2: MOODLE BLOCKS

WELCOME TO THE MOODLE BLOCKS TUTORIAL!

In this tutorial, you will learn:

- How to customize the information on your course page with blocks.
- How to use five specific blocks:
  - ✓ Calendar
  - ✓ HTML
  - ✓ RSS Feed
  - ✓ Poll

Not all of these options are available on all Moodle servers.

If you have not used a CareerTech "How to Moodle" tutorial before, view the [instructions](#) for using it as a self-paced tutorial or as a resource for classroom instruction.

Before taking this tutorial, you should have a Moodle user ID and a course site and be familiar with:

- Setting up a course in Moodle
- Adding an activity to a topic section in your course

To begin, select from the menu below or simply turn to the next page.

<div style="background:#CC0000;color:white;padding:4px;">

MENU OF TUTORIAL TOPICS

</div>

INTRODUCTION TO MOODLE BLOCKS

"Block" is the term for any of the square or rectangular text areas you see on the right and left side of the Moodle course page. Each block displays a specific kind of information. Two types of blocks that appear on course pages include the Navigation and Administration blocks. All other blocks on your course page can be removed, and you can add many other types of blocks to your course page.

Why Use Blocks?

Blocks provide a way to keep students informed, to keep them engaged with the course content, and to encourage exploration and participation. Moodle offers many standard blocks that you can add to your course page. In addition, your server administrator may have installed additional types of blocks as plugins.

Since there are so many blocks to choose from, this tutorial will cover just a few of the most commonly used blocks. The process for adding a block is the same each time. Once familiar with how blocks can help you customize your course, feel free to explore other blocks not discussed in this tutorial.

ADDING AND USING A CALENDAR BLOCK

VIDEO DEMONSTRATION:

Watch this 3-minute video to see a demonstration of completing this task.

http://youtu.be/AfmViuWf0Nk

NOTE: Video demonstrations were not created by Oklahoma CareerTech, and they may use a different version of Moodle. However, the steps are similar to the ones that you will use.

To add any block in Moodle, you must first:

1. Go to your course page.
2. Turn editing on. (If using the "Boost" theme, the editing button is in the dropdown menu by the gear icon in the upper right of the screen.)

Follow these steps to add a Calendar block to your page:

Step	Action	Notes
1.	Click the **Add a Block** link in the side column.	This can be found in either the right or left column, depending on your site.
2.	Select Calendar from the list that appears.	The page will refresh. The new Calendar block will appear.

Notice the icons in the upper right corner of the Calendar block. Depending on the theme you are using, you can:

- **Show/Hide the block.** Clicking the "minus/plus" icon (- or +) will expand or collapse the block.
- **Dock the block.** Clicking the "less than" icon (<) will send your block to a dock at the side of your course page. Click the same icon again to undock. Note that the docking feature may not be available for all Moodle themes (designs).
- **Move the block.** The 4-arrow icon allows you to drag the block to another location on the page.
- **Configure the block.** When course editing is turned on, you will also see a gear icon. As with all blocks, you can configure them or hide them from the students' view. Clicking the "eye" icon collapses the block so that just the title bar of the block displays. If the block is hidden, clicking this icon will expand the block.
- **Delete the block.** Clicking the "X" deletes the block from the course.

On the Calendar block, you will also see a color key for the different types of events that can display on your calendar. The four event types are:

- **Global Event**—This event type is relevant to the whole Moodle site, so it will be visible in every course and on the home page. Only users with the capability to manage calendar entries at the system level can add global events.
- **Course Event**—Course events are visible to all participants of the course at hand. Only users with the capability to manage calendar entries at the course level (for example, the instructor) can add course events.
- **Group Event**—This event will be visible to a particular learner group in the course (chosen from a dropdown list). For example, if you have an activity that divides your class into Moodle groups, each group can create their own event on the course page calendar. (For more information on how to set up groups in your course, refer to CareerTech's tutorial on Groups and Groupings.)
- **User Event**—This event is specific to the site user who creates it, and will only be visible from that user's log in. For example, a student viewing your course page can create a User Event on the calendar that is only visible to that student.

Clicking the eye icon for any of these event types will hide the display of that event type on your calendar.

Follow these steps to add events to your calendar:

Step	Action	Notes
1.	Click the month name at the top of the calendar.	Moodle will display the calendar page view.
2.	Click the **New event** button at the top right of the Calendar view.	The "New event" settings page displays.
3.	Under the General heading, click the **Type of Event** dropdown list.	The options you will see are: • **User**: A User event is private. For example, if you have a dentist appointment to add to your calendar, you would select User. • **Course**: A Course event is applicable to all course participants. • **Site**: This option appears for those who have site-wide editing capabilities. For this example, imagine you are adding a test date. For the type of event, select Course.
4.	Enter an event title.	This field is required. For training purposes, type "Midterm Exam."
5.	Enter a description of the event.	This field is optional. For training purposes, type: The midterm will consist of three questions, each requiring a short essay response. 100 points maximum.
6.	Select the date and time of the event.	You may also click the calendar icon to the right of the date fields to select a date from a calendar display. For training purposes, use tomorrow's date at 8 AM.

Step	Action	Notes
7.	Modify the **Duration** and **Repeated events** settings as needed.	An event may last one hour, so you could select the "Duration in minutes" option and enter 60.
		For training purposes, our midterm test will last 120 minutes.
		In most cases, these settings may be left in their default state.
8.	Click the **Save changes** button.	Your new event will display. Review the event from your Calendar block. From here, you may add another new event.

If you have finished adding events to your calendar, navigate back to your course page using the breadcrumbs at the top of the page. (The breadcrumbs are the navigation links, which are usually located under the title of the course.)

Review the events on your calendar block.

Note: Events added to your course calendar will also display in the Upcoming Events block, if that block has been added.

ADDING AND USING THE HTML BLOCK

VIDEO DEMONSTRATION:

Watch this 3-minute video to see a demonstration on how to add an HTML block.

http://youtu.be/-mjZJ-fXsQg

NOTE: Video demonstrations were not created by Oklahoma CareerTech, and they may use a different version of Moodle. However, the steps are similar to the ones that you will use.

You can use the HTML block to add text, links, images, or embedded code to your course page. For example, you may want to use it to display a picture of yourself with an introduction for your students. You could also use an HTML block to inform students about an event that they may want to explore with

a link to the event page. Unlike the Calendar block, you may add multiple HTML blocks to your course page.

To add any block in Moodle, you must first:

1. Go to your course page.
2. Turn editing on.

Now follow these steps to add an HTML block to your page:

Step	Action	Notes
1.	Locate the **Add a Block** dropdown list.	This is a block itself, and is usually found toward the bottom of your course page.
2.	Select **HTML** from the dropdown list.	The page will refresh. The new HTML block will appear.

Depending on the Moodle version and theme used, this block may have the same two icons in the upper right corner that allow you to hide or dock the block.

If course editing is turned on, you will also see a gear icon for configuring the block, and the move icon to drag your block to a new location on the page.

Now follow these steps to add information to your HTML block:

Step	Action	Notes
1.	Click the gear icon and select **Configure (new HTML block) block**.	The **Configuring a (new HTML block) block** settings page will display.
2.	Section: Block Settings *Field: Block Title* Enter a title for your block.	This is optional. If you do not enter a block title, the title bar of the block will be blank. For this example, type: Go to the Fair!

Step	Action	Notes
3.	*Section: Block Settings* *Field: Content* Enter your desired content.	Notice that you can use formatting tools for this text. You can also add images or a URL. If you add an image, be sure to modify the size so that it fits nicely into the column of your course page. For this example, type: Keep an eye on what's happening at the state fair this year. Do you have plans to compete? Better be prepared! http://www.okstatefair.com.
4.	Modify the settings for **Where this block appears** and **On this page** only if needed.	In general, the remaining settings can be left in their default state.
5.	Click **Save changes**.	Your course page will refresh with your HTML block displayed. Review the contents in your HTML block.

ADDING AND USING THE REMOTE RSS FEED BLOCK

VIDEO DEMONSTRATION:

Watch this 4-minute video to see a demonstration of completing this task.

http://youtu.be/oATcbuDkvCo

NOTE: Video demonstrations were not created by Oklahoma CareerTech, and they may use a different version of Moodle. However, the steps are similar to the ones that you will use.

An RSS (really simple syndication) feed automatically delivers links to published web articles directly to your course page. Many news sites and bloggers publish their content as an RSS feed. To add the Remote RSS Feed block, you must:

1. Go to your course page.
2. Turn editing on.
3. Go to the Add a Block dropdown list.
4. Select the Remote RSS Feed block from the list.

Now follow these steps to configure the Remote RSS Feed Block:

Step	Action	Notes
1.	Click the gear icon and select **Configure Remote news feed block**.	The **Configuring Remote news feed block** settings page will display.
2.	Under **Block Settings**, find the list of available RSS feeds. In the "Choose the feeds which you would like to make available in this block" field, scroll to find your desired feed, and click to select.	If you do not find the feed you want, you will need to add it using the next steps in this table. If the feed you want to add is in the list, you can skip to Step 9 in this table.
3.	To add a new feed choice to the list, click **Add/edit feeds** (found below the list of choices).	A page displaying all your available feeds will display. If you have never added an RSS feed to a Moodle course before, the page may be empty.
4.	Click the **Add a new feed** button.	This will open the Add a New Feed settings page.
5.	Enter the URL of the news feed.	Copy a URL for the desired feed from the feed website. RSS feeds can be located by doing a web search.
	For example, if interested in events occurring at the International Space Station, choose:	
	http://www.brightsurf.com/rss.news.xml?search=International_Space_Station	
6.	Click **Add a new feed** button to add the URL to your feed list.	A Manage Feeds page will display. You will need to return to your course page to continue configuring your new RSS Feed block.
7.	Return to your course page by clicking on the link in the breadcrumb and click the Configure button on the RSS Feed block.	You will be returned to the RSS Feed configuration page.
8.	Under Block Settings, in the "Choose the feeds which you would like to make available in this block" field, scroll to find your desired feed, and click to select.	The feed that you just added should now be available in the list.
9.	Modify the remaining fields under Block Settings only if necessary.	In general, the remaining settings can be left in their default state.
10.	Modify the settings for **Where this block appears** and **On this page** only if needed.	In general, the remaining settings can be left in their default state.

Step	Action	Notes
11.	Click the **Save changes** button.	Your course page will refresh with the feed headlines displayed in your Remote RSS Feed block. Review the content in your Remote RSS Feed block.

Note: It is possible to add multiple RSS feeds to a single Remote RSS Feed block. However, this could be confusing for students. Instead, try adding a block for each separate RSS feed.

ADDING AND USING A POLL BLOCK

VIDEO DEMONSTRATION:

Watch this 3-minute video to see a demonstration of completing this task.

http://youtu.be/7U5Mm16lMYg

Note: Video demonstrations were not created by Oklahoma CareerTech, and they may use a different version of Moodle. However, the steps are similar to the ones that you will use.

A Poll block is a fun way to engage students with a topic. When students open the course page, they will see the Poll displayed. Once the student has responded to the poll, the block displays current response results. You can use the Poll block to generate discussion about different points of view. (The Poll block is an optional feature that may not be installed on all Moodle servers.)

To add any block in Moodle, you must first:

1. Go to your course page.
2. Turn editing on.
3. Go to the Add a Block dropdown list.
4. Select the Poll block from the list.

Follow these steps to add a question and response choices to your Poll block:

Step	Action	Notes
1.	Click the gear icon and select **Configure Poll block**.	The **Configuring a Poll block** settings page will display. If you have not used a Poll block before, under **Block settings**, you will see the following message: No polls are currently available, select the create/edit poll link below to create one.
2.	Click the Create/edit poll link.	A poll configuration page with 4 tabs will display. The **Create/Edit Poll** tab is active.
3.	*Parameter: Poll name* Enter the desired Poll Name in the Value column of the table.	Although there is a dropdown list displayed for Poll Name, there will not be any choices to select. You will enter a new Poll Name in the Value column of the table. For training purposes, type: Yesterday's Class
4.	*Parameter: Question text* Enter the desired question text for your poll.	For training, type: What was your favorite part about yesterday's class?
5.	*Parameter: Anonymous* Click to mark the box if respondents should be anonymous.	Depending on the poll, it may be important to allow anonymity for responders.
6.	*Parameter: Eligible users* Select the desired user audience from the dropdown list.	The choices are All, Students, and Teachers. For training purposes, select Students.
7.	*Parameter: Option count* Enter the number of choices that users will select from.	The page refreshes to display the number of fields that you enter here so that the response choices can be created. For training purposes, set 3 choices.
8.	Click **Save Changes.**	The page refreshes to display the text boxes for option entry.

Step	Action	Notes
9.	Complete the Option fields as provided.	These are the choices that users will select from. For this example, type: • Guest speaker • Refreshments • Technology demonstration
10.	Click the **Save changes** button.	Changes are saved, though the page does not refresh.
11.	Click the **Configure Block** tab.	You will be returned to the **Configuring a Poll block** page for your poll block.
12.	Select the desired poll from the **Poll name** dropdown list.	The poll that you just created will now be available in the **Poll name** dropdown list.
13.	Modify the settings for **Where this block appears** and **On this page** only if needed.	In general, the remaining settings can be left in their default state.
14.	Click the **Save changes** button.	Your course page will refresh with the new poll displayed in your poll block. Review the content in your poll block. If you like, change your role to Student and answer the poll to see the block display change.

As the instructor, you will see results of the poll in the Poll block. Students will see the poll question and choices. Once they have made a selection in the Poll block, it will display the results of the poll.

SUMMARY AND RESOURCES

This tutorial provided the steps needed to add and use several different types of blocks.

- Calendar
- HTML
- Remote RSS Feed
- Poll

As you will have noticed when adding these blocks to your course page, there are many more blocks you could add. Spend some time experimenting with different blocks and explore which ones might be especially useful to you and your students.

To learn more about this topic, visit:

- https://docs.moodle.org/33/en/Blocks

HOW TO USE THIS TUTORIAL:

This tutorial can be used as a self-paced lesson or as a lesson plan in a classroom setting.

- *As a self-paced lesson.*

   If this is a completely new skill for you, work through the tutorial from beginning to end. However, if you have some prior experience with the topic, use the menu hyperlinks on page one to jump to a topic that you want to learn.

   Most topics include hyperlinks to video demonstrations. While the videos are useful, you don't have to watch them. All the information that you need is listed in the tutorial text and step instructions.

   Use the exercises at the end of the tutorial to practice the skill. This will help to correct any misunderstandings or mistakes before you use the skill in your classroom.

- *As a lesson-plan for a classroom.*

   When teaching this skill in a classroom, use the tutorial for:

   ✓ **Motivation**—Use the tutorial introduction as a springboard for a deeper exploration of how instructors might use this functionality in their classrooms. Encourage discussion and contributions from your students.
   ✓ **Demonstration**—Once your learners understand the purpose and pedagogical value of the functionality, demonstrate the steps of the relevant tasks as listed in the tutorial, using your computer and an overhead projector.
   ✓ **Practice**—Use the tutorial example as a basis for student practice. Assist as necessary.
   ✓ **Reference**—Encourage learners to use the tutorial post-session as a reference when using the functionality.

Return to the tutorial main menu.

We would appreciate feedback on this tutorial! Please send comments or suggestions to:

Margi Stone Cooper, Digital Delivery Coordinator
Oklahoma Department of CareerTech
margi.cooper@careertech.ok.gov