

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.

MENU OF TUTORIAL TOPICS

- [Introduction to Moodle Blocks](#)
- [Adding and Using a Calendar Block](#)
- [Adding and Using the HTML Block](#)
- [Adding and Using the Remote RSS Feed Block](#)
- [Adding and Using a Poll Block](#)
- [Summary and Resources](#)

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, to keep them engaged with the course content, and to encourage exploration and participation. 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 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/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 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. The Edit button is the “pencil and paper icon” toward the left side of the top navigation bar.
3. Click the “hamburger icon” in the upper left of the screen (three stacked horizontal lines) to reveal the side navigation panel.

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

Step	Action	Notes
1.	Under the ADD A BLOCK heading in the side column, choose Calendar from the dropdown menu.	If you already have a calendar in your course, this option will not display in the dropdown menu.
2.	Select Calendar from the list that appears.	The page will refresh. The new Calendar block will appear in the side column.

Notice the icons in the upper right corner of the Calendar block. By clicking the **gear** icon, you can:

- **Configure the block.** When course editing is turned on, you will also see a gear icon. This setting allows you to specify where the block appears on the course page.
- **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:

- **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 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.	This field is required. 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.
5.	Under the General heading, click the Type of event dropdown list.	The options you will see are: <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 site-wide 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.	This field is optional. For training purposes, type: The midterm will consist of three questions, each requiring a short essay response. 100 points maximum.

Step	Action	Notes
7.	Modify the Duration and Repeat settings as needed.	<p>An event may last one hour, so you could select 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.	Your new event will display. Review the event from your Calendar block. From here, you may add another new event.
9.	When you have finished editing the calendar, return to the main course page by either clicking the link to the course in the side navigation column or by clicking on the name of the course in the navigation breadcrumb.	Notice that tomorrow’s date is highlighted on the calendar. Mousing over the date reveals a popup that says Midterm Exam.

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 your contact information. 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.

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

Step	Action	Notes
1.	Locate the Add a block dropdown link.	On ctYOU.org, this link is at the bottom of the side navigation panel.
2.	Select HTML from the dropdown list.	The page will refresh. The new HTML block will appear in the side column.

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

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!
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 side 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 .

Step	Action	Notes
4.	Modify the settings for Where this block appears and On this page , 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 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 on the Add a block link located in the side navigation panel.	
2.	Select the Remote RSS feeds block from the list.	The page will refresh and the Remote News Feed block will be visible.

Step	Action	Notes
3.	Click the gear icon and select Configure Remote news feed block .	The Configuring Remote news feed block settings page will display.
4.	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.	<p>If you do not find the news feed you want, you will need to add it using the next steps in this table.</p> <p>If the news feed you want to add is in the list, you can skip to Step 9 in this table.</p>
5.	To add a new RSS news 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.
6.	Click the Add a new feed button.	This will open the Add a New Feed settings page.
7.	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.
<p>For example, if interested in world events reported by the <i>New York Times</i>, choose:</p> <p>http://rss.nytimes.com/services/xml/rss/nyt/World.xml</p>		
8.	Click the Add a new feed button to add the URL to your feed list.	The Manage all my feeds page will display. You will need to return to your course page to continue configuring your new RSS Feed block.
9.	Return to your course page by clicking on the course title in the breadcrumb.	
10.	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.
11.	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.

Step	Action	Notes
12.	Modify the remaining fields under Block settings to suit your preferences.	In general, the remaining settings can be left 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.
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 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

VIDEO DEMONSTRATION:

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

<http://youtu.be/7U5Mm16IMYg>

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 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 installed 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.	Under the ADD A BLOCK heading in the right column, choose Poll from the dropdown menu.	
2.	Locate the Poll block in the side column, click the gear icon, and click the Configure Poll block link.	<p>The Configuring a Poll block settings page will display.</p> <p>If you have not previously used a Poll block in the course, under Block settings, you will see the following message: No polls are currently available, select the create/edit poll link below to create one.</p>
3.	Click the Create/Edit Poll link.	A poll configuration page with 4 tabs will display. The Create/Edit Poll tab is active.
4.	<p>Parameter: Poll name</p> <p>Enter the desired poll name in the Value column of the table.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>For training purposes, type: Yesterday’s Class</p>
5.	<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>
6.	<p>Parameter: Anonymous</p> <p>Click the checkbox if responses should be anonymous.</p>	Depending on the poll, it may be important to allow anonymity for responders.
7.	<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>
8.	<p>Parameter: Option count</p> <p>Enter the number of choices that users will select from.</p>	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.

Step	Action	Notes
9.	Click Save changes .	The page refreshes to display the text boxes for option entry.
10.	Complete the Option fields as provided.	These are the choices that users will select from. For this example, type these choices into the three fields: Guest speaker, Refreshments, and Technology demonstration.
11.	Click the Save changes button.	Changes are saved, though the page does not refresh.
12.	Click the Configure block tab.	You will be returned to the Configuring a Poll block page for your poll block.
13.	On the Configuring a block tab, modify the settings for Where this block appears and On this page only if needed.	On this page, 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.
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 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 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, 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/34/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.