

How to Find Books Using the Dewey Decimal System

Once you have looked up a book on the catalogue and have the shelfmark you need to use this shelfmark to find the book within the library. Books are assigned this number using the Dewey Decimal System. This is a hierarchical classification system used by many libraries for organising their items, from the broadest to the most specific of topics. The system is made up of 10 main classes or categories, each divided into 10 secondary classes or subcategories, which in turn have 10 divisions of their own.

In Dewey, basic classes are organized by fields of study. At the broadest level, Dewey is divided into ten *main classes* (as below).

000	– Computer science, information, and general works
100	– Philosophy and psychology
200	– Religion
300	– Social sciences
400	– Languages
500	– Science
600	– Technology applied science
700	– Arts and recreation
800	– Literature
900	– History and geography

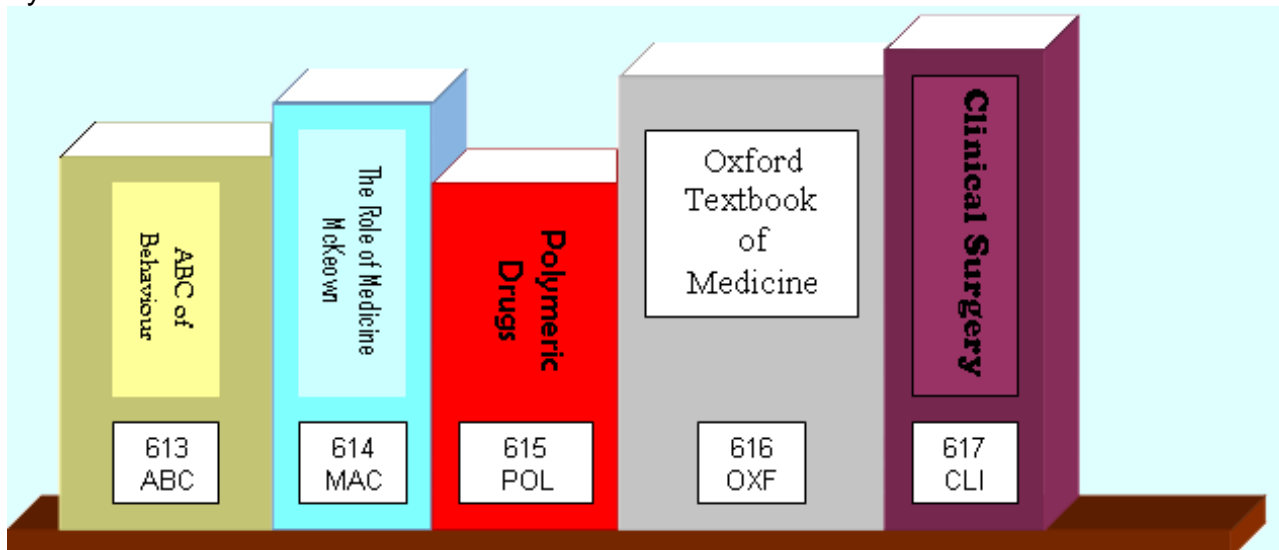
The first digit in each three-digit number represents the main class. For example, 600 represents technology.

The second digit in each three-digit number indicates the division. For example, 600 is used for general works on technology, 610 for medicine and health, 620 for engineering, 630 for agriculture.

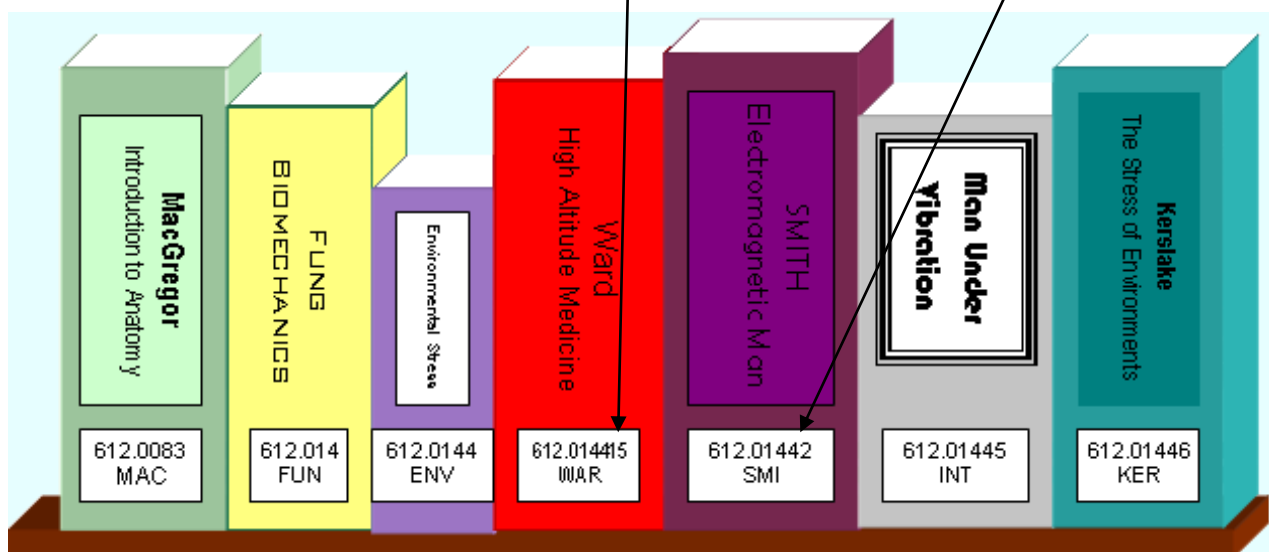
The third digit in each three-digit number indicates the section. Thus, 610 is used for general works on medicine and health, 611 for human anatomy, 612 for human physiology, 613 for personal health and safety.

Books are arranged numerically on the shelves from 000 – 999. If you look at the end of each shelf you will see a notice which tells you which number books you will find on it.

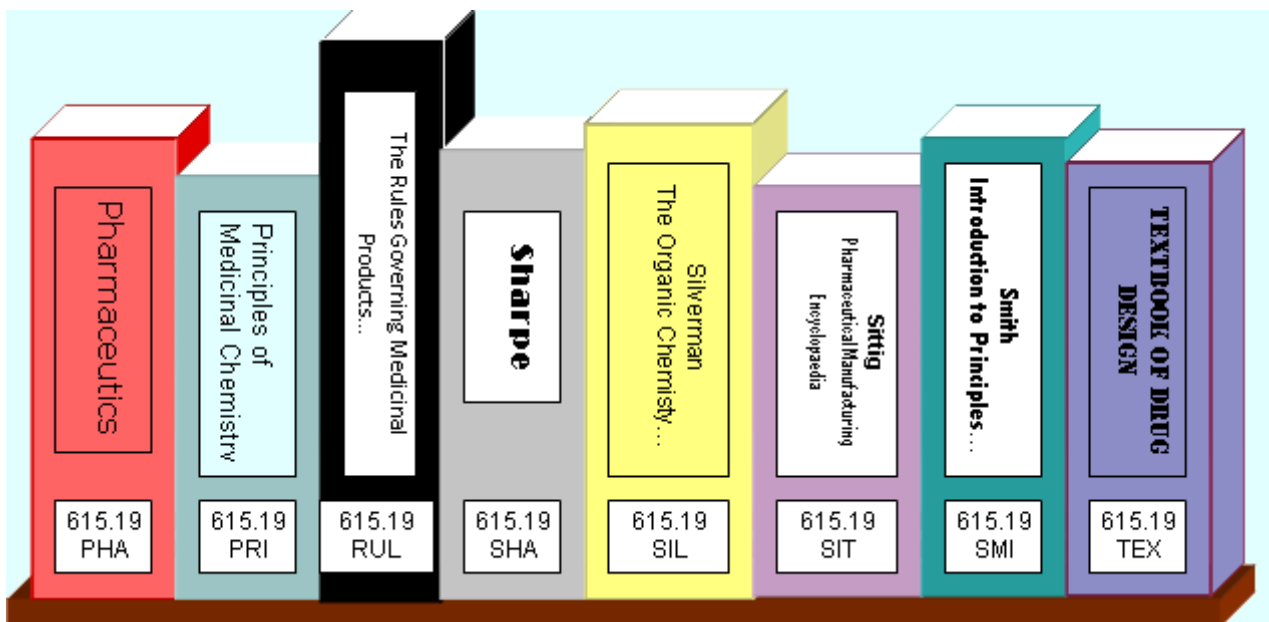
When you look on the shelf you will see that the books are arranged in numerical order. The numbers of the books located on each shelf can be found on a notice at the end of the bay.



Many books have a much longer shelfmark, with a decimal point and several numbers after it. When there are many numbers after the point it can be difficult to see which order the books should come in. It is easiest to compare each of the numbers in turn. Take a look at the bookshelf below. You can see that 612.014415 comes before 612.01442.



The letters that come after the numbers are also important, particularly when there are many books which have the same number. These letters can be the first 3 letters of the author or editor's surname or the title of the book and help differentiate between books on the same subject. You can see on the bookshelf below that all of the books have the same number but the letters that follow it are different and these are in alphabetical order.



For a closer look at the Dewey Decimal System you might like to take a multimedia Dewey Tour. Visit <http://www.oclc.org/dewey/resources/tour> .