

More Than One Way To Skin a Cat, Or Shelve a Book

SJI Library



Dewey Decimal works great for organizing large collections of books, but would you use Dewey to organize your own bookshelves?

Maybe you go strictly alphabetical, but have you ever thought about trying something a little more CREATIVE using the INSIDES and OUTSIDES of your books?

Let's start with some INSIDE standards:

- Alphabetical by Author or Title—don't go putting Shel Silverstein before Dr. Seuss, or Wuthering Heights before Watership Down unless you want trouble!
- By Genre or Subject—Separate shelves for mysteries, sci-fi, DIY guides, and history. But how about these:
 - Favorites first, on down to your least favorites. And why are those least favorites still hanging around?
 - By publishing date, from oldest to newest, or vice versa.
 - By time period in which they are set if they're historical.
 - Region? Shelve books by authors who come from a certain region together.
 - Or shelve books ABOUT different regions, creating a global bookshelf divided by continents, countries, regions and towns.
 - Author-signed books probably need their own "do not touch, do not lend even to family or friends" shelf.
 - Books you chronically re-read? Keep those well-worn, well-loved tomes together in a handy spot for easy retrieval when the mood strikes.
 - Those books you haven't read yet? Are they in some kind of order—to read next, must return to so-and-so, by subject, or pleasure vs. work?



Now for OUTSIDE, and some real fun:

- Color! Make a rainbow: red spines, orange spines, yellow spines, and on through indigo. Use color blocking, or make rainbow after rainbow by putting the colors of individual books in rainbow order, again and again.
- Shelve only green books in a green room, and put orange books in the room that has orange accents. Make it a visual feast for friends and family.

- Focus on Size. Shelf tallest books on down to shortest.
- Patterns. Make a parabola—shorter to higher to shorter again, or a series of high to low repeats for a zigzag effect, or other cool patterns.

A smart observer looking at your shelves would probably be able to figure out which system you are following.

Unless you shelved them in the order you bought them! If you have something like a photographic memory, the books you bought around a certain time probably bring back other memories or feelings you associate with that time.

Get CREATIVE with your books and your space—they're yours, after all. And let me know of other fun ideas you'd like to share!

Laurie Orton