

# Doing Dewey Decimal

By *Cindy H. Perdue* for Blue Ridge Public Television (WBRA, WMSY, WSBN)  
William Byrd High, Vinton, VA

**Grade Level:** 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

**Time Allotment:** Approximately two half-hour classes

**Overview:** Students will learn to find books in the nonfiction section by Dewey Decimal number. The students will be introduced to the Dewey Decimal System by the Media Monster in the Media Mania video series.

**Subject Matter:** Library Information Skills

**Learning Objectives:**

- Students will learn how to locate books in the nonfiction section of the library by using the Dewey Decimal number

**Standards:**

Virginia Library Information Use Standards of Learning

<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Technology/OET/library.shtml>

2.2 The student will identify and use beginning reference sources.

Descriptive Statement: Emphasis is on alphabetizing words and utilizing guide words in reference works, such as dictionaries and encyclopedias.

3.3 The student will recognize that information and recreational sources in a library/information center are arranged according to a scientific system.

Descriptive Statement: Emphasis is on using the Dewey Decimal System, for nonfiction, and alphabetical arrangement for fiction.

## Media Components

Video:

- *Media Mania*, # 103 (available from BRPTV)

Web

- *Let's Do Dewey*, (Middle Tennessee State University offers a site with Dewey Decimal activities.)

<http://www.mtsu.edu/~vvesper/dewey.html#Exercise%202>

## **Materials:**

- Books from the nonfiction section. There should be enough books for each student to have one. There should be two books on each topic so that students can work in pairs to locate the correct shelf for their books. For example, two students would each have one book about dinosaurs.
- Objects, such as a toy dinosaur, to represent topics in the nonfiction section (one per student pair)
- 12" x 18" colored construction paper. (One per student, folded into "books" using directions below.)
- "Covers" and "spine labels" to put in the books.  
(Note: You may wish to create multiple sets of four different "books" and let students work in groups of four.)

## **Preparation for Teachers:**

### Preparation for Introductory Activity:

- Collect several nonfiction books from the library collection. Pairs of books about the same topic should be selected from various nonfiction areas.
- Objects representing those topics should be placed on the shelf where the books were removed. For example, if two dinosaur books are selected, a toy dinosaur can be placed on that shelf.

### Preparation for Culminating Activity:

Create folded construction-paper "books."

- Turn 12" x 18" colored construction paper horizontally.
- Fold up the bottom inch and fold down the top inch.
- Fold the left side to within an inch of the right side and make a crease.
- Fold the right side to within an inch of the left side and make a crease. This creates the spine.
- Then fold each flap in one inch and glue or tape to the inside cover. This will create a "book" with outside pockets for front and back covers and a spine label.
- Use 8 ½ x 11 inch paper to create the covers and spine labels. The covers should have the author and title. The spine labels should have only the Dewey number. (Students will use their knowledge of the Dewey decimal system to match the cover to the spine label.)

## **Introductory Activity**

1. Show students a small bookcase filled with nonfiction books that are arranged by author, like fiction books are.

2. Ask students to determine how the books are arranged.
3. Point out a book on one topic at one end of the shelf, such as a dinosaur book. Ask students to locate another dinosaur book. Discuss how difficult it would be to find several books about dinosaurs if they were spread out like this in the library.
4. Ask students for suggestions to make the books easier to find. (Answer-put the books together by topic)
5. Tell students that someone else had the same idea of grouping books that were on the same topic. His name was Melvil Dewey. Tell students that they will learn more about Mr. Dewey from Mortimer, the Media Monster. Then they will be able to find where these books belong on the library shelves.

### Learning Activities

Cue the video, *Media Mania #103*, to 5 ½ minutes into the video. The visual cue is that the children and Mortimer the Media Monster are at the card catalog. **Stop** the video after the monster states, “All of you need to listen up.” The video is now ready for the Viewing Activity.

1. Give a **Focus for Media Interaction** by telling the students, “We are going to watch a video about using the library. In the video you will see Mortimer the Media Monster explaining to students how to find nonfiction books in the library. During the video, I want you to listen for why Melvil Dewey created the Dewey decimal system 100 years ago.”
2. **Play** the video until the monster states, “...to help him find books faster.”
3. **Pause** and discuss the answer. (Answer-Melvil Dewey wanted to create a system that allowed people to find books faster.)
4. **Tell** the students, “During the next section of the video, you should watch and listen for how fiction books are different from nonfiction books and try to figure out why they are arranged differently in the library.”
5. **Play** the video until after the monster states, “Fiction books are placed on the fiction shelf in alphabetical order by the author’s last name.” **STOP** the video
6. **Ask** students, “How are fiction books arranged?” Discuss that fiction books are arranged alphabetically by author.
7. **Ask** students, “How are nonfiction books arranged?” Discuss that nonfiction books are arranged by subject.
8. **Ask** students, “Why are nonfiction books arranged this way instead of by author, like the fiction books?” Remind them of the Introductory Activity in which the nonfiction books were placed on the shelf this way. It would be difficult to find books that are about the same topic.
9. **Rewind the video** to the Dewey chart or show students a Dewey chart located in the library.
10. **Tell** students, “Now we will be using the chart that Mr. Dewey invented to find where these books belong in the library.”
11. Hand out the books randomly to the students

12. Example-Ask which two students have the dinosaur books. Ask those two students to stand or sit together. Ask all of the students to match up in pairs with someone else who has the same topic. You may need to call the students, “Who has a book about football?” and place the two together, etc.
13. Give the students a brief orientation to the nonfiction section by pointing out the numbers on the shelves. Point out that the call numbers on their books match up with numbers on the shelves.
14. Ask students to go in their pairs to the location in the library where their book would be found. Instruct them to bring back what they find there that represents the topic of their book. (For example, a plastic dinosaur.)
15. Send the students out to find their objects. When they return, ask the students to share where they found their objects.

### **Culminating Activity:**

1. Put students in groups of four. Give each group four or more construction paper books with covers and spine labels removed.
2. Ask students to select one cover for their book.
3. Ask students to find the Dewey number that best matches up with the topic of their book. Remind them that the letters refer to the author’s last name, which can be found on the cover.
4. Discuss as a group which spine labels matched each cover.
5. Review what the students learned about the Dewey decimal system
6. Fast-forward the video to near the end. Stop the video at the close-up on Mortimer, right before the monster sings the Dewey decimal song.
7. Tell the students, “Now we will hear Mortimer the Monster sing a song about the Dewey decimal system. Maybe this song can help you to remember how important it is that Mr. Dewey invented a way of organizing the library.
8. Play the Dewey decimal song at the end of the video. Encourage students to sing along with the “Dewey, Dewey” chorus.

### **Cross Curricular Extensions:**

#### Technology

- Visit the *Let’s Do Dewey* site to practice what they have learned about Dewey. *Let’s Do Dewey*, (Middle Tennessee State University offers a site with Dewey Decimal activities.) <http://www.mtsu.edu/~vvesper/dewey.html#Exercise%202>  
[Note: The instructor may wish to do this as a demonstration, as the exercises include Dewey numbers with more than one decimal.]

#### Writing:

- Have students create their own ideas for nonfiction books. Give the students construction paper and teach them how to fold their own books. Fold white paper the same way. Create covers for the books that include the title and the student as the author. Create a back cover with a summary of the book. Get the librarian’s assistance in determining the correct Dewey number for the book to create the

spine labels. Separate the books and mix up the covers, summaries, and spine labels. Play the matching game again with the books the students created.

Art:

- Have students illustrate the covers of their books.

### **Community Connections:**

Ask students to visit the public library with a parent or guardian. Locate in the public library where the book they created in the cross curricular extension would be on the shelf.

### **Adaptation for English Language Learners or Special Needs Students**

In the Introductory Activity and Matching Game include easy books or books in other languages for students who need them. A list of recommended bilingual books can be found at the Cooperative Children's Book Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. <http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/books/>