Organising the books – how libraries work

Libraries need to be organised places: lots of people share them and it's very important that everyone can find what they are looking for when they visit. One of the most important jobs in a library is making sure that the books are in the right place on the shelves.

The two main types of book are fiction (stories) and non-fiction (information books). Fiction and non-fiction are kept separately and are shelved in different orders:

- **Fiction** is shelved in alphabetical order by the author's surname. This means that all the books written by a particular author are kept together on the shelves.

  ➢ If you have some story books in your classroom, why not try putting them in alphabetical order by author surname.

  ➢ NB We don't usually keep picture books in alphabetical order because small children don't know their alphabet and so the section gets messy really quickly!

- **Non-fiction** is shelved in subject order because most people are interested in what the book is *about* rather than who wrote it.

  ➢ Books about a subject are kept together so that you can see all the books on that topic at the same time and decide which one is best for you.

  ➢ The subjects are kept in order using the Dewey Decimal System. This system gives every subject in the world its own number. Librarians use the subject of each book to work out the Dewey number for that book. Then they put the number on a small sticker on the spine of the book. The books are then put on the shelves in number order.

  ➢ You can find out the number for a subject using a Subject Index or you can look it up in the library catalogue.

  ➢ Similar subjects have similar numbers. For instance, all books about Nature begin with a 5 (e.g. Flowers 582.13, Trees 582.16, Tigers 599.756, Lions 599.757), and all books about sport start with a 7 (e.g. Football 796.334, Tennis 796.342, Fishing 799.1). This means that even if you don't know the exact number for your subject you can usually find the right shelf by looking for things that in the same broad category.

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