

## 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 four specific blocks:
  - ✓ Calendar
  - ✓ Text
  - ✓ Remote RSS Feeds
  - ✓ Comments

Not all of these blocks 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 Text Block](#)
- [Adding and Using the Remote RSS Feeds Block](#)
- [Adding and Using the Comments Block](#)
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### INTRODUCTION TO MOODLE BLOCKS

“Block” is the term for any of the text areas you see in the right 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 Announcements** 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 these brief videos to see demonstrations showing how to use the Blocks Drawer; how to add, move, and delete a Block; and how to use the Moodle Calendar.

Using the Blocks Drawer: [https://youtu.be/dmns5JWGZ9A?si=bdLEr7QDJ1irv\\_6r](https://youtu.be/dmns5JWGZ9A?si=bdLEr7QDJ1irv_6r)

How to Use the Calendar: <https://youtu.be/MCJvpY9H1bU?si=MEu16PP6cN-ZuQPX>

**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 mode toggle** is on the right side of the top navigation bar. The toggle turns green when editing is enabled.

Follow these steps to add a **Calendar** block to your course:

Step	Action	Notes
1.	Open the <b>block drawer</b> by clicking the <b>arrow</b> icon (<) in the upper right corner of the course page.	
2.	Click the <b>Add a block</b> link and click <b>Calendar</b> in the popup screen.	The popup 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.	Locate the <b>Calendar</b> block in the right column (block drawer).	
4.	Click on the <b>gear icon</b> in the top right corner of the Calendar block and click <b>Configure Calendar block</b> .	
5.	To make the Calendar appear at the top of the block drawer, next to <b>Default weight</b> choose <b>-10 (first)</b> .	Selecting the weight of the block allows you to choose the location of the block. The lower the number, the higher the block will appear in the block drawer.
6.	Click the <b>Save changes</b> button.	Once on the course page, notice the location of the Calendar.  <b>NOTE:</b> 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:

- **Move the block.** The **4-way arrow** icon at the top of the block allows you to drag the block to another location on the 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.

At the bottom of the calendar block, you can find links to view the **full calendar** (full-screen view) and **import or export calendars**.

When viewing the **full calendar**, 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 events**—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).
- **Category event**—Category events are viewable by participants within a category on Moodle server. On ctYOU.org, categories include BMITE, FCS, etc.
- **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. To **return to the main course page**, you can click **Dashboard** in the top navigation bar toward the left, and then click the link to the course site.

Follow these steps to add events to your calendar from the **full calendar** view. (Remember, expand the Calendar block by linking the **Full calendar** link at the bottom of the Calendar block.)

Step	Action	Notes
1.	At the top of the <b>Full calendar</b> view toward the left, be sure that the correct course name displays in the <b>courses</b> dropdown menu.	
2.	Click the <b>New event</b> button at the top right of the Calendar full view.	The <b>New event</b> settings page displays.
3.	Enter an event title.	For training purposes, type: <b>Midterm Exam</b>

Step	Action	Notes
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 <b>calendar icon</b> to the right of the date dropdown menus to select a date from a calendar display. For training purposes, use tomorrow's date at 8:00 a.m.
5.	Click the <b>Type of event</b> dropdown list and choose <b>Course</b> .	<p>The options you will see are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>User:</b> A User event is private. For example, if you have a dentist appointment to add to your calendar, you would select User.</li> <li>• <b>Group:</b> A Group event is available to participants assigned to the same group.</li> <li>• <b>Course:</b> A Course event is applicable to all course participants.</li> <li>• <b>Category:</b> A Category event is available to participants who have Category-level user rights.</li> <li>• <b>Site:</b> This option appears for those who have sitewide editing capabilities.</li> </ul> <p>For this example, imagine you are adding a test date. For the type of event, select <b>Course</b>.</p>
6.	Ensure the correct course name displays in the <b>Course</b> field.	
7.	Click the <b>Show more</b> link. Enter an explanation of the event in the <b>Description</b> field.	<p>This field is optional. For training purposes, type: The midterm will consist of three short essay questions. 100 points maximum.</p> <p><b>NOTE:</b> If you are unable to edit the Calendar description, try changing your text editor preference by clicking the down arrow next to your name icon in the upper right. Choose <b>Preferences &gt; Editor preferences &gt; Default editor &gt; Save changes</b>.</p>
8.	Modify the <b>Duration</b> and <b>Repeat</b> settings as needed.  In most cases, you can leave these settings at their default state.	<p>An event may last one hour, so you could click the "Duration in minutes" option and enter 60.</p> <p><b>For training purposes, our midterm test will last 120 minutes.</b></p>

Step	Action	Notes
9.	Click the <b>Save</b> 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.
10.	When you have finished editing the calendar, return to the main course page by clicking the name of the course on your Dashboard screen.	Notice that tomorrow's date is highlighted on the Calendar block in the block drawer. Mousing over the date reveals a small popup that says Midterm Exam (or the name of your event).

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

### ADDING AND USING THE TEXT BLOCK

#### VIDEO DEMONSTRATION:

Watch this brief video to see a demonstration on how to add a Text block.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owy1fOd5neE>

**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 Text block to add messages, links, or images, to your course page. For example, you may want to use it to display a picture of yourself along with your contact information. You could also provide a link to promote an upcoming event. Unlike the Calendar block, you may add multiple 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 Text block to your page:

Step	Action	Notes
1.	Click the <b>Open blocks drawer</b> arrow button in the upper right of your screen to open the Blocks drawer.	
2.	Click the <b>Add a block</b> link, scroll down the popup menu, and choose <b>Text</b> .	The screen will refresh. You should now see a block labeled ( <b>new text block</b> ) in the blocks drawer. The new block will also include a <b>four-way directional arrow icon</b> and a <b>Gear dropdown menu</b> .
3.	Click the <b>gear icon</b> and select <b>Configure (new text block) block</b> .	The <b>Configuring a (new text block) block</b> screen will display.
4.	<b>Section:</b> Block settings <b>Field:</b> 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: <b>Go to the Fair!</b>
5.	<b>Section:</b> Block settings <b>Field:</b> 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: <a href="https://okstatefair.com">https://okstatefair.com</a> .
6.	Modify the settings for <b>Where this block appears</b> and <b>On this page</b> , if needed.	In general, you can leave the remaining settings in their default state.
7.	Click <b>Save changes</b> .	Your course page will refresh with your block displayed in the Block drawer. Review the contents in your new block.

## ADDING AND USING THE REMOTE RSS FEEDS 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 content directly to your course page. News sites, blogs, and podcasts often publish their content as a remote RSS feed. To add the **remote RSS feeds** block, you must:

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

Now follow these steps to configure the remote RSS feeds block:

Step	Action	Notes
1.	Click the <b>Open blocks drawer</b> arrow button in the upper right of your screen to open the Blocks drawer.	
2.	In the <b>Add a block</b> box, click to open the <b>Add</b> menu and choose <b>Remote RSS feed</b> from the dropdown menu.	The screen will refresh. You should now see a block labeled <b>Remote news feed</b> in the blocks drawer. The new block will also include a four-way directional arrow icon and a gear dropdown menu.
3.	Click the <b>gear icon</b> and select <b>Configure Remote news feed block</b> .	The <b>Configuring a Remote news feed block</b> screen will display.
4.	<b>Section:</b> Block settings <b>Display each link's description:</b> No	For this example, choose <b>No</b> . Link descriptions often are not necessary.
5.	<b>Section:</b> Block settings <b>Max number entries to show per block:</b> 3	To avoid creating an overly long block, choose 3 for this example.



Step	Action	Notes
6.	<p><b>Section:</b> Block settings  <b>Choose the feeds which you would like to make available in this block:</b> NYT Technology</p> <p>Select NYT Technology for training purposes.</p>	<p>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.</p> <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>
7.	To add a new news feed choice to the list, click the <b>Add/edit feeds</b> link (found below the list of choices).	A page displaying all your available feeds will display. If you have never added a new feed to a Moodle course before, the page may be empty.
8.	If you do not see the new feed that you want, scroll down and click the <b>Add a new feed</b> button.	<p>This will open the <b>Add a new feed</b> settings page.</p> <p>In another web browser window, locate RSS feeds by doing a web search or using a site such as <a href="https://www.rsssearchhub.com/">https://www.rsssearchhub.com/</a>. Or, you can search for your topic of interest on the web (for example, “best technology RSS feeds”).</p> <p>Copy a URL for the desired feed from the feed website.</p>
9.	<p>Paste the URL of the news feed in the <b>Feed URL</b> textbox.</p> <p>For example, if interested in world events reported by the <i>New York Times</i>, choose:  <a href="http://rss.nytimes.com/services/xml/rss/nyt/World.xml">http://rss.nytimes.com/services/xml/rss/nyt/World.xml</a></p>	
10.	Leave the other settings at their default, and click the <b>Add a new feed</b> button to add the URL to your feed list.	The <b>Manage all my feeds</b> 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 the top link in the course index.	The course index appears in the left column of the course site.
12.	Click <b>gear</b> icon to configure the RSS Feed, and click the <b>Configure Remote news feed block</b> link.	This takes you back to the <b>Configuring a Remote news feed block</b> settings page.
13.	Under <b>Block settings</b> in the <b>Choose the feeds which you would like to make available in this block</b> 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
14.	Modify the remaining fields under <b>Block settings</b> 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 <b>Where this block appears</b> and <b>On this page</b> only if needed.	In general, you can leave the remaining settings in their default state.
16.	Click the <b>Save changes</b> 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 COMMENTS BLOCK

A **Comments block** allows students to add comments to a course. You can add this block to a course page, or to individual resources or activities.

To add any block in Moodle, you must first turn on editing in your course site.

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

Step	Action	Notes
1.	Click the <b>Open blocks drawer</b> arrow button in the upper right of your screen to open the Blocks drawer.	
2.	In the <b>Add a block</b> box, click to open the <b>Add</b> menu and choose <b>Comments</b> from the dropdown menu.	The screen will refresh. You should now see a block labeled <b>Comments</b> in the blocks drawer. The new block will also include a four-way directional arrow icon and a gear dropdown menu.

Step	Action	Notes
3.	Click the <b>gear</b> icon, and click the <b>Configure Comments block</b> link.	The <b>Configuring a Comments block</b> settings page will display.
4.	For training purposes, you may leave all settings at the default. Please note that under the <b>On this page</b> heading, you can choose whether to make the Comments block visible.	For the <b>Visible</b> setting, “Yes” means the block will appear on that page.
5.	Click <b>Save changes</b> .	Your course page will refresh with the <b>Comments</b> box displayed in the block drawer. If you like, change your role to Student and answer the poll question to see the block display change.

Students will be able to see all comments and they can delete their own comments. As the instructor, you can also delete any comments.

### SUMMARY AND RESOURCES

This tutorial provided the steps needed to add and use several different types of blocks: Calendar, Text, Remote RSS Feed, and Comments. There are many more types of blocks. Spend some time experimenting with different blocks and explore which ones might be especially useful to you.

To learn more about this topic, visit:

- <https://docs.moodle.org/403/en/Blocks>

### HOW TO USE THIS TUTORIAL:

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

Many training documents 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 ctYOU.org Support Staff listed under Contact Info on the ctYOU.org top navigation bar.*

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