

# DEWEY DECIMALS GUIDE FOR YOUTH

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Smithsonian



**Melvil Dewey** (1851-1931) was an early American librarian interested in organizing information, professionalizing librarianship, and efficiency. He was so into efficiency that he chopped the last two letters off "Melville!" He created the Dewey Decimal System (DDS), an organizational system for knowledge. Librarians continue to update the DDS to incorporate new types of knowledge (eg- computers, space travel, etc.) and modern ways of understanding the world (eg- moving phrenology from science to pseudoscience). Most American public libraries use the Dewey Decimal System.

## Why do we need library organization systems?

- Information is only useful if you can find it.
- Every item needs its own place, and only one place. A physical book can't sit on two shelves simultaneously.
- How we organize information informs how we think about it. Eg- social movement history in the 300s rather than the 900s
- Information organization is inherently political.
- The Dewey Decimal System is a great tool, but it isn't the only tool. There's a growing movement to incorporate Indigenous Systems of Knowledge into libraries.

## BROAD TO SPECIFIC

Each Dewey Decimal "call number" (the number on a book's spine) moves from broad ideas like "Religion" to more specific ideas like "Jewish life and customs."



for example:

- 900 History & Geography
- 970 History of North America
- 978 Western United States
- 978.6 Montana
- 978.682 Flathead County
- 600 Technology & Application of Knowledge
- 640 Home & Family Management
- 641 Food & Drink
- 641.5 Cooking
- 641.59 Geographic/ethnic-specific cooking
- 641.596 African cooking
- 641.5964 Moroccan cooking

### 000

#### Information

- Computers
- Libraries
- Encyclopedias
- Unexplained phenomena (UFOs, Bigfoot)

### 100

#### Philosophy & Psychology

- Philosophy
- Psychology
- Logic
- Ethics

### 200

#### Religions

- Christianity
- Greek & Roman Mythology
- Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, et al.

### 300

#### Social Sciences

- Anthropology
- Political Science
- Economics, Law
- Military
- Social problems
- Education
- Folklore & Fairy Tales

### 400

#### Language

- Linguistics
- English
- Other languages
- Sign language

### 500

#### Natural Sciences & Math

- Math
- Astronomy
- Physics
- Chemistry
- Earth Science
- Fossils
- Biology

### 600

#### Technology & Application of Knowledge

- Medicine
- Engineering
- Agriculture
- Gardening
- Home Economics
- Building

### 700

#### Arts & Recreation

- Fine arts
- Architecture
- Photography
- Music, theatre
- Sports

### 800

#### Literature

- Organized by region, language

### 900

#### History & Geography

- Geography
- Travel
- Biography
- History organized by location

# SCAVENGER HUNT

gather or photograph an item to satisfy every clue

a nonfiction book  
on any subject  
**AND**  
an audiobook or  
film on that  
same subject

a nonfiction  
history book from  
the adult  
collection  
**AND**  
a nonfiction book  
on the same  
subject from the  
kids' collection

a fictional story  
**AND**  
a complementary  
nonfiction book

a nonfiction book  
about outer space  
**AND**  
a nonfiction book  
about humans  
traveling into  
space

wild card  
something cool you found

something  
local to the  
Flathead Valley

two nonfiction books from  
different sections on  
similar topics  
examples:  
tanks, WWI  
leopards, house cats  
botany, gardening  
Civil Rights Movement, US History