

Dewey Decimal System of Classification

In 1876 Melvil Dewey devised a numbering system using numbers 000-999 for ten broad subject classes of nonfiction books. Each subject class (ex.: 500 for science) was divided into ten divisions, and each division was then subdivided into related topics. This arrangement allows for every known subject, as well as new subjects, to be classified. Robots, space travel and television are examples of recent topics not known to Mr. Dewey in 1876. Yet his numbering plan expands to accommodate their inclusion in the technology class and will continue to include newly invented topics in their subject classes. The Dewey Decimal Classification outline on p. 3 shows examples of main classes, divisions and subdivisions.

It would be useful to you as a media assistant to learn the ten main Dewey classes and try to remember some topics included in each class. For example, the 600's Technology, include inventions and "man-made" science topics, and the 500's Pure Science, include nature, the universe, and mathematics. Library users will frequently ask questions of you concerning the location of such general topics. As you work in the media collection, observe the grouping of similar subjects and their Dewey numbers.

When a nonfiction book or item of media arrives in the library, it must be assigned a classification number and be processed before being placed on the shelf for circulation. The librarians selects the Dewey classification number which identifies the subject or topics in the book, if the publisher has not assigned the classification number at publication. From the assigned classification number and the first three letters of the author's last name, a call number is derived to give the book or item a shelf location in the media collection. For example, Sports and Games, by the author Harold Keith, would be assigned the Dewey classification number 796, and the letters Kei would be placed under the number to derive the call number or shelf location 796 Kei. One step in processing a new book is attaching the spine label on the lower portion of the spine of the book before it is placed in numerical order with other items in the 796 subdivision. Suppose the 790 location in the 700's section had the following call numbers already in place:

790	790.1	793	794.5	794.8	796.35
Ber	Tho	Ada	Byr	Hol	Alb