THE COMPLETE GUIDE

What is a leaderboard?

A leaderboard is a ranked list that orders people or teams by a score or metric - and updates in real time as new results come in. This guide explains what a leaderboard is, how it works, the main types of leaderboards, why they motivate people, and exactly how to make one.

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Leaderboard definition

> A **leaderboard** is a ranked list that orders participants - people, teams, players or departments - from best to worst based on a single score or metric, and refreshes as those scores change.

The word comes from racing and golf, where the “leader board” showed who was out in front. Today a leaderboard can be a screen on an office wall ranking sales reps by revenue, a page in a video game ranking players by points, or a classroom display ranking students by stars earned. Whatever the context, the idea is the same: take a number everyone cares about, sort everyone by it, and make the standings visible.

A leaderboard usually shows three things for each row: the participant's rank (1st, 2nd, 3rd…), their name (often with a photo or avatar), and their score in whatever unit matters - dollars, points, calls,

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How a leaderboard works

Under the hood, a leaderboard does one job: it ranks. You choose a metric, every participant gets a score in that metric, and the leaderboard sorts them - normally from highest to lowest (though a race leaderboard might sort by fastest time, lowest first).

The thing that makes a modern leaderboard powerful is that it updates in real time. When a new result arrives - a deal closes, a quiz answer is scored, a workout is logged - the score updates and the board instantly re-sorts. Someone who was 4th can jump to 1st in front of everyone watching. That live movement is what turns a static ranking into something people keep glancing at.

The core ingredients

- → **A metric** - the single number you rank by (revenue, points, calls, fastest time, reps completed).
- → **Participants** - the people or teams being ranked, each with a name and ideally a photo.
- → **Scores** - each participant's current value for the metric.
- → **A sort order** - usually highest first, so the leader sits at the top.
- → **Live updates** - new scores re-rank the board automatically, no manual refresh needed.

Types of leaderboards

Almost any activity with a measurable number can have a leaderboard. The mechanics are identical; what changes is the metric being tracked and where the board is displayed. Here are the most common types of leaderboards.

Sales leaderboards

A sales leaderboard ranks reps by revenue, deals closed, calls made or meetings booked, usually on an office TV so the whole floor can see who's winning. It turns quota into a daily race and is the most common business use of a leaderboard. See our **sales leaderboard** guide for how teams set these up.

Customer support & call-center leaderboards

Support teams rank agents by tickets resolved, CSAT scores, first-response time or calls handled. A live **customer support leaderboard** keeps a busy help desk or call center motivated and makes good service visible.

Classroom & school leaderboards

Teachers use leaderboards to rank students or whole classes by points, stars, reading minutes or quiz results, turning learning into a friendly game. See how to run one in the **classroom leaderboard** guide, or the dedicated **school leaderboard** page for whole-school competitions.

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Gyms and fitness studios rank members by reps, weight lifted, miles run, class attendance or workout streaks. A **gym leaderboard** drives accountability and keeps members coming back to climb the rankings.

Gaming & tournament leaderboards

Games rank players by high score, kills, win rate or speedrun time - the original home of the leaderboard. A **gaming leaderboard** works for esports tournaments, community ladders or a single arcade high-score table.

Event & quiz leaderboards

Conferences, hackathons and trivia nights use a live **event leaderboard** to rank attendees or teams, while a **quiz leaderboard** ranks players by correct answers and speed - perfect for classrooms, training sessions and pub quizzes.

Benefits of using a leaderboard

Why bother putting a leaderboard on the wall when the data already lives in a spreadsheet or a CRM? Because a ranked, public board changes behavior in ways a hidden number never does.

- → **Motivation through visibility** - people work harder when their name is on a board everyone can see.
- → **Recognition** - top performers get celebrated in public, in real time, instead of in a quarterly review.
- → **Friendly competition** - a little rivalry lifts the whole group, not just the person at the top.
- → **Focus** - ranking by one metric makes it crystal clear what everyone should be optimizing for.
- → **Progress tracking** - everyone can see how close they are to a goal and how they compare over time.
- → **Engagement** - a live, moving board is something people genuinely want to watch.

How to make a leaderboard

You can build a leaderboard in a spreadsheet, but the fastest way is a dedicated leaderboard maker that handles the ranking, the live updates and the display for you. Here's how to make a leaderboard in five steps.

1

1. Pick your metric

Choose the single number you'll rank by - revenue, points, calls, reps, fastest time or correct answers. One clear metric beats five fuzzy ones.

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List the people or teams you want to rank and add their names (and photos, if you want the board to feel personal).

3

3. Enter the scores

Give each participant their current score. The leaderboard sorts them automatically, so the leader rises to the top.

4

4. Pick a template and theme

Choose a layout that fits your use case - bars, a podium, a grid or a clean ranked list. Browse ready-made **leaderboard templates** to start from something that already looks right.

5

5. Share it or screen it

Put the board on an office TV, classroom screen or stream, or just share the link. The easiest way to do all of this is to **make a leaderboard with the free BoardQ maker** - it updates in real time as scores change.

Your first leaderboard takes two minutes.

Free to start. Unlimited rows. No credit card.

Create a leaderboard — free →

See pricing

FAQ

Leaderboard questions, answered.

What is a leaderboard used for?

A leaderboard is used to rank people or teams by a shared score or metric so that performance is visible and comparable. It motivates effort, recognizes top performers, creates friendly competition, and tracks progress toward a goal - in sales teams, classrooms, gyms, call centers, games, quizzes and events.

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worst by a metric. In short: a scoreboard tracks one contest, while a leaderboard ranks everyone across many contests or an ongoing period.

How do you make a leaderboard?

Pick the single metric you want to rank by, list the participants, give each one a score, and sort them from highest to lowest. The easiest way is a leaderboard maker: name your board, add participants and scores, choose a theme, and share the link or put it on a screen. Updating a score re-ranks the board in real time.

Are leaderboards effective for motivation?

Yes. Leaderboards make progress visible, tap into our natural drive for recognition and friendly competition, and give people a clear goal to chase. They work best when the metric is fair, the ranking updates in real time, and effort - not just raw talent - can move someone up the board.

Do leaderboards update in real time?

Good leaderboards do. When a new score comes in, the board re-sorts immediately so the rankings always reflect the latest data. Real-time updates are what make a leaderboard feel like a live race rather than a static report - which is why a live leaderboard is far more engaging on an office TV, classroom screen or stream.

What types of leaderboards are there?

Common types include sales leaderboards, customer support and call-center leaderboards, classroom and school leaderboards, gym and fitness leaderboards, gaming and tournament leaderboards, and event or quiz leaderboards. They all share the same core idea - rank participants by a score - but differ in the metric tracked and where the board is displayed.

READY TO BUILD ONE?

Make your own leaderboard in 60 seconds.

Now you know what a leaderboard is and how it works - the fastest way to learn the rest is to build one. Free to start, unlimited participants, live updates, no credit card.

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Ready to create your leaderboard?

Get Started Free

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