then in alphabetical order of the author's first name.

Fly Girl by Sherri Smith and Elephant Run by Roland Smith

Elephant Run by Roland Smith → Fly Girl by Sherri Smith

In addition to Dewey and alphabetical organizations, the library can also use a number of prefixes to designate where the library an item is shelved. For instance, REF/595.789/Mor is a nonfiction book about butterflies, but since it has a REF prefix, it is shelved in the in Reference Section.

- REF- Reference
- FIC- Fiction
- BIO - Biographies
- TR- Teacher Resource

## HOW TO PROPERLY SHELVE BOOKS

### 1. Shelf numerically by the Dewey Decimal number.

#### a. Non- Fiction

- i. Books are arranged in number order with the lowest numbers to the left. Numbers are arranged in order firstly by the 3 digits to the left of the decimal point, and then by any digits that are present after the decimal point. Digits after the decimal point are ordered with the lowest number first, taking one digit at a time. For example: 658 → 658.01 → 658.1 → 658.101
- ii. If two or more books have identical numbers, then shelve by the author's last name. 641.5636 KAT (Katzen, Mollie) → 641.5636 SAL (Salloum, Habeeb) → 641.5636 SHU (Shulman, Martha Rose)
- iii. When you have the numbers arranged in the correct order, look at the letters after the numbers. Where the numbers are exactly the same, the books are then arranged in alphabetic order from left to right. Here are examples of correct order: 229.8 And → 373.4 Ree → 793.3 Zen → 909.07 Are → 909.07 Bal

#### b. Fiction

- i. Arrange alphabetically by the author's last name. BARRIE (Barrie, J. M.) → BAUM (Baum, L. Frank) → BOSTON (Boston, L.M )
- ii. If two or more authors have the same last name, shelve alphabetically by the author's first name. Brontë, Anne → Brontë, Charlotte → Brontë, Emily
- iii. If an author has more than one title, shelve the books alphabetically by the title (ignore the words A, An, and The as the first word of the title). Murakami, Haruki Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World → Murakami, Haruki A Wild Sheep Chase → Murakami, Haruki Wind-Up Bird Chronicle
- iv. If an author has more than one title, and some of the titles belong to a series, shelve the non-series titles first alphabetically by the title and then the series title according to the series number. Tolkien, J.R.R. The Children of Húrin Tolkien → J.R.R. The Two Towers

- c. Biographies (special collection) - All Biographies are call number BIO and are shelved alphabetically. For example: BIO Adams → BIO Dickinson → BIO Ruth
2. Check call numbers around the items being shelved to verify correct order of shelf. The automated system has the option of running a shelf list to help shelve books in the proper location. Make sure that the spine labels match the information in the system.
3. Items should be upright. If items are too tall to stand upright, then rearrange the shelves so that the book is not damaged.
4. Items should be brought out to the edges of the shelves to make even, neat rows (called blocking). Do not push books to the back of the shelves. This makes it harder for smaller students to reach books.
5. Each shelf should have a bookend at the end of the row.
6. Watch for crowded shelves. If an item will not slide back into its place with a gentle push, the shelf is too full. The proper method to remove an item that is too tight is to push in the volumes on either side of it, then carefully grasp the center of the spine and remove it (not by pulling from the top of the spine). If you cannot make room, rearrange shelves to accommodate for books. Shelves should not be more than 75% full.
7. Items with damage (call number labels, mold, mildew, insect, or tears on/to covers, pages, etc.) should be pulled and repaired. Remove bits of paper, Post-its, and paper clips. If the book is beyond repair, then it should be weeded.
8. Any loose papers or library items left at the end of each row or on the floor should be picked up. If the area is kept tidy, the users will tend to leave it that way.

## SHELVING EXAMPLES



Shelves are not blocked and bookends are not being used properly. This damages books and creates an environment where students do not want to check out books.



Books are aligned at the end of the shelf and are straight. Books are shelved by Dewey Decimal Classification and series are grouped together and labeled. Books should read left to right and top to bottom.