Shelf talkers: kids recommending books without a social network

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A free 'I recommend' card a child makes in three taps (stars, who would like it, print) for the class wall or a library display. No typing, no names, no posting.

A shelf talker is the little card a bookshop pins under a book it loves: "Staff pick. If you liked this, you'll like that." Children's own recommendations work the same way, and the best place for them is a wall, not a feed. Peabody's bookshelf lets a child make one in three taps, printed for the class wall or a library display. Like the rest of Peabody it is free through the end of 2026, nothing is typed, and nothing is posted anywhere.

Three taps

On their bookshelf, a child opens a book they've rated and makes an "I recommend" card:

1. The stars, one to five.
2. Who would like it: someone who likes to laugh, animal lovers, someone who likes adventures, a little brother or sister, a grown-up, or everyone.
3. Print.

The card says the title in big letters, the stars, the one word they chose for the book (funny, exciting, sad, scary, true, or made me think), who it's for, and the reader's animal face. Never a name.

Why on paper

Children love telling other children about a book. Online, that means accounts, followers, comments and strangers, which is exactly what a seven-year-old doesn't need. On a wall, the audience is the class, and the conversation happens in person: "Is the dragon book really a five?" That's the whole point of a recommendation.

A library can run the same thing at the children's desk: a board of cards under the shelf, refreshed each month.

What makes a good recommendation

The best shelf talkers are specific. "Funny, for someone who likes to laugh" tells the next reader more than five stars alone, which is why the card asks for who the book is for as well as how much the reader liked it. A child choosing "a little brother or sister" for a book they've outgrown is giving a real recommendation: they know who it suits. Over a term, a class wall of cards becomes a map of what this group of readers actually likes, and it's often a better guide than any list from outside. Honest cards matter more than glowing ones: a three-star card that

says "for a little brother or sister" is useful, and children quickly learn to trust a wall where not every book gets five stars. Encourage readers to make a card for a book they didn't love, too, and to say who might love it instead.

Kids' picks

When a child rates one of Peabody's own free stories, the Book Club counts the story and the tap (loved it, OK, or not for me), with nothing about the child, and the Book Club shows the week's most-loved stories. It's a gentle way for readers to see what other children enjoyed, without any of them seeing each other.

Ideas for the wall

- A recommendation board: one card per reader, swapped each month.
- "If you liked…": pin a card next to the book it recommends on the class shelf.
- Book swap day: each reader brings a book from home with a card on it.
- Reading buddies: older readers make cards for a younger class's library corner.

Every story on Peabody is free to read in the library, so a recommendation of a Peabody story is one any reader can follow at once.

Questions teachers ask

Can a child write their own words on the card?

Yes, with a pencil: the printed card has room around the edge. Nothing is typed on the screen.

What if a child gives a book one star?

That's a recommendation too. "Not for me" is honest, and other readers learn from it.

Do the cards show who made them?

Only the reader's animal face. If the class wants names, children write them on by hand.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/shelf-talkers-kids-recommend-books