



The Dewey Decimal System

Shelving Books & Other Items at the Chelmsford Library

The Chelmsford Public Library uses the Dewey Decimal System to organize our non-fiction shelves. Non-fiction items can include books, movies, CDs, audiobooks, etc.

Any given item can have a long Dewey Decimal number (also called the "call number"), such as 595.789/BROC. 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. These are:

<u>Dewey Number Class</u>	<u>Subject</u>
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/BROC), 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 four letters of the author's last name (or, if no author is given, then the first four letters of the title). In our example, the author is James P. Brock, so BROC is added to the end of the Dewey call number to get 595.789/BROC.

How Fiction Items are Shelved

In this library, the Dewey System only applies to non-fiction items. All fiction items, such as books, audiobooks, music CDs and Hollywood movies, are shelved alphabetically:

- Books, audiobooks & music CDs are shelved by the name of the author or artist
- "Fiction" (Hollywood) movies are shelved by the title

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/BROC 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

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
331.1980
331.2000

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/Bett
641.5/Corn
641.5/Wolk
641.555/Ray
641.594/Muns
641.5945/Food
641.596/Mont
641.596/West
641.65/Dese
641.812/Savo

This same list of decimal numbers and letters with zeros added:

641.0000/Bett
641.5000/Corn
641.5000/Wolk
641.5550/Ray
641.5940/Muns
641.5945/Food
641.5960/Mont
641.5960/West
641.6500/Dese
641.8120/Savo

Where Things Are in the Library

In addition to Dewey and alphabetical organizations, this library also uses a number of prefixes to designate where the library an item is shelved. For instance, J/595.789/Morr is a non-fiction book about butterflies, but since it has a J prefix, it is shelved in the Childrens room. Please refer to the Library Shelving Locations handout for a complete list, but a few of the most common prefixes are listed below:

J - Juvenile - Childrens Room

DVD - DVD movie - first floor A/V

VC - VHS movie - first floor A/V

Y - Young Adult - YA Room

Y/Comix - YA Graphic Novel - YA Room

PB/A - Adult Paperback - first floor fiction