

WHAT ON EARTH IS THE DEWEY DECIMAL SYSTEM?

Libraries give all materials a unique number that serves as that item's address for locating and or filing that item. The East Lake Community Library uses the Dewey Decimal System to catalog and locate our materials.

What about alphabetical by the author's last name?

Many sections of the library are filed this way. You will find Adult fiction, the Classics section, Adult paperbacks, Young Adult/Teen fiction, Children's fiction, Children's picture books and beginning readers, as well as, both Adult and Children's audio books all shelved by the author's last name. DVDs that are fiction are alphabetical by the movie title and Biographies are always alphabetical by the subject. For example, the movie Casablanca will be found in the C section of the DVDs and Game of the Thrones will be found in the G's, while books about Steve Jobs will be found under J in Biography. This works the same in both the adult and children's collections.

Non-fiction items in the library, books, movies and audio are all filed by **call number** located on the spine of the item. The call number is composed of two parts: the Dewey decimal classification number and the cutter number.

How do we determine the call number?

Long ago, librarian Melville Dewey divided all knowledge into ten main subjects. His system is still widely used today.

000 Generalities

100 Philosophy and Psychology

200 Religion

300 Social Sciences

400 Language

500 Science and Math

600 Technology and Applied Science

700 Arts

800 Literature and Literary Criticism

900 Geography and History

Each of these ten subjects have 10 divisions and the divisions are further and further divided to become more and more specific.

Need an example? We need a book on butterflies. More specifically, we want *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Butterfly World* by Paul Smart. Fortunately, we can just look it up in the online catalog and be directed to the call number in order to locate this book. 595.789 SMA

But how did it get assigned this number?

To find the classification number for butterflies, we need to start with the class for the Natural Sciences- the 500s. This means the first number of the call number will be a 5.

Remember how the ten main subjects each have divisions to make things more and more specific? Now we need to look at the 10 divisions for the 500s.

510 Math
520 Astronomy
530 Physics
540 Chemistry
550 Earth Science
560 Paleontology
570 Life Science
580 Botanical Science
590 Zoological Science

Butterflies are classified under the Zoological Sciences- 590. So, now we know the second number of our call number will be 9. To get our next number we have to look at the ten divisions within the 590s to find the next number.

591 Zoology
592 Invertebrates
593 Protozoa
594 Mollusca
595 Other invertebrates- worms and insects
596 Vertebrates
597 Fish
598 Reptiles and Birds
599 Mammals

Butterflies are insects, making our call number 595. But our number is 595.789SMA, where does the rest of it come from? Remember those division keep breaking down, and breaking down, making the number more and more specific? Here is a quick rundown of the rest of those division breakdowns.

The subject the Natural Sciences got us to the 500s

We made it more specific knowing it would be Zoological Sciences **590**

Butterflies fall under the category of other invertebrates, so that's **595**

Invertebrates are also divided and we want the division for Insects **595.7**

Insects is divided into categories and we want Lepidoptera (meaning Insects that molt) **595.78**

Won't all the butterfly books have the same number? Yes. That is how we keep all the books on the same topics in the same place. To differentiate we add the first three letters of the author's last name.

595.789 SMA is the correct classification for this book!

Confused?

It may help to think of Dewey numbers as money. For example, if you have \$120.20 this is more money than having 120.02. Just like having 979.50 is more than having 979.1799. Try to think of every item as a sum of money from 000.000 to 999.999. **These numbers are not whole numbers and should be read digit by digit.**

Questions? Comments? Confusions? Just ask! We are happy to help!

Thank you!

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