

Mr. Dewey's Numbers

Approach: One to one

Level: Year 4 and year 8

Resources: Dewey Decimal System chart; video showing the chart and reading the words aloud; card with specific topics on it (questions 5 to 9).



Questions/instructions	% responses		
	year 4	year 8	
Place the chart in front of the student.			
1. Have you seen a chart like this before?	yes	16	59
2. Where would you see a chart like this?	in a library	55	85
3. Can you explain to me how this chart is used? <i>Prompt: What does it tell about books?</i> classifying or organising books		29	76
This activity is about the Dewey library numbers. We'll start by watching a short video.			
Show the video.			
If you went into a library you might be able to use Dewey numbers to help you find books. Here is a list of topics for you to look at. I want you to tell me the number or numbers on the Dewey chart where I might find a book or information on each topic.			
Give the student the list of topics.			
Read the topics one at a time and wait for the student to give the Dewey classification(s).			
Write down the answers on the recording sheet.			
4. The history of China	900✓	60	91
5. Nursery rhymes	800✓	69	90
6. Volcanoes	500✓	35	70
7. How to make a soft toy	700✓	55	71
8. How to speak Māori	400✓	74	96
9. Celebrations and festivals <i>Prompt: Are there any other numbers on the chart that you might use to find books on this topic.</i>	200, 900, 700 or 100 ✓		
	2 or more	14	38
	one	54	47

Commentary

It appeared that most year 4 students were not acquainted with the Dewey classification scheme, and had not used such a scheme to help them find non-fiction books on particular subjects. Despite this handicap, they had quite good success in using the Dewey chart to identify where to look for books on particular topics. The success rate for year 8 students averaged about 25 percent higher than for year 4 students.