

## Adopt-A-Shelf Training: Shelf Reading 101

Shelf reading means reading the spines of the items on the shelf and rearranging any materials that are out of order. Straightening shelves and correcting shelving errors are ongoing tasks. High use areas such as new books and media need to be straightened more often than areas which are less frequently used.

### Shelving by Alphabetical Order/Fiction

Alphabetizing is done by letter, rather than word. This applies to collections that are shelved by the author's last name and by title. First, you would alphabetize by the author's last name (**only 7 letters will be on the spine label**), then author's first name, then book title if necessary. Book series vary based on the area of the library in which you are shelf reading.

#### Level 1: Alphabetical Order by Author

The following authors would be placed in this order on the shelf:

**Anders, Kirk**  
**Andersen, Thomas**  
**Anderson, Derek**  
**Anderson, Katie**  
**Andrew, Austin**

If the last name and first name were identical, further alphabetize by middle initial, if applicable. You would alphabetize the same for a musical artist. Here are some examples:

|                     |                         |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Kellerman, Faye     | Mellencamp, John        |
| Kellerman, Jesse    | Mellencamp, John Cougar |
| Kellerman, Jonathan | Mellencamp, Jonathan    |

When a last name has a unique spelling, it will still be shelved the way it is spelled. For instance, a last name like McDaniel would be shelved under MCD, not just MC. The following names have been placed in the correct order:

DePaola, Tomie  
 Depp, Johnny  
 MacDonald, Robert  
 McCallister, Kevin  
 McDonald, Elizabeth

*Note: When there is not an author listed, the spine label should indicate how to shelve the book. It will typically be by title but other examples are by editor name, band name, medical condition, software name, etc.*

## Level 2: Alphabetical Order by Title

If an author had multiple titles, they would be shelved as follows:

**Anderson, Derek** *Gladys Goes Out to Lunch*  
**Anderson, Derek** *How the Easter Bunny Saved Christmas*  
**Anderson, Derek** *Romeo and Lou Blast Off*

Articles such as “a,” “an,” and “the,” are disregarded when they appear as the first word in a title. Prepositions like “of,” “for,” and “into,” are considered part of the title. Spaces in a name or title are disregarded.

*The Giving Tree* is shelved as ***Giving Tree, The***  
*Of Mice and Men* is shelved as ***Of Mice and Men***

Titles are compared to each other word for word. If the first two words of two different titles are identical, go to the third word or beyond to determine shelving. The following books are shelved in order of title:

***What if Everybody Did That?***  
***What if You Get Lost?***  
***What if You Met a Pirate?***

With abbreviations, file in alphabetical order exactly as written on the label or the title of the book.

**Doctor Zhivago** would come before **Dr. Dolittle**  
**Saint Louis Cardinals** would come before **St. Anthony**

## **Dewey Decimal System/Non Fiction**

Good news! You don't need to know the Dewey Decimal System to shelf read, you just need to know how to keep your section in order by number or genre and author. Our adult and children's non-fiction materials are shelved by Dewey Decimal number.

If you are shelf reading in non-fiction, you'll start with the Dewey Decimal number on the spine followed generally by the first 7 letters of the author's last name. These should be shelved in numerical order starting with 000 and going up to 999. Many books in a section will have the same Dewey Decimal number. For example, many cookbooks will have the number 641.5. Then the books are put in alphabetical order by the author's name on the label.

For example, these books would go in this order:

**641.56 GATES**  
**641.5637 BOURDAI**  
**641.5736 RAY**  
**641.58 THOMA**  
**641.5898 STEWART**  
**641.624 GREEN**  
**641.624 TAYLOR**  
**642 BELL**

If there are multiple books with the same Dewey Decimal number by the same author, you would further alphabetize by book title. For example, there are several works by William Shakespeare with the same call number; you would place them as follows:

**822.33 SHAKESP**      Much Ado About Nothing  
**822.33 SHAKESP**      Othello

### Biographies

Biographies are non-fiction materials but they are shelved a little differently. They are given their own place at the end of the non-fiction section and they are placed in order of the last name of the subject. For example, a book about Abraham Lincoln would come before a book about Venus Williams, regardless of the author's name. If there are multiple books on a particular subject, further alphabetize by the author's name then the title. For Abraham Lincoln, the biographies would be in the following order:

**BIO LINCOLN**    *Abraham Lincoln* by Collins, David R.  
**BIO LINCOLN**    *Lincoln* by Donald, David Herbert  
**BIO LINCOLN**    *Abraham Lincoln* by Keneally, Thomas

### Things to Look for When Shelf Reading

- Materials on the floor, stuck on the bottom shelf, or haphazardly shelved may not belong in the section you are shelf reading. Put these items on the sorter to make sure they make it to the right spot.
- Any broken or missing book ends should be recorded on your time sheet.
- Books that are from another section can be put on the sorter for reshelving.
- Please straighten and front shelves (pull books forward) as you work. This makes things easier for patrons to pull books off the shelf and keeping the spines straight keeps the books in better shape.

Examples of straightened shelves



Un-straightened shelf:

