

# Dewey Decimal Game

## Summary

This lesson is designed to help students understand the Dewey Decimal system. It is formatted as a competition between classes and can be carried out over a 5-6 week period as classes visit the library once a week.

## Time Frame

6 class periods of 30 minutes each

## Group Size

Large Groups

## Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning

## Materials

- Award certificates
- Gifts for winners
- Dewey Decimal chart and handout
- Index cards or old catalog cards
- Tally sheet

## Instructional Procedures

### Invitation to Learn

From the first day of classes, when kids ask where an informational book is - say "in number \_\_\_\_\_" and then guide them there.

Begin preparing for actual game weeks well in advance. Each section takes about 20 minutes, but can be extended to fit your schedule. 15 minutes is the least amount of time that works well. I find that long dry spell between Winter and Spring break is the best time hold this competition.

Note: If you wish, contact community businesses for a gift for your top classes of each grade and prepare certificates. (Consider Burger King or McDonald coupons for top class, book marks for second place and lollipops for 3rd.) Make a certificate of some kind for each class - Most Enthusiastic, Most Improved, Best Teamwork, etc. - something for the class to have in their room. Plan bulletin board which will have a picture of the DDC Champions for school year ... you may want to leave this up somewhere and add to it each year.

### Intro/Basics

Begin with "when you ask me, where are the drawing books?" And I say: "in 743." What do I mean? What is 743?"

Explain why they need to know this both as the basis of game and future usage.

Discuss what libraries were like before Dewey:

- closed stacks. Only trained personnel were allowed to go into the stacks to search for books.

- varying systems. Usually organized to each person's specifics and interests.

- inefficient. What if librarian wasn't available?

- make up a story about how people had to come to the librarian to get any books because they weren't allowed to browse the stacks and how the librarian would "call" back to his/her assistants to bring the books up from the stacks. (hence the word call number) How long would that take a class to get books? Dewey said "That's ridiculous. People who come here can read and they

know what they want." He devised the DDC using all the subject areas he could think of. Go over a Dewey poster briefly. Choose any subject and tell them "Here's what I had to learn in library school" (I chose dogs but you can do any topic.):

I know that 600 = Applied Science

I know that 636 = domestic animals

I know that 636.7\* = domestic animals that are dogs

I know that 636.73 = domestic animals, that are dogs, that are working dogs

I know that 636.737 = domestic animals ,that are dogs, that are working dogs, that were born in the US

I know that 636.7375 = domestic animals, that are dogs, that are working dogs, that were born in the US, that were born in GA

I know that 616.73756 = domestic animals, that are dogs, that were born in the US, that were born in GA, that were born in Whitfield County

I know that 616.737564 = domestic animals, that are dogs, that were born in the US, that were born in GA, that were born in Whitfield County, in Dalton

I know that 616.7375649 = domestic animals that are dogs that were born in the US that were born in GA that were born in Whitfield County in Dalton on Dug Gap Road.

Ask "Do you see what's happening? (Hold arms outspread wide and narrow with each statement) "I went from a very wide group and made it narrower and narrower. I can even go domestic animals that are dogs that are working dogs that were born in the US that were born in (your state) that were born in (your county) that were born in (your city) on (school's street or teacher's) on Thursday at 7:30 AM ... if I wanted to." (By this time, fingers are micro-distance apart.)

\* Point out: "Here is the decimal part of the Dewey Decimal System."

Talk about how elementary schools rarely go past 2 digits; mid/high school usually about 4. In colleges, they use a different system, but the idea is the same. Tell them that they only have to work with the major categories for this game. (I usually tell them "Say Thank you (your name)" here with a big smile. (They do with great relief.) Point out this only applies to non-fiction books. During the game, you MIGHT throw in a FIC book just as a trick question. If you do, preface the title with some sort of clue like "OK, Smarties" or "Be careful here" and make certain it's a title you KNOW they have read.

## Week Two

Prepare: a copy of the Dewey Decimal handout for each child and one for the teacher to hang in her room. Go over the handout. Tell them to make notes in each section of what might be in there and give them ideas of what is in each group.

Explain what "Philology" is.

## Week Three

This first week is the hardest week because it's when you have to get the basics down. Use only 000-500 titles. Use kitchen timer set for desired time - 15 to 20 minutes

In advance --

Prepare: 3 X 5 cards (or recycle old card catalog cards) One set of 4 with #1, 4 with #2, 4 with #3 and 4 with #4 (you may need #5 if your classes are bigger) 3 to 5 is optimal team. Hand one to each child face down as they enter the library. This is their team number for the day.

-- You can put "T" on one card to choose "tallies" if you want to. (see below) Be sure to ask the child if s/he is comfortable with keeping score for you. If not, choose another child.

Prepare: tally sheet (Wk. 1, Wk. 2, Wk. 3 , Total) on which to keep a running count of who is in first place. Never let anyone know other classes' actual score, but do let them know who's in 1st, 2nd and 3rd places and how quickly they could get to first place if they act as a team and stop guessing. (One year, I had a class come out of dead last when they finally grasped the concept and won - talk about excited!)

Prepare: AT LEAST 15 cards for each Dewey section (hundreds only). Write the title of an

obvious subject name, such as Art for Children, Soccer is for Me, Buddhism, etc. Sometimes, just to watch their eyes light up, throw in a book title with one of their teachers or the principal or one of the class member's name in it, like Mrs. Cassidy's Chicken Farm or Bobby's Birds. Write the title and the DDC number on each card, placing the number in a corner where it can be hidden by thumb if need be as some children like to gather around and look at the number. Do not encourage this. Mix the cards well.

Put the tallies where you can see them and watch to be sure they are doing it right - the class sure will! You can appoint a caller to read the titles if you want to save your voice, but its usually best to do it yourself so you can subtly emphasize what you want them to hear, such as "Mrs. Cassidy's Chicken Farm"

Each team stands in the front of the room with their Dewey Decimal handouts (cheat sheets). When a title is called, they must talk among themselves until a group decision is made and then call out the Dewey number they believe the book belongs in. Give one point for each correct answer, but take away one point for each wrong answer. Since the group could end up with a minus score, this encourages them to act as a team and discuss it. Give each team about 10 seconds to come up with the title and always ask if the answer is a group decision. I usually give them 2 opportunities to get the correct answer. If they don't get it right, then I ask the class to help them out for no points.

Important: Take a point away if you hear someone in the audience answer, see someone signaling or if the team starts "name calling" or not acting like a team. Encourage "Atta boy!" talk - team spirit. Let each team stay in front until they get one right answer for each team member. If there are 4 team mates, they have to get 4 correct answers. The teams can get up as many times as they can during the time limit you have set. At the end of the time, count up the rights and wrongs and subtract one from the other. Keep a running tally of the score each week.

Week Four

Same as week 3 using only 500 to 900. Class is usually ready and raring to go this week. Let them!

Week Five

Same as weeks 3 and 4 using 000 to 900. Add a few new ones just for variety.

Week Six

Sometimes classes really want to do one more week. If they are that excited about dull old Dewey, extend the game if your schedule allows,

-or-

Announce winners. Present awards in the library or at a school wide ceremony. Be sure winners are announced in school paper.

Most important of all ... have fun with the game, get the teachers involved in their classrooms and let the kids explore!

Enjoy!

### Bibliography

<http://www.storylady.com/deweygame.html> (site no longer active) I found this on this site-- want to make sure I give credit to the real author! I put it on UEN as a workshop training. I found it a fun idea and wanted to share it with others.

### Authors

[Karen Draper](#)