

Incorporating Course Blocks in Your Site

In addition to the standard **Administration** and **Navigation** blocks in the left column of your course home page, there are several other blocks that provide quick access to Moodle features that you might want to add to your course site. Follow these simple steps to add a block:

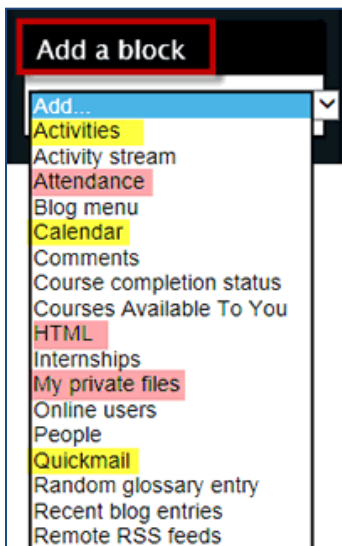


Figure 1: Add a Block Menu

1. Under the **Administration** block, click on **Turn editing on**.
2. Locate the block labeled **Add a block...** at the bottom of the column on the left of the course page (Figure 1) and click on **Add...** to open the drop-down menu.
3. Choose the name of the block you wish to add and click on it. The screen will refresh to show the new block.

The blocks highlighted in yellow in Figure 1 are some of the most commonly used, while the pink blocks represent more advanced features.

Common Block #1: Providing Links to Resources and Activities

The **Activities** block (Figure 2) provides links to activities and resources as they are created in your course. To display this block in your course site, choose **Activities** from the **Add a block** drop-down menu.

New and existing resources will be linked to "Resources" in the **Activities** block. Opening this link will display a list of all the resources posted in the course—files, books, pages, web links, etc.—along with the description related to each resource. This list provides a quick way for all users to open any resource regardless of where it is posted in the site.

In addition to resources, each activity that you create will generate a corresponding link in the **Activities** block. Items are posted by type—quizzes, assignments, advanced forums, etc. Opening the link for Quizzes, for instance, will display a list of all the quizzes currently posted in the course site.

Note: Students only see items in the **Activities** block when they are visible to them; hidden items do **not** show up on these lists for students, even though you will be able to see all activities and resources due to your teacher role.

Tip: Reviewing the items in this list offers a quick way to verify that they are visible/hidden for students. In the case of Assignments, it's a shortcut for checking that due dates have been set/updated for each assignment. It also provides a quick way to view and change Forum subscriptions.

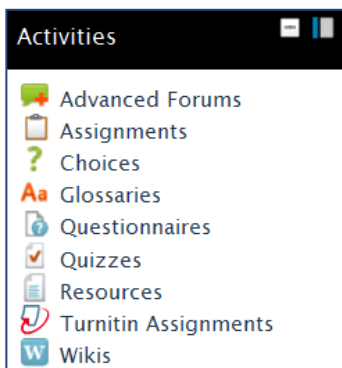


Figure 2: Activities Block

Common Block #2: Enabling Quickmail to Send Email

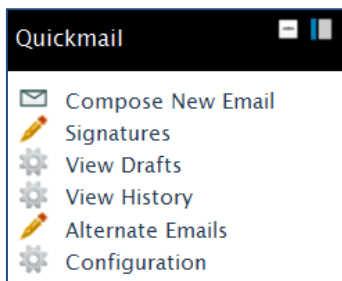


Figure 3: Quickmail Block

Quickmail enables you and your students to send email to any or all class participants. Messages sent through Quickmail are sent to each recipient's SOU email account. To enable Quickmail, follow the steps above and select "Quickmail" from the block list.

Once you've added Quickmail to your course (Figure 3), click on "Compose New Email" to send a message. You can draft messages to all users in the course site, to groups ("sections"), or to select users. By default, a copy of the message will be sent to you. The "History" link will display all messages that you send for your later reference.

Working with Blocks

Tip: If you use Groups in your course, clicking on **Compose New Email** is one way your students can find out who else is in their group.

Common Block #3: Displaying the Calendar and Creating Events

Besides highlighting today's date, Moodle's calendar signals due dates for assignments and quizzes and offers links to them as you add them to your course site. Moodle creates these links automatically! Calendar items from all courses are aggregated to the calendar displayed on the student's home page, making this a great planning tool. You can add a calendar block to your site by following the instructions for adding a block and choosing **Calendar**.

As you create assignments, the due dates will automatically be added to the course calendar. To add a calendar item for your students manually:

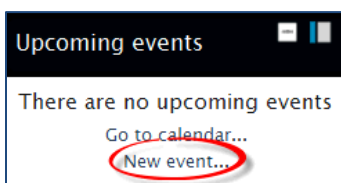


Figure 4: Add Event to Calendar

1. Click on the link labeled **New Event...** in the **Upcoming Events** block (Figure 4).
2. Indicate if this is an event for a specific group (if you have groups created) or if it's a course event— something that you want all students to have on their calendar.
3. Provide a title for the event and add a description for it, if you wish.
4. Complete the date and start time fields.

5. Set duration, if desired.

6. Set repeat option if this event will have a weekly recurrence and indicate the total number of times the event should be scheduled.

7. Click on **Save changes**.

Advanced Block #1: Taking Attendance

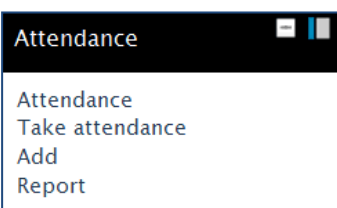


Figure 5: Attendance Block, Faculty View

Instructions for setting up an **Attendance** activity in your course site are posted in the [Moodle Knowledgebase](#). Once you create an **Attendance** link, you can add a block for it the same way you add other blocks.

The **Attendance** block (Figure 5) interface differs for students and teachers: students see their current attendance status displayed on the block and can click on "Details..." to read your comments, while instructors have links in the block to take attendance, add a session, or view attendance reports.

Advanced Block #2: Customizing an HTML Block

An HTML block is basically a text box that you can place in your course to contain information that you'd like your students to have immediate access to throughout the term. Possible uses include posting your office hours and contact information, posting key web links, etc. After you add the block, click on the **configure** icon shown in Figure 6 below to add content to the block. Add a title if you wish and enter what you want to display in the **Content** box shown in Figure 7 at right. **Save changes**.

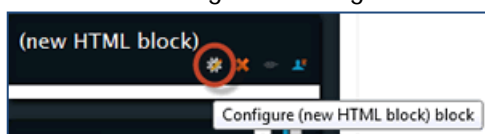


Figure 6: Configure HTML Block

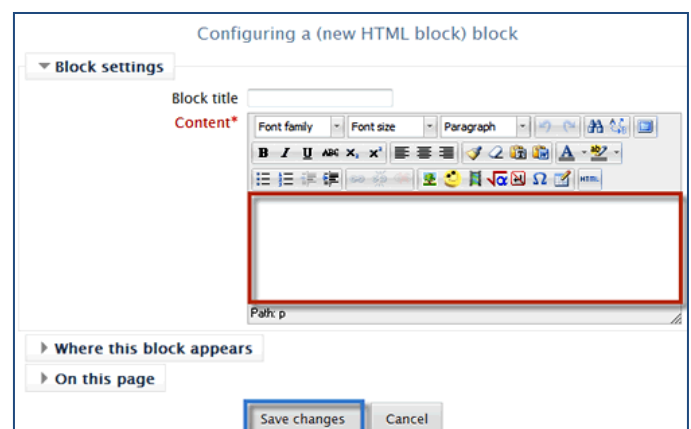


Figure 7: Customize HTML Block

Advanced Block #3: Linking to My Private Files

Every user has a file storage site in Moodle called "My Private Files." Students can use this file repository as a storage space for their work, uploading their files from home or campus and downloading them wherever they are when they are ready to work on them again. No one else can view a person's files when they are posted in this area.

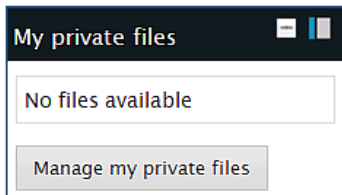


Figure 8: My Private Files Block

You can access this area from your Moodle home page by clicking on **My profile** in the **Navigation** block, then clicking on **My private files**. Adding the **My private files** block (Figure 8) to your course site will give you and your students direct access to any files that have been uploaded to Moodle.

The files in this area will be available to you (and **only** you) no matter what course you have open, making it possible to link to the same file from any course site.

Thus, if you have guidelines for online discussions or checklists that you provide for all of your students, you only need to upload each file once to be able to link to it from all of your course sites. **Note:** If you upload a new version of a file that you have linked in multiple places, you will have to relink the file everywhere it appears in order to provide access to the updated version. (This may seem illogical, but there is a lengthy, technical explanation for it—we'll spare you here!)

For more on using this repository, see the related article in the [Moodle Knowledgebase](#).

Advanced Block #4: Inviting Comments

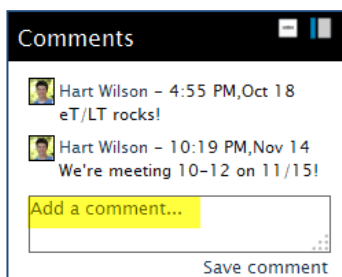


Figure 9: Comments Block

Moodle has a block for comments (Figure 9) that enables course participants to jot a quick note to all users about whatever is on their minds. This block accommodates exchanges that are more informal than an announcement and offers a simple means for you and your students to share a thought spontaneously. Try it out and see what happens!

"Docking" Blocks

Most blocks may be "docked" to the upper right margin of your page. In Figure 10, the **Comments** block has been docked. Clicking on the **name of the block** will display the links available from the block, while clicking on the **gray and blue box** underneath will undock the block and restore it to its normal position in the left column.

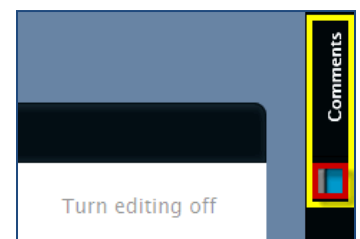


Figure 10: Docked Block

Managing Blocks

A few good things to know about blocks:

- Blocks can be moved up and down by dragging and dropping them.
- Most blocks can only be added once—if you don't see a Quickmail block listed among those you can add to your course, you've probably already added it!
- Multiple HTML and Random glossary entry blocks may be added to your course site.
- You can set a block to appear on every page in your course site—this is very handy for the Quickmail and Activities blocks. See this Knowledgebase article for more—[Add a Block Everywhere](#).