Get to know the Dewey Decimal Classification system

A brief PowerPoint slide show to help you understand how the Dewey Decimal Classification system works in your library
Get to know the DDC

Have you ever gone to the library and wondered how to find the books you want?
Did you know that your library has a great way of organizing its books so that you can find them easily?
It’s called the **Dewey Decimal Classification** system—or **DDC**. This system got its name from **Melvil Dewey** (1851-1931), who introduced his great idea for organizing library collections in 1876.
With its structure and flexibility, the DDC has served libraries for over 130 years so far and has spread to more than 200,000 libraries in 135 countries around the world.
But how does the DDC benefit you?

Very simply, the DDC is an organizational tool that makes it easy for you to find the books and other materials you want.
So what does the DDC do?

It helps solve a big problem: helping you find the right information by giving you a specific number that belongs to the item you want.
The DDC helps libraries arrange the items so that library users can find them. It’s a lot like an organized kitchen pantry:

- Canned goods on one shelf
- Breakfast cereals and grains on a second shelf
- Baking goods on a third shelf
- Snacks on a fourth shelf
Let’s say you’re interested in gardening. What you want to know about it will decide what DDC numbers you’ll need to find:

- The history of gardening
- Organic gardening
- Garden design
- Gardens in Britain
Each of these topics is about gardening, but a book about each of these topics will have its very own DDC number.

- **The history of gardening** (630.9)
- **Organic gardening** (635.0484)
- **Garden design** (712)
- **Gardens in Britain** (712.0941)
Once you have the number for the book you need, you can go find the row of books where the book you want should be.

The books on each shelf are arranged in number order, but if you need help, someone who works at the library can help you.
You will probably notice that when you find a specific book, other books shelved around it are usually books on a similar topic.

That’s how the DDC is arranged—by topic. The DDC has lots of topics—thousands of them!
The topics in the DDC are arranged into ten main classes:

000  Computer science, information & general works
100  Philosophy & psychology
200  Religion
300  Social sciences
400  Language
500  Science
600  Technology
700  Arts & recreation
800  Literature
900  History & geography
These ten main classes are each divided into ten divisions, like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>700</th>
<th>Arts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>710</td>
<td>Landscaping &amp; area planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>720</td>
<td>Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>730</td>
<td>Sculpture, ceramics &amp; metalwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>740</td>
<td>Drawing &amp; decorative arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>750</td>
<td>Painting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>760</td>
<td>Graphic arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>770</td>
<td>Photography &amp; computer art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>780</td>
<td>Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>790</td>
<td>Sports, games &amp; entertainment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each division is then divided into ten sections, like this:

- **790** Recreational & performing arts
- **791** Public performances
- **792** Stage presentations
- **793** Indoor games & amusements
- **794** Indoor games of skill
- **795** Games of chance
- **796** Athletic & outdoor sports & games
- **797** Aquatic & air sports
- **798** Equestrian sports & animal racing
- **799** Fishing, hunting & shooting
You’ll see all of these numbers on the **LEFT** side of the decimal point. But what about the numbers on the **RIGHT** side of the decimal point?

796.046
The numbers on the right side are used to divide a specific subject into even more specific parts of a subject.

- For a book on 16th century Italian poetry, look for 851.4
- For a book on dog training, look for 636.70887
- For a book on extreme sports, look for 796.046

It’s like sorting your socks by color, or music CDs by performer or type of music.
So how do you know what numbers to look for in the first place? Here are a few suggestions:

- You can look up your topic on a computer in your library.
- You can browse the shelves, using the DDC numbers on the ends of shelves as your guide.
- You can ask someone who works at the library to help.
Once you get to know the DDC, you’ll have a much better idea about where you’ll find the books and other items you need in your library—and in other libraries that use the DDC.
Melvil Dewey had a great idea in 1876 that helps library users like you today.

You can count on his idea, the DDC, to help you find the information you need in your library.

Melvil Dewey