

LACONI TSS – November 5, 2021

## Using the DDC and WebDewey Effectively

**Alex Kyrios**

Senior Editor, Dewey Decimal Classification





## Alex Kyrios

Senior Editor, Dewey Decimal Classification

---

---

# DDC OVERVIEW

---

## DDC basics

- First published by Melvil Dewey in 1876
- Long published by Forest Press
- Library of Congress involved since 1927
- Forest Press acquired by OCLC in 1988



The DDC was created by Melvil Dewey in 1876. It was never meant to be a static system, and Dewey published several more editions in his lifetime. Beginning in 1911, the DDC was published by a company called Forest Press.

Even though the Library of Congress had developed its own classification by then, the Dewey editorial office was established at the Library in 1927. Since most public libraries in the US use DDC, there are Library of Congress employees who assign DDC numbers for their benefit.

OCLC, acquired Forest Press and the DDC in 1988 and has been responsible for its maintenance ever since.

## DDC publication history

- Since 2011, electronic access via WebDewey
- 23 printed editions
- 15 abridged editions
- Annual print-on-demand (POD) versions
- ~8-9 current translations



In 2011, OCLC published Edition 23 of the DDC. This is the last printed edition of the DDC. Since 2011, the system has been continuously revised via WebDewey.

For many years, after the publication of an edition, the editors would prepare an abridged edition, which compressed the whole classification into a single volume. These were primarily intended for small libraries. The last of those, Abridged 15, was published in 2012, and was an abridgement of Edition 23. While there is no longer a separate abridged edition, WebDewey gives you the option to view segmentation marks, which show where to cut off a number if you want to use abridged classification in your library.

WebDewey is an incredible tool because it goes beyond what was in even the full printed editions. There are thousands of built numbers, history notes, and index terms that simply would not fit in print. Still, we know sometimes it's easier to view things in print. Since 2018, we have produced print-on-demand versions of the classification, similar to a “snapshot” of WebDewey data.

The DDC has also been translated into many languages. There are about 8 or 9 current translations, meaning they translated DDC 23 or Abridged 15. Most of these have dedicated translation teams that translate every update I make from the English version into their own translation.

## DDC outline

- Schedules
  - Ten main classes
  - 100 divisions
  - 1000 sections
- Tables
  - Numbered 1-6
  - Table 3 is in 3 parts
- Manual
- (Introduction)



The three main elements of the whole DDC are the schedules, tables, and Manual. The schedules are the ten main classes. Each of those has ten divisions, and each division has 10 sections, for a total of 1000 three-digit numbers. There are longer numbers than three digits, and even some three-digit numbers that aren't actually valid, but they're still part of the overall structure.

The tables give notation that can be added to base numbers in the number-building process. The Manual gives longer notes on usage of particular numbers, and guidance on when you should use one number vs. another.

While it's not part of the DDC in quite the same way, the Introduction is a very valuable resource. It's where you would expect in print, and available as a linked PDF from WebDewey.

Basic structure	
	<b>Main Classes</b>
000	<a href="#">Computer science, information &amp; general works</a>
100	<a href="#">Philosophy &amp; psychology</a>
200	<a href="#">Religion</a>
300	<a href="#">Social sciences</a>
400	<a href="#">Language</a>
500	<a href="#">Science</a>
600	<a href="#">Technology</a>
700	<a href="#">Arts &amp; recreation</a>
800	<a href="#">Literature</a>
900	<a href="#">History &amp; geography</a>
	<b>Tables</b>
T1	<a href="#">Table 1. Standard Subdivisions</a>
T2	<a href="#">Table 2. Geographic Areas, Historical Periods, Biography</a>
T3	<a href="#">Table 3. Subdivisions for the Arts, for Individual Literatures, for Specific Literary Forms</a>
T3A	<a href="#">Table 3A. Subdivisions for Works by or about Individual Authors</a>
T3B	<a href="#">Table 3B. Subdivisions for Works by or about More than One Author</a>
T3C	<a href="#">Table 3C. Additional Notation for Arts and Literature</a>
T4	<a href="#">Table 4. Subdivisions of Individual Languages and Language Families</a>
T5	<a href="#">Table 5. Ethnic and National Groups</a>
T6	<a href="#">Table 6. Languages</a>

These probably look familiar if you've used WebDewey. You can see the ten main classes, numbered 0 through 9, as well as the six tables. If you want to be technical, there are really eight tables, but that's because Table 3 is in three parts. Table notation is never used alone—just in the number-building process.

Classification in the DDC is based on discipline, so different works on the same topic might have very different numbers—for example, a work on environmentalism could be with economics, political science, or philosophy.



## Update process: An editor's role

- Continuous revision and improving of the classification
- Coordinating with partners and volunteers (subject-matter experts, translators, users, etc.)
- Soliciting feedback to determine future changes
- Work with the Editorial Policy Committee (EPC)



Again, there's never been a time where the DDC was totally static. But in the pre-computer days, changes between printed editions were rare. The DDC has been available in an electronic form since 1993, so for a while, there was a mix of immediate changes and those that were held off for the next print edition. After that last print edition in 2011, it became harder to justify holding changes for years like that. Today, WebDewey offers handy ways to view recent updates.

Some of an editor's time is spent working on my own proposals. Beginning

several years ago, we really opened up this process so anyone can propose changes.

All major proposals for revising the DDC go through a group called the Editorial Policy Committee, or EPC.

## Editorial Policy Committee (EPC)

- 10-member representative body of worldwide Dewey users
- Joint ALA/OCLC committee
- Dates to 1953
- Six countries currently represented (Australia, Canada, Norway, South Africa, UK, US)



The EPC is a group of 10 representative Dewey users from around the world. EPC is a joint committee of OCLC and the American Library Association, though the ALA knows it's important that the DDC be a global system. EPC as we know it was created in 1953, though there were some earlier groups that did similar work. There are currently members from six different countries.

In normal times, EPC meets in person once a year, with 1-2 electronic meetings in between where smaller issues are discussed. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, their last face-to-face meeting was in September 2019, and they have had more electronic meetings since. We hope that it will be safe to have the next face-to-face meeting in June 2022.

At EPC meetings, members vote on proposals written by me or Dewey volunteers worldwide. If they don't accept a proposal, they usually send it back with comments so a revised proposal can be presented, rather than rejecting it outright. EPC members are good at considering what a proposal will mean for their libraries, and often share them with colleagues for further feedback.

## Core editorial work

- New developments and larger changes
  - Lots of research (subject areas, how other taxonomies model)
  - May involve consultation with outside experts
  - Exhibit writing
    - Iterative process
    - Shared with peers for questions and revision
- Smaller substantial changes still involve some of above



Also called exhibits since they are presented to EPC at meetings, a proposal involves research, either research into the subject area itself, or comparisons with other classification systems and taxonomies. It may also involve consultation with subject-matter experts. Exhibit writing is an iterative process, in which drafts are shared with a group of interested peers and volunteers. Asking how long it takes to prepare a single exhibit is like asking how long it takes to catalog one work—it really depends quite a bit. All of this is true of smaller changes too, though of course there's generally less work involved with them.

## Levels of revisions

- Minor error corrections, “editorial malarkey”
- Small changes, EPC notified
- Straightforward changes, EPC given 3 days to object
- Formal proposals (exhibits), presented at electronic or in-person meetings



Not every proposal needs to be formally presented to EPC for voting at one of their meetings.

The smallest changes, which we sometimes call “editorial malarkey”, can be made without EPC’s involvement at all. Editors can simply fix misspellings or similar errors. **For bigger changes than that that are still fairly obvious, editors may make the change and send a notification on EPC’s listserv explaining it. Next, for changes that are still not very far-reaching, editors may propose on EPC’s listserv to publish them if there are no objections after three days. We call this the safety-valve process, since it lets EPC members note if they think an issue needs more discussion. Only beyond that does there really need to be an EPC exhibit.**

EPC is a good group, and they love to see people getting involved in the process too. They also understand that sometimes it makes sense to make exceptions. For example, when a volunteer put together a proposal for a DDC number for COVID-19, we fast-tracked it and EPC approved it outside of one of their meetings.

## Community involvement

- Librarians are the experts in how people use Dewey
- Subject matter expertise
- Diversity of thought
- Flexibility, different ways to get involved
  - [oclc.org/DeweyContributors](https://oclc.org/oclc/DeweyContributors) – documentation
  - [oclc.org/DeweyExhibits](https://oclc.org/oclc/DeweyExhibits) – current and past proposals



We want to tap into the subject matter expertise that librarians bring. There are lots of folks who are subject matter experts because they are in a library with a special focus, or they have education in other fields, or they just know a lot!

Some librarians think they don't know enough to help, they're not experts. But librarians ARE the experts in how people use Dewey. Here at the editorial office we don't catalog books, and we don't necessarily see the kinds of books that come through. We can't possibly keep up with the publishing trends everywhere in the world.

Another benefit of bringing more people into the revision process is that we're able to represent a fuller diversity of thought than if revisions are just written by the editors. This ensures that the classification moves away from a US-centric point of view. We've always reached out to library workers around the world to get their feedback on our proposals, but now we're trying to be more clear about welcoming feedback on how Dewey can improve.

Here are two sites where you can learn more about the process. The Dewey Exhibits site is where proposals for the

EPC are posted. It also has information about what goes into those proposals, a template to make your own, and a list of proposals from some previous meetings. The Dewey Contributors site has more information about what you can do, and a forum where you can share thoughts with other Dewey users from around the world.



---

## CLASSIFYING WITH DDC

---

## Subject and discipline

- Subject: What a work is about
- Discipline: Field of study or author's perspective



In most cases, the first step in classification is determining the subject of a work, what it's about. That's not unique to the DDC. For more specific subjects, subject alone *may* get the job done. But more often, the DDC requires you determine the discipline too. Most subjects can be and are studied across multiple disciplines.

For example, how would you come up with a DDC number for a work about clothing? You might think you have some idea, but you really need more information—namely, the discipline—to be sure. Probably the best way to get a sense for the disciplinary coverage of a specific subject is to consult the Relative Index, either in print or via browsing in WebDewey.

Before we move on, a note about the idea of form. Although it's understandable to think of the DDC as a system for books, and it's older than some of the forms libraries hold today, sometimes the form of an item can matter. You may know that many comics and graphic novels class at 741.5, in a drawing section, even though they're examples of drawing rather than being *about* drawing. Sound recordings and films have their own numbers too, for example. But those don't necessarily trump other considerations. A non-fiction graphic novel or documentary film

should go with the subject. And I assume no library throws all their books at 002, "The book".

Clothing	<a href="#">391</a>
Clothing	
see <i>Manual at</i> <a href="#">391 vs. 646.3.746.92</a>	
Clothing--armed forces	<a href="#">355.8/1</a>
Clothing--armed forces--costume	<a href="#">355.1/4</a>
Clothing--arts	<a href="#">746.9/2</a>
Clothing--commerce	<a href="#">381/45687</a>
Clothing--commercial manufacturing	<a href="#">687</a>
Clothing--customs	<a href="#">391</a>
Clothing--health	<a href="#">613/482</a>
Clothing--home economics	<a href="#">646/3</a>
Clothing--home sewing	<a href="#">646.4</a>
Clothing--product safety	<a href="#">363.19</a>
Clothing--product safety	
see also <a href="#">Product safety</a>	
Clothing--product safety--law	<a href="#">344.04/235</a>
Clothing--psychological influence	<a href="#">155.9/5</a>
Clothing--social welfare	<a href="#">361/05</a>

Back to the idea of discipline. Here's an example of a browse in WebDewey. You can see here there are a lot of disciplines, and this is even pared down to fit on one slide!

Some of these are fairly specialized. The last entry on this screen is specifically for providing clothing for the needy. The one above it, on the psychological influence of clothing, sounds fascinating, but probably won't come up much. Big ones for this example include customs, looking at the cultural aspects of clothing, and home economics or commercial manufacturing for the creation of clothing. I also want to draw attention to the topmost entry, for just plain "Clothing". You may notice this one is indexed to the same number as the customs entry. That's because the customs number is what's called the interdisciplinary number for clothing. More on that soon, but I think the term communicates the general idea – if a work is looking at the subject of clothing from multiple disciplines, 391 is probably a good place for it.

One common criticism I hear about the DDC is that it splits subjects. You can see that here—if someone came into your library wanting all works on clothing, there isn't a single number you could point them to. But I hope you can

also see the logic of this approach. If someone wants a work on how to sew clothing at home, they're probably more interested in other sewing projects than the significance of clothing in military science; if they want to read about effective provision of clothing to needy people, other ways of helping them will probably be more relevant than commercial manufacturing of clothing.

It's also the nature of the beast that any system that wants to give one code to an item is going to have to make trade-offs. If I wanted to rearrange things so all works on clothing were together, other similar subjects would get split. As an aside, it's possible in MARC records to assign multiple DDC numbers to the same work, and some libraries do that, but the notes and rules of the DDC are designed around the assumption that there is one best number for any given work, and if you're using DDC for shelving, you probably either need to have that one number or make judicious use of dummy items on shelves.

## Choosing between numbers

- Rule of application
- First-of-two rule
- Rule of three
- Rule of zero



Once you've determined the subject and discipline, you may still find multiple numbers that seem suitable. Here are four general rules that help you choose the best one. Always keep in mind that the specific overrides the general. If specific instructions at a number conflict with any of these, follow the specific instruction. There are plenty of notes like that in the DDC, such as tables of preference, which give a comprehensive listing for a given area of which numbers to prefer over which.

The rule of application says that when you have a work discussing the influence or effect of one subject on another, class with the one being affected. This comes up a lot in literature. Shakespeare's influence on a later author would class with that later author. It's not limited to literature, though.

The first-of-two rule says that if you're choosing between two numbers, choose the one that comes first. The rule of three says if you have three or more subjects with equal weight, go up to the lowest number that includes them all. A work on the history of Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri would class with the history of the Midwest.

The rule of zero is more technical. If you're choosing between two subdivisions, avoid one beginning with zero if the alternative has a non-zero number in the same position. The Introduction has a good example of this. The rule of zero also tells you to prefer subdivisions with single zeros to those with two zeros, and so on. Since zeros come before 1, the rule of zero itself is like an exception to the first-of-two rule.

If a work is predominantly about one thing, the rest may not matter. A history of Illinois will still class with the history of Illinois even if there's a small amount of discussion about neighboring states. A history of Virginia that includes parts of what are now West Virginia or Kentucky can still class with Virginia. I'm using geographic examples a lot because they have nice, clear boundaries, but none of this is exclusive to geography. A work dealing equally with planetary rings, gravitation, and stars would class in the general number for astronomy.

## Other important notes

- Class at this number
  - Class here
  - Including
- Class at another number
  - See
  - Class elsewhere
  - See also



While these are not the only types of notes you'll find in the DDC, they're among the most important in helping you choose a number for a work. I've separated them into two main clusters: notes that tell you to class a subject at the number where you find the note, and notes that tell you to head to a different number.

All of these notes do a pretty good job getting across their intent in plain English. Editors' choices of these notes aren't arbitrary, though; they have nuances. To briefly summarize: A class-here note lists a subject that is pretty close to being a synonym—close enough that we anticipate never giving them a separate number. An example of this is the number for fishes, 597, which has “bony fishes” in a class-here note. Almost all living fishes are bony fishes, so there wouldn't be much value in giving bony fishes their own number. An including note is for topics we say are in “standing room”. They're just one smaller aspect of the number they're found at, but they may get their own number at some point in the future.

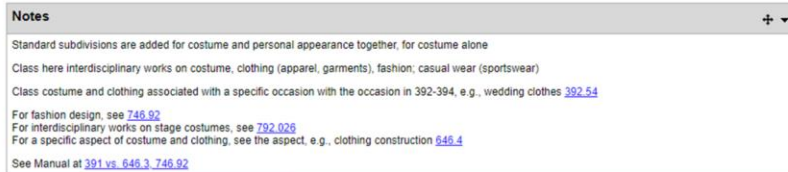
In the second group, see references are notes that start with the word “For”, like “For *topic*, see *number*.” When we use a see reference, we're saying that topic logically belongs here, but we've put it elsewhere for one reason or



another, usually because we ran out of room! For example, 410 Linguistics has a see reference for sociolinguistics. It's a logical subtopic, but sociolinguistics is in with social science. A class-elsewhere note is used for other related topics, and a see-also note is reserved for more tenuous connections, such as potential mistakes or homophones.

## Interdisciplinary numbers

- Often called out in the index (term with no subdivision)
- Sometimes called out in notes in the schedules
- Not a bad choice if in doubt, but...
- Avoid if illogical



Notes

Standard subdivisions are added for costume and personal appearance together, for costume alone

Class here interdisciplinary works on costume, clothing (apparel, garments), fashion; casual wear (sportswear)

Class costume and clothing associated with a specific occasion with the occasion in 392-394, e.g., wedding clothes [392.54](#)

For fashion design, see [746.92](#)

For interdisciplinary works on stage costumes, see [792.026](#)

For a specific aspect of costume and clothing, see the aspect, e.g., clothing construction [646.4](#)

See Manual at [391 vs. 646.3](#), [746.92](#)

There are interdisciplinary numbers, sometimes “ID numbers” for short, designated for many, but not all, subjects. As we saw on the previous slide and the example for clothing, the Relative Index often makes these explicit, where you have a term indexed with no further subdivision. Sometimes the notes for a specific number will call them out too. You can see on the second line of these notes from 391 that interdisciplinary works on clothing class here.

An ID number is not *quite* the same as us saying, “just drop it here if you’re in doubt”. That’s not necessarily a bad idea, but make sure you’re still thinking about what best fits a work in hand, and not just following the gravity of an interdisciplinary number. Avoid ID numbers if they’re illogical for a specific work. If you have a work on clothing, but it’s really all about making clothing, either at home or in manufacturing, let other notes, or rules like the first-of-two rule, be your guide.

A similar concept to that of an interdisciplinary number is a *comprehensive number*. Comprehensive numbers are limited to a single discipline. For example, the number for baking bread, 641.815, has a note “Class here comprehensive works on baked goods”. That still applies to the discipline of cooking, but tells you you can use the

number for bread and other baked goods, not just bread.

## Hierarchy

- Some notes have hierarchical force
  - Scope
  - Class here
  - See reference
  - (And more)
- Check up and down!

**94 History of Europe**

- [900](#) ▾ History & geography
- [930-990](#) ▾ History of specific continents, countries, localities; extraterrestrial worlds
- [940-990](#) ▾ History of specific continents, countries, localities in modern world; extraterrestrial worlds
- 940 History of Europe**
- [940](#) ▾ History of Europe
- [941](#) ▾ \*British Isles
- [942](#) ▾ \*England and Wales
- [943](#) ▾ Germany and neighboring central European countries
- [944](#) ▾ \*France and Monaco
- [945](#) ▾ \*Italy, San Marino, Vatican City, Malta
- [946](#) ▾ Spain, Andorra, Gibraltar, Portugal
- [947](#) ▾ Russia and neighboring east European countries
- [948](#) ▾ \*Scandinavia and Finland
- [949](#) ▾ Other parts of Europe

**Subdivisions:**

- 949.1 \*Northwestern Islands
- 949.2 \*Netherlands
- 949.3 \*Belgium and Luxembourg
- 949.4 \*Switzerland
- 949.5 \*Greece
- 949.6 \*Balkan Peninsula
- 949.7 \*Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia
- 949.8 \*Romania
- 949.9 \*Bulgaria

Notes

Comments

Create built nu...

- [941.081](#) Reic...
- + [T1-089](#)
- + [T5-916/2](#) \*Inst

By its nature, the DDC is a hierarchical system. Every topic has a supercategory, or parent or broader class, and most have one or more subcategories, or children or narrower class. In many cases, topics are defined by their position in the hierarchy. Some types of notes have what's called hierarchical force, meaning they apply not just at the number where they appear, but also in all of its subcategories. I've listed a few examples here; section 7 of the Introduction is a good place to look for a fuller listing of which types of notes have hierarchical force.

I mostly use WebDewey and our internal database in my day-to-day work, but I like having a print copy nearby too. There are advantages to each. Notes with hierarchical force are much easier to process in print, because you probably just need to look up on the same page, or flip a page or two back, to see what notes are higher up. In WebDewey, you'll need to click into those records, though you can also open them in a new tab or window for ease of flipping back and forth. We are looking into ways to make these notes more explicit in WebDewey so you don't have to do that, but for now, that's how it is.

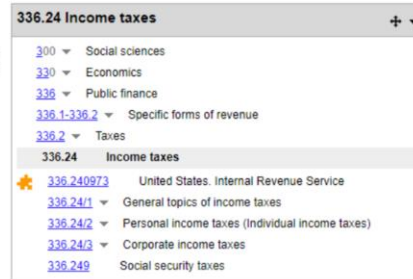
But you can, as seen in this screenshot, hover over the downward arrows next to other numbers in the hierarchy

for a quick look at what's there. The box at the bottom labeled "Subdivisions" is what you'll see—the screenshot doesn't show the cursor over the downward arrow next to 949. Suppose you have something on the history of Bulgaria. Cover up that box, and where does it go? Is it a neighboring central European country, with Germany? An east European country, with Russia? This shows you that it's down with other parts of Europe, in 949.

Hovering like this can save you some clicks when you're manually navigating the hierarchy, but you should still make a habit of checking the notes at higher numbers too. You may also want to check *down* in the hierarchy, especially if you're deciding whether or not to go to a more specific number. Speaking of which...

## Truncating numbers

- Close and broad classification
- Abridgement
- Local needs (think globally, act locally!)



The screenshot shows a hierarchical DDC classification structure. At the top is '336.24 Income taxes'. Below it are several levels of sub-classification, including 'Social sciences', 'Economics', 'Public finance', 'Specific forms of revenue', and 'Taxes'. Under 'Taxes', there is a sub-section for 'Income taxes' which includes 'United States. Internal Revenue Service', 'General topics of income taxes', 'Personal income taxes (Individual income taxes)', 'Corporate income taxes', and 'Social security taxes'. The 'United States. Internal Revenue Service' entry is marked with a star icon.

336.24	Income taxes
300	Social sciences
330	Economics
336	Public finance
336.1-336.2	Specific forms of revenue
336.2	Taxes
336.24	Income taxes
336.240973	United States. Internal Revenue Service
336.24/1	General topics of income taxes
336.24/2	Personal income taxes (Individual income taxes)
336.24/3	Corporate income taxes
336.249	Social security taxes

There's no real limit as to how long a DDC number can be. While there's always exactly three numbers to the left of the decimal, some numbers can get very long in digits to the right. I always recommend in a MARC record, especially in a shared catalog like WorldCat, that you provide the most accurate DDC number possible, regardless of length or other considerations. But I'm also a big proponent of the idea that the employees of a library best know their own users.

That's why I say here "think globally, act locally". Consider your colleagues in libraries around the world, and assume they want standard DDC as a baseline, but act locally in adapting the system for your needs. And if you make a change that you think really does improve upon standard DDC, and that everyone can benefit from it, that's good! Tell me, and we can see about making that happen. There's no Dewey police. You won't get in trouble for modifying the system to meet your needs. Whether you want to ignore other rules or give local notation, you should consider that a tool in your toolbox. Most end users will have little or no knowledge of the DDC themselves, and they really don't need to.

I mention this in the context of truncating numbers, because I know there's a general desire for shorter numbers, but sometimes, especially when you're building numbers, they get pretty long. There are a few ways you can trim numbers for length. First is the idea of close and broad classification. Close classification is really the default, the idea of assigning the most specific number you can to a subject. Broad classification is an approach that's happy to use broader numbers for concepts. If you class a work on income taxes at the broadest possible number for economics, that really isn't wrong. Sometimes it's best to stay at a broader number or subject heading, especially if you're not sure which subdivision you'd continue down to. (This may sound like the rule of three!)

I mentioned back towards the beginning of the session that there used to be official abridged editions of the DDC. These were intended for smaller collections. The last few abridged editions were single print volumes, vs. the four-volume full editions. While there is no longer a separate abridged product, there are still slashes, or segmentation marks, in WebDewey numbers, showing you where a number should end if you're using abridged classification. No segmentation mark means the whole number is used. In this example, you can see the numbers 336.241 through 336.243 cut off at the four. Note that you can choose to show or hide the segmentation marks in your WebDewey preferences.

Finally, the segmentation marks represent logical places to truncate, but you may choose to use other criteria. It's not uncommon for a library to only go X digits past the decimal, in the interests of fitting neatly onto a spine label or for ease of use. Again, I am not at all opposed to this practice, and will just again ask that you use standard DDC in shared catalog records for the sake of your colleagues across the field.

## Review exercises

1. *The human intestines and stomach*
2. *Doctrines, ethics, and education in world religions*
3. *A complete guide to opera*
4. *Heating with electric chimneys*

[oc.lc/ddc-intro](http://oc.lc/ddc-intro)

Remember: rule of application, first-of-two rule, rule of three, rule of zero, interdisciplinary numbers



Exercise answers below

~~~~~

1. 611.33 Stomach – first-of-two rule
2. 200 Religion – rule of three
3. 782.1 Operas and related dramatic vocal forms – ID number
4. 697.8 Chimneys – rule of zero



---

# NUMBER BUILDING

---

## Built numbers

- Almost infinite possible numbers
- Start with a schedule number (base number)
- Add from tables, or even other schedule numbers
- But follow instructions—don't just combine two numbers without thought!
- WebDewey can help, but isn't perfect
- Examples: car repair (629.2872), car repair in Illinois (629.287209773), bus repair (629.287233), illustrations of bus repair (629.2872330222)



The DDC presents many opportunities for number building. The number of possible Dewey numbers isn't infinite, but it's very, very large.

There are a lot of numbers simply given in the schedules—thousands of them. If you're cataloging a work and one of those numbers fits, that's good! You're done. But you can also use number building to make more specific numbers to fit. There are about 12,000 “building blocks” found in tables, and even some places where you can build numbers by adding one schedule number to another. For example, adding 09773 to the end of most numbers means that topic in Illinois.

Just be careful when building numbers that you're doing so by following instructions in the classification itself. WebDewey has a built-in number-building tool, which does a really good job of taking complex instructions and helping you build numbers. Like any machine, though, it's not perfect, and you should check its work. We'll be looking at this in much more detail soon.

These examples can give you a sense of how many potential numbers there are. For any number that you can add 09773 for Illinois, you can add 0973 for the US, 09772 for Indiana, and more codes for every country of the world. You can add from Table 1, the standard subdivisions, to express ideas that can apply to any topic, like illustrations, philosophy, history, or serial publications.

## Tables

- T1 Standard subdivisions
- T2 Geographic areas, historical periods, biography
- T3A Works by or about individual authors
- T3B Works by or about more than one author
- T3C Additional notation for arts and literature
- T4 Individual languages and language families
- T5 Ethnic and national groups
- T6 Languages



Tables are the basic building blocks of built numbers. Not all numbers are built from the tables—with some, you'll add schedule numbers, or parts of them, to each other. In many cases, though, you'll use the tables.

Table notation is never used alone; it's always added to a base number from the schedules. Table 1, standard subdivisions, is a lot like the free-floating subdivisions in LCSH. You can add it to almost any base number, unless there are instructions otherwise. For the rest of the tables, you only add the notation when there are instructions that say you can.

Table 2 is kind of special. There are a few places where you're instructed to add it directly, and again, much of the 900s is Table 2 notation added directly to base number 9. But often, you'll be adding T2 notation by way of a standard subdivision, in T1. (This is also true of Table 5, but T2 sees more use.)

## Exercises: Standard subdivisions

1. *History of meteorology*
2. *Cooking magazines*
3. *Library administration in Illinois*
4. *Palestinian Arab customs*



Exercise answers below

~~~~~

1. 551.509
2. 641.505
3. 025.109773
4. 390.0899274

## Exercises: Internal add tables

1. 362-363 *Assessing pollution risk*
2. 362-363 *Reliable employment for veterans*
3. 930-990 *Encyclopedia of Somali history*
4. 930-990 *Archaeology of Tennessee*



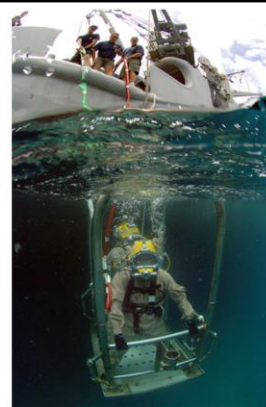
Exercise answers below

~~~~~

1. 363.732
2. 362.8684
3. 967.73003
4. 976.800909

## 800s and Table 3

- Essential equipment
  - Note at 800
  - Notes at the beginning of Table 3 sections
  - Manual notes linked from above
  - Flow charts for T3A and T3B (see Manual)
- Existing built numbers (fellow divers)



US Navy / Public domain



It might surprise you to learn that the DDC doesn't have a separate fiction section, per se. The 800s is literature, but there's also literary criticism and so on mixed in there. Few libraries use the 800s to their fullest extent, and may forgo it for popular fiction. But many still use the 800s for classic or more scholarly fiction, even if popular fiction is organized by author name or genre.

This is the most complex part of the DDC. Don't jump into these waters of

the 800s alone! Read the notes at the beginning of each of these sections, and refer back to them often. Among other guidance, the Manual has flow charts that you can follow.

And again, built numbers in WebDewey can help as examples—in the metaphor, your fellow divers. The usual caveats apply: make sure you understand those numbers and translating them to your needs. This is also a great time to check places like WorldCat, or OCLC Classify, to see if someone has already done the work. Double check them, but as long as they look good, no need to reinvent the wheel.



### Table 3: A table divided

- T3A: Subdivisions for Works by or about Individual Authors
- T3B: Subdivisions for Works by or about More than One Author
- T3C: Additional Notation for Arts and Literature



Table 3 comes in three parts. You'll always be adding from A, B, or C. In the 800s, you'll most often be using A or B, depending on whether you're classifying something by or about an individual author or by more than one author. Tables 3A and 3B are parallel in many ways, with 3B going into more detail since that's where a lot of scholarly analysis ends up, whether it's comparing two or three authors at once or writing about a specific period in a specific language or national literature, covering multiple authors.

Table 3C does get used in a narrow part of the 800s, but gets called for more often for topics in the arts—very broadly speaking, from fine painting to video games. When you have works about the artistic or literary themes of other media, you'll often use T3C. There's also a part of T3B that asks you to build from the T3C notation.

## Considerations for T3 and the 800s

- Base number for literature – original language
- Form (e.g., fiction, poetry, drama)
- Time period
- And sometimes more...
- Generally not relevant
  - Author's name
  - Language of translation



Typical built numbers in the 800s will express at least three aspects. The base number, perhaps the most straightforward part of the process, comes from the language of the literature. Note that the DDC separates English-language literature of the Americas, the 810s, effectively treating it as its own language. Otherwise, you usually have to first just ask the language the literature was originally written in. Usually next in the number is notation from Table 3A or 3B for the form, meaning the type of literature. It can be poetry, drama, fiction, essays, speeches, letters, or miscellaneous writings. Next is notation for the time period. In some cases, those are just based on even periods like centuries. In others, there are custom period tables with notation spelled out. So for American literature in English, the first period runs through 1776, another through 1861, and so on. The current period notation for American literature in English is 6, for anything published in 2000 forward. That's not likely to change until we approach the year 2050!

Other aspects of the work may be expressed, depending on what exactly you're building. There's more complexity in Table 3B, for more than one author, such as notation to mark collections of literature, or history and criticism. There's also some subtypes under the forms, such as monologues or drama for radio production under drama.

A couple of things you might expect to factor into the DDC number but generally don't: the author matters, but not their specific name. You may well add cutter numbers or other notation to express this, but like in other parts of the DDC, this doesn't come into play. What does matter is the period where an author wrote, and you're also instructed to keep an author's works together where appropriate. So going back to the example of James Patterson, the correct standard DDC number for a specific novel of his is 813.54, with American fiction of 1945-1999. That's true even if it's a more recent novel, published since 2000. The same goes for Steven King. There's no P or K to mark these numbers, though you may well use them in your library.

Finally, the 800s are blind to translated literature. All that matters is the original language. So the number for 21<sup>st</sup>-century Norwegian fiction applies for the *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* series, whether it's in the original language, English, or another translation. You can find numbers in the 800s specifically *about* translating literature, but for translated literature itself, the notation won't reflect that.

## Further reading

- DDC Introduction ([oc.lc/ddc-intro](http://oc.lc/ddc-intro))
- DDC Manual ([oc.lc/ddc-manual](http://oc.lc/ddc-manual))
- DDC Summaries ([oc.lc/ddc-summaries](http://oc.lc/ddc-summaries))
- Dewey blog ([ddc.typepad.com](http://ddc.typepad.com))
  - Periodic updates
  - Posts tagged by subject, DDC numbers
- Training courses ([oc.lc/ddc-teachingsite](http://oc.lc/ddc-teachingsite))

**Thank you!**

**Alex Kyrios**  
Senior Editor, Dewey Decimal Classification  
[kyrios@oclc.org](mailto:kyrios@oclc.org)

**Because  
what is  
known must  
be shared.®**

