

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 (Text)
 - ✓ 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.

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INTRODUCTION TO MOODLE BLOCKS

“Block” is the term for any of the text areas you see in the side column of the Moodle course page. Each block displays a specific kind of information. You can add many types of blocks to your course page. For example, the first tutorial described how to add a **Latest News** block.

Why Use Blocks?

Blocks provide a way to keep students informed, engaged with the course content, and motivated to participate. While Moodle offers many standard blocks that you can add to your course page, 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 commonly used blocks. The process for adding a block is the same each time. Once familiar with adding and using blocks, 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.

<https://youtu.be/AfmViuWfONk>

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

To add any block in Moodle, you must first:

1. Go to your course page.
2. Turn editing on. The Edit button is the “pencil and paper icon” toward the left side of the top navigation bar.

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

Step	Action	Notes
1.	At the top right-side of the course site and click the Course Blocks button to expand the Course Blocks menu.	
2.	Under Add a block , click the dropdown menu and choose Calendar .	The block lists the various options in alphabetical order. If you already have a Calendar in your course, this option will not display in the dropdown menu.
3.	To make the calendar appear in the right side of the main course page, click on the gear icon in the top right corner of the Calendar block.	
4.	Select Configure Calendar block from the options.	
5.	To make the Calendar appear on the right-hand side of the course page, on the screen that appears under Where this block appears next to Default region, choose Right from the dropdown menu. Under the same heading, change the Default weight to -10 (negative 10).	
6.	Under the On this page heading next to Region , choose Right and choose the Weight to -10.	
7.	Click the Save changes button.	Once on the course page, notice the location of the Calendar. NOTE: When viewing the course on a cellphone or any device with a narrow screen, the Calendar block will appear at the bottom of the course.

When clicking on the **gear icon** of a Calendar block, in addition to configuring the location of the Calendar, you can:

- **Show/hide the block.** As with all blocks, click the **eye** icon to show or hide the icon from the students' view.

- **Set permissions.** This setting determines who can see the block. For example, you can set up a calendar so that only people with certain user rights can edit it.
- **Delete the block.** Clicking the **trashcan** icon deletes the block from the course.
- **Move the block.** The **4-arrow** icon allows you to drag the block to another location on the page.

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:

- **Site event**—This event type is “global” to the entire 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 (this includes server managers or admins).
- **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 teacher) 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 (such as different class periods), each group can create their own events 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 block.	Moodle will display the calendar page view.
2.	Click the New event button at the top right of the Calendar.	The New event settings page displays.
3.	Enter an event title.	For training purposes, type: Midterm Exam
4.	Select the date and time of the event. Notice that the time menu uses military time (a 24-hour clock).	You may also click the calendar icon to the right of the date dropdown menus to select a date from a calendar display. For training purposes, use tomorrow’s date at 8 AM.

Step	Action	Notes
5.	Click the Type of event dropdown list and choose Course .	<p>The options you will see are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User: A User event is private. For example, if you have a dentist appointment to add to your calendar, you would select User. • Group: A Group event is available to participants assigned to the same group. • Course: A Course event is applicable to all course participants. • Category: A Category event is available to participants who have Category-level user rights. • Site: This option appears for those who have sitewide editing capabilities. <p>For this example, imagine you are adding a test date. For the type of event, select Course.</p>
6.	Click the Show more link. Enter an explanation of the event in the Description field.	<p>This field is optional. For training purposes, type: The midterm will consist of three short essay questions. 100 points maximum.</p>
7.	Modify the Duration and Repeat settings as needed.	<p>An event may last one hour, so you could click the “Duration in minutes” option and enter 60.</p> <p>For training purposes, our midterm test will last 120 minutes.</p> <p>In most cases, these settings may be left in their default state.</p>
8.	Click the Save button at the bottom of the editing screen.	<p>Your new event will display. Review the event from your Calendar block. From here, you may add another new event.</p>
9.	When you have finished editing the calendar, return to the main course page by either clicking the link to the course in the left-side navigation column or by clicking on the name of the course in the navigation breadcrumb.	<p>Notice that tomorrow’s date is highlighted on the calendar. Mousing over the date reveals a small popup that says Midterm Exam.</p>

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 OR TEXT BLOCK

VIDEO DEMONSTRATION:

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

<https://youtu.be/1ZodHL8cZ7Y>

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 (also known as the Text 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 your contact information. You could also use an HTML/Text 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/Text blocks to your course page.

To add any block in Moodle, you must first:

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

Follow these steps to add an HTML/Text block to your page:

Step	Action	Notes
1.	Click the Course Blocks button in the upper right of your screen to open the Blocks drawer.	
2.	In the Add a block box, click to open the Add menu and choose HTML (or Text) from the dropdown menu.	The screen will refresh. You should now see a block labeled (new HTML block) in the Blocks drawer. The new block will also include a four-way directional arrow icon and a Gear dropdown menu.
3.	Click the gear icon and select Configure (new HTML block) block .	The Configuring a (new HTML block) block screen will display.

Step	Action	Notes
4.	<p>Section: Block settings Field: Block Title</p> <p>Enter a title for your block.</p>	<p>This is optional. If you do not enter a block title, the title bar of the block will be blank.</p> <p>For this example, type: Go to the Fair!</p>
5.	<p>Section: Block settings Field: Content</p> <p>Enter your desired content.</p>	<p>Notice that you can use formatting tools for this text. You can also add images or a URL.</p> <p>If you add an image, be sure to modify the size so that it fits nicely into the side column of your course page.</p> <p>For this example, type:</p> <p>Keep an eye on what’s happening at the state fair this year. Do you have plans to compete? Better be prepared!</p> <p>https://okstatefair.com.</p>
6.	<p>Modify the settings for Where this block appears and On this page, if needed.</p>	<p>In general, you can leave the remaining settings in their default state.</p>
7.	<p>Click Save changes.</p>	<p>Your course page will refresh with your block displayed in the Block drawer. Review the contents in your new block.</p>

Remember, you can display the block alongside your course content, if you would like.

ADDING AND USING THE REMOTE RSS FEED BLOCK

VIDEO DEMONSTRATION:

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

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

Step	Action	Notes
1.	Click the Course Blocks button in the upper right of your screen to open the Blocks drawer.	
2.	In the Add a block box, click to open the Add menu and choose Remote RSS Feeds from the dropdown menu.	The screen will refresh. You should now see a block labeled Remote news feed in the Blocks drawer. The new block will also include a four-way directional arrow icon and a gear dropdown menu.
3.	Click the gear icon and select Configure Remote news feed block .	The Configuring a Remote news feed block screen will display.
4.	Section: Block settings Display each link's description: No	For this example, choose No . Link descriptions often are not necessary.
5.	Section: Block settings Max number entries to show per block: 3	To avoid creating an overly long block, choose 3 for this example.
6.	Section: Block settings Choose the feeds which you would like to make available in this block: Moodle.net Select Moodle.net for training purposes.	If the news feed you want to add is in the list, you can choose it from the list, and then skip to Step 15. If you do not find the news feed you want, you will need to add it using the next steps in this table.
7.	To add a new RSS news feed choice to the list, click the Add/edit feeds link (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.

Step	Action	Notes
8.	If you do not see the RSS feed that you want, scroll down and click the Add a new feed button.	This will open the Add a new feed settings page. In another web browser window, locate RSS feeds by doing a web search or using a site such as https://www.rsssearchhub.com/ . Copy a URL for the desired feed from the feed website.
9.	Paste the URL of the news feed in the Feed URL textbox. For example, if interested in world events reported by the <i>New York Times</i> , choose: http://rss.nytimes.com/services/xml/rss/nyt/World.xml	
10.	Click the Add a new feed button to add the URL to your feed list.	The Manage all my feeds screen will display. You will need to return to your course page to continue configuring your new RSS Feed block.
11.	Return to your course page by clicking on the course title in the breadcrumb.	
12.	Click gear icon to configure the RSS Feed, and click the Configure Remote news feed block link.	This takes you back to the Configuring a Remote news feed block settings page.
13.	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 it click to select.	The feed that you just added should appear in the list.
14.	Modify the remaining fields under Block settings to suit your preferences.	In general, you can leave the remaining settings in their default state. However, teachers often change the number of entries to show in the block and display a link to the news site. Allowing a channel image tends to make the RSS feed appear too long when displayed.
15.	Modify the settings for Where this block appears and On this page only if needed.	In general, you can leave the remaining settings in their default state.
16.	Click the Save changes button.	Your course page will refresh with the feed headlines displayed in your RSS feed block. Review the content in your new news feed.

NOTE: It is possible to add multiple RSS feeds to a single 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

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 in the side column of the course. 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 on all Moodle servers.)

To add any block in Moodle, you must first:

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

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

Step	Action	Notes
1.	Click the Course Blocks button in the upper right of your screen to open the Blocks drawer.	
2.	In the Add a block box, click to open the Add menu and choose Poll from the dropdown menu.	The screen will refresh. You should now see a block labeled Poll in the Blocks drawer. The new block will also include a four-way directional arrow icon and a gear dropdown menu.
3.	Click the gear icon, and click the Configure Poll block link.	The Configuring a Poll block settings page will display.
4.	Click the Create/Edit Poll link.	A poll configuration page with 4 tabs will display. The Create/Edit Poll tab is active.
5.	Parameter: Poll name Enter the desired poll name in the Value column of the table.	Although a dropdown will displayed for the poll name, there will not be any choices to select if you have never created a poll. You will enter a new poll name in the Value column of the table. For training purposes, type: Yesterday's Class

Step	Action	Notes
6.	<p>Parameter: Question text</p> <p>Enter the desired question text for your poll.</p>	<p>For training, type:</p> <p>What was your favorite part about yesterday's class?</p>
7.	<p>Parameter: Anonymous</p> <p>Click the checkbox if responses should be anonymous.</p>	<p>Depending on the poll, it may be important to allow anonymity for responders.</p>
8.	<p>Parameter: Eligible users</p> <p>Select the desired user audience from the dropdown list.</p>	<p>The choices are All, Students, and Teachers.</p> <p>For training purposes, select Students.</p>
9.	<p>Parameter: Option count</p> <p>Enter the number of choices that users will select from.</p>	<p>The page refreshes to display the number of fields that you enter here so that you can create the response choices. For training purposes, set 3 choices.</p>
10.	<p>Click Save changes.</p>	<p>The page refreshes to display the text boxes for option entry.</p>
11.	<p>Complete the Option fields as provided.</p>	<p>These are the choices that users will select from.</p> <p>For this example, type these choices into the three fields: Guest speaker, Refreshments, and Technology demo.</p>
12.	<p>Click the Save changes button.</p>	<p>Changes are saved, though the page does not refresh.</p>
13.	<p>Click the Configure block tab.</p>	<p>You will be returned to the Configuring a Poll block page for your poll block.</p>
14.	<p>On the Configuring a block tab next to the HTML block title field, type in a name for your new poll, if you want a title other than "Poll."</p>	<p>For this exercise type: Class Activity Poll</p>
15.	<p>On the dropdown menu next to Poll name, choose the poll you just created.</p> <p>Modify the settings for Where this block appears and On this page only if needed.</p>	<p>On this screen, you can change the name of the poll block, edit the poll, view the responses, or specify where on the course page the poll will appear.</p>

Step	Action	Notes
16.	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 question 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 make 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, and Poll. There are many more types of blocks. 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/311/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 contact the General ctYOU.org Support Staff listed under Division Contacts on ctYOU.org.