A class reading goal without a leaderboard

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How to run a class reading goal with no leaderboard: one target for the whole class, numbers instead of names, the total on the board, and nothing collected.

Set one goal for the whole class, count the books with numbers instead of names, and put only the class total on the board, climbing toward the goal: every book any child reads moves the same picture, and nobody is ranked. Peabody's class tally does exactly that on your own device. It starts with thirty numbered seats, ten books each and three hundred for the class, shows the total on a projector, and keeps each child's own count off the board unless you choose to show it, in seat order and never sorted. Like the rest of Peabody, it is free through the end of 2026, and it sends nothing anywhere.

Why not a leaderboard

A chart with every child's name and a row of stickers is the classic classroom reading tracker, and it works for the children at the top. For the rest, it is a daily reminder of where they stand. The fastest readers win every week; a child reading one long book a fortnight looks as if they aren't reading; a child who struggles sees their row stay short in front of everyone.

A class goal changes the question from "who's ahead?" to "how close are we?" A picture book read by a beginner moves the total exactly as much as a chapter book read by the strongest reader in the room. Children start telling each other about books, because every finished book is good news for everyone.

Step 1: Pick the goal

Start with what is reachable, not what is impressive. A simple way:

- Class size: 20 · Books each over a term: 10 · The class goal: 200
- Class size: 26 · Books each over a term: 10 · The class goal: 260
- Class size: 30 · Books each over a term: 10 · The class goal: 300
- Class size: 30 · Books each over a term: 15 · The class goal: 450

Ten books a term works for most classes from first grade up, if a picture book and a chapter book count the same. For older readers working through long novels, count days with reading instead of books: the tally can count books, minutes, pages, days, stars or points, and days is the fairest second choice. I'd avoid minutes for a class goal; a minute has to be vouched for, and books and days don't.

In the tally's set-up, pick the number of seats (10 to 60), what you are counting, a goal for each reader (or none) and the class goal. You can also pick what to call it from a short list, such as "Our reading goal" or "Winter break reading".

Step 2: Numbers, not names

Give each child a number: their seat, or their place on the register. The tally prints a paper key, the numbers with a blank line each, and you write the names there. That sheet stays in your desk drawer. It is the only place the names go; the tally itself has no box to type a name into.

Children like knowing their number. It is theirs, a little private, and it means the screen can be on the board without anyone's name on it.

Step 3: Count the books as they come in

There are three ways to add a book, and you can mix them:

- A tap. When a child shows you a finished book, a coloured chart or a bookmark, tap + beside their number.
- Typed lines. Type 7 to add one to seat 7, or 7 12 to set seat 7's count to 12. Anything the tally doesn't understand is shown back to you and changes nothing.
- "Show my teacher". Children who use Peabody's reading challenges on a device can tap "Show my teacher": they tap their class number on a big number pad once, and their number and their book count fill the screen. You type what it says. Nothing is sent from their device to yours, or to anyone.

It is an honour count, and I'd say so to the class on the first day. A class goal works because children want the picture to climb, not because anyone is checking.

Step 4: Put the total on the board

Show on the board fills the projector with the class total in numbers big enough to read from the back of the room, and a picture of the total climbing a hill toward the goal flag. That is all the board shows.

If you want each number's count on the board, say for a celebration at the end, Show each number lists them in seat order, never sorted from most to least. Most weeks I'd leave it off. The total is the point.

A short routine helps: update the tally on Friday afternoon, put the board up for two minutes, and ask the class how many more books it needs.

Step 5: Celebrate together

When the class reaches the goal, celebrate as a class: a picture-book afternoon, a read-aloud in the library, a class choice of the next shared book. No prize store is needed, and nobody misses out because their own count was low.

If you set a goal for each reader as well, the tally prints a certificate for every reader who reached it, with a blank line for the name. If that would leave a few children out, set the goal

each low enough that everyone can reach it, or skip the certificates and print the class wall chart instead.

On paper, too

Some classes would rather colour a square than watch a screen. The class wall chart is the same chart on paper: thirty rows, a square a book. The tally prints it filled in too, with each seat's number. A wall chart does show every row, so keep it by your desk rather than on the wall if your class would read it as a race.

Over a term, and at the end

Every tap is saved in this browser on this device. Save to a file carries the tally to another computer, keeps last term's, or hands it to a colleague covering your class; Open a file picks it up again. At the end of the term, print the filled-in chart and the totals for your records, then Clear everything takes it off the device after a second tap.

If you want the class to have a challenge of its own as well, with its own name, dates and a link for each child's device, make one: its wall chart prints with the challenge's name. The post on a classroom reading challenge explains how the two work together.

Where the books come from

A class goal goes faster when there is always a next book to hand. Every child can read Peabody's free stories at their own level in the library, a tap to log on their own device, and what should I read next asks three tap-to-answer questions and suggests one book.

Questions teachers ask

What if a child says they read a book they didn't?

It happens, and it matters less than you'd think in a class goal: one extra book doesn't change who wins, because nobody wins. Ask them to tell you one thing about the book when they show it. Most children enjoy that more than a check.

Can the children see each other's counts?

Only if you show them. The board shows the class total; each number's count appears only when you tap "Show each number", and then in seat order. The paper key with the names never goes on the board.

Does a picture book count the same as a chapter book?

In a books goal, yes, and that is the point: every reader adds to the total at their own level. If your class reads mostly long books, count days with reading instead.

Does Peabody see my class's numbers?

No. The tally lives in your browser. Peabody never receives a seat number, a count or a name; it hears only that a step was used (the board shown, a sheet printed, a file saved), never what was on it.

Can two teachers run one tally?

Save the tally to a file and open it on the other computer. Each device keeps its own copy, so agree who updates it each week.

Free at peabody.kids/guides/class-reading-goal-without-a-leaderboard