

# The Dewey Decimal System

## *Shelving Books & Other Items at the ERL*

The Educational Resources Lab uses the Dewey Decimal System to organize our Children's and Young Adult books. Non-fiction books are arranged by the Dewey Decimal number according to their subject. Educational manipulatives also are arranged using Dewey Decimal call numbers.

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. 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/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 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/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

In our collection, **Biographies** do not use the 921 Dewey number, but rather the letter “B” for biography. They are shelved in their own section, first by the last name of the person the book is about, and then by that person’s first name. For example, a biography of Abraham Lincoln by Kathleen Krull has the call number **B/LIN**. Another bio of Abe Lincoln by D. Rappaport also would be **B/LIN**. A biography of Mary Todd Lincoln by Jean Baker would have the same call number (**B/LIN**), but would follow all of the Abe Lincoln books, since she is a different person with the same last name; *M* comes after *A* alphabetically. The list below shows the proper order, as you would find them on the shelf.

B/LIN/ (Book about Abe Lincoln)  
 B/LIN (Book about Abe Lincoln)  
 B/LIN (Book about Mary Todd Lincoln)

### How Fiction Items are Shelved

- In the ERL, the Dewey numbering system only applies to non-fiction items; fiction items are shelved alphabetically. Fiction materials fall into two main groups: Fiction (F) for novels/ chapter books, and Easy/Everybody (E) for picture books and easy readers. Books on CD and videos are interfiled with the books.
- Fiction items are shelved first by the last name of the author or artist, then first name, then by title. We use the first three letters of the author’s last name. For example: the picture book *Thunder Cake* by Patricia Polacco would have the call number E/POL; the novel *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins would have the call number F/COL. Shelves must then pay attention to the first name of each author and then the book titles when arranging the shelf. This might require pulling the book out to look at details rather than just simply viewing the spine labels.
- Always ignore *A*, *And* or *The* at the beginning of titles, and alphabetize by the first main word of the title.

For example, all of the books below have the same call number on the spine label. The proper shelf order would be as follows:

<u>CALL #</u>	<u>AUTHOR NAME</u>	<u>TITLE</u>
F/NEL	NELSON, <b>B</b> LAKE	<i>DESTROY ALL CARS</i>
F/NEL	NELSON, <b>R</b> .A.	<i>DAYS OF LITTLE TEXAS</i>
F/NEL	NELSON, <b>T</b> HERESA	<i>THE <b>B</b>EGGAR’S RIDE</i>
F/NEL	NELSON, THERESA	<i><b>E</b>ARTHSHINE</i>
F/NEL	NELSON, <b>V</b> AUNDA MICHEAUX	<i>MAYFIELD CROSSING</i>

### Where Things Are in the Library

In addition to Dewey and alphabetical organizations, this library also maintains separate sections for board books, BIG-books, pop-up books, and easy readers. Within these sections, Dewey, F and E call numbers are used, and we either add an extra spine label to designate the appropriate section in our lab or there will be a strip of tape at the top of the spine.

Award Books Room (non-circulating) ■■■■

Easy Readers ■■■■

All trade books for the current year are filed by the name of the publisher on the display shelves at the front, and will remain there for the entire year for review purposes.

\* All Professional materials, textbooks and reference books have Library of Congress call numbers.