



How-To Tally Tidily

by Christina Wainwright

I grew up tallying things by either recording the exact number, or if they were subject to change I would make 4 vertical lines, then cross them with a 5th line: 

At the 2025 How-To Festival, however, a volunteer who was counting attendees at the in-person sessions blew my mind when she recorded each 5 attendees by drawing a box: 

I thought that the box was tidier and cuter than the hash marks, so have adopted it. A co-worker recently pointed out that you could also use other 5-sided shapes, such as a star: 

Finally, if you like to sort your numbers by 10's, here is another box option: 

To illustrate, here's how you'd tally up to 10 using each of these drawings:

	Hash Marks	Box (5)	Star	10-Box
1			/	•
2		└	^	••
3		└┐	△	•••
4		□	☆	••••
5		▣	☆	•••••
6		▣	☆ /	•••••
7		▣ └	☆ ^	•••••
8		▣ └┐	☆ △	•••••
9		▣ □	☆ ☆	•••••
10		▣ ▣	☆ ☆	•••••