

Excel #1: Basic Calculations and Totals

Region	Sales
West	250
Southwest	393
Southeast	594
Northeast	492

These are basic data values, so enter them by hand.

To compute the total, select the cell beneath the table, below 492.

Click the Summation icon  and press the Enter key.

Region	Sales
West	250
Southwest	393
Southeast	594
Northeast	492
	1729

Although this method works, it has a serious problem. What happens if you insert new rows at the top or bottom of the list?

Select the West row (or cell).

Right-click to open the menu and choose Insert. Pick Entire row.

Enter Midwest and 159 as values.

Region	Sales
Midwest	159
West	250
Southwest	393
Southeast	594
Northeast	492
	1729

The total remains the same, so it is now wrong. And, there is no indication that the total is wrong, so someone glancing at the sheet will not be aware of the problem.

Inserting a row at the bottom of the list will cause a similar problem.

To solve the problem, undo these last changes by pressing Ctrl+Z three times.

Select the total cell and press the Delete key to remove the sum.

Add a break to indicate the bottom of the table.

You can set the bottom row border of the last cell, or use the Insert/Shapes/Line tool to draw a line.

For borders, highlight the two bottom cells and click the Border button on the Home/Font menu ribbon.  You can also right-click the selection and choose Format Cells and Borders.

Now add the total of the Sales column.

Select the cell in the Sales column below the row with the line.

Click the Summation icon.

Using the mouse, click one of the top corners of the highlighted selection box and extend the box up to the row with the Sales heading. The selection must include the heading and the footer line.

Press the Enter key to accept the formula.

	A	B	C	D
1				
2				
3				
4				
5	Region	Sales		
6	West	250		
7	Southwest	393		
8	Southeast	594		
9	Northeast	492		
10		=SUM(B5:B9)		
11		SUM(number1, [number2], ...)		
12				

Region	Sales
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Southeast	594
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	1729

To see the benefit of this approach.

Select the row with the West entry.

Right-click and choose Insert.

If necessary, select the Entire Row option and click the OK button.

Enter data for Midwest and 159

Region	Sales
Midwest	159
West	250
Southwest	393
Southeast	594
Northeast	492
	1888

You will see that the total is now correct. As long as you insert between the heading and the line footing, the formula for the total will include the new row—as long as you

This approach reduces hard-to-spot errors caused when someone needs to add data later.