FlexiContact for Joomla

User Guide

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Introduction

FlexiContact is a simple but flexible contact form for Joomla.

After installation, you create a contact page on your website by creating a menu item of type FlexiContact Contact Page. The simplest contact form can be created by entering just one parameter - the email address to receive the emails.

The menu item has a few more parameters, and there are many more in the back end of the component, but all have working defaults so any further configuration is entirely optional.

Licence

FlexiContact is free software licensed under the GNU General Public License Version 2, the same licence that Joomla! itself uses. The GNU General Public License is a Free Software license. For more details please see http://www.gnu.org/licenses/old-licenses/gpl-2.0.html

Installation

Install as a regular Component in the usual way using the Joomla Extension Manager.

Following installation, you will find a new administrative component called "FlexiContact", where you can manage the Configuration and view the log.

To create a contact form on the site, create a menu item of type FlexiContact Contact Page.

Uninstalling

To uninstall, use the uninstall option in Extension Manager. The component and any image packs you have installed will be removed. If you had used logging, the log table (jos_flexicontact_log) is not removed from the database.

Upgrading

To upgrade to a newer version of FlexiContact, just install the new version. There is no need to uninstall first.

Getting Started

Joomla Global Mail Settings

FlexiContact requires you to have correctly setup the Mail Settings in Joomla's Global Configuration. If you have not already done this, you must do so before FlexiContact will work properly.

Go to Site, Global Configuration, Server. The "Mail from" address should be a valid email address otherwise some mail servers will reject your messages as spam. Some servers will only send mail if the from address actually exists on the sending server.

Making a Contact Page

Create a new menu item of type FlexiContact Contact Page (Responsive) or FlexiContact Contact Page (Original).

New sites should use the Responsive page, which is laid out using CSS, and changes its layout and width depending on the width of the browser window.

A few people may prefer the original table based layout, however, this will be removed in a future version.

Set the Email To address

This setting is found in the menu item under "Basic Options". In Joomla 2.5 (and below), this is immediately visible. In Joomla 3.x you have to click on the "Advanced Options" tab before you can see the "Basic Options" panel.

The screenshots are from Joomla 3.0. Other versions look slightly different but the same options are available.

Fill in the "Email To" address. This is where emails from your contact page will be sent. You can only specify one address. *This field is required, and the contact form will not work without it.*

You should now have a working contact form.

Optional Menu Item Parameters

The other parameters in Basic Options are optional.

Email Cc, Email Bcc

Messages are copied to these addresses. You can only specify one address in each field.

Number of Captcha Images

The number of images displayed for the user to choose the correct image from. Specify 0 to disable the image captcha system.

Magic Word

A word or phrase that the user must enter to send the message. Leave blank to disable the magic word system.

Page Title

If you want a page title in <H2> tags, use the Page Title option in Basic Options.

If you want a page title in <H1> tags, use the Page Heading in Page Display Options, and set Show Page Heading to Yes.

Captcha Options

FlexiContact supports two different types of Captcha. You can use one, both, or neither of them.

Magic Word

The magic word is a word or phrase that the user must find and enter before they can send you a message. FlexiContact does not display the magic word, it is up to you to show it somewhere on your site. You could display it on the contact page itself (in the top or bottom text), or you could make it more difficult to find, for example by placing it on another page or inside a PDF document that you want people to read before sending you a message. The magic word is not case sensitive.

If you leave the magic word blank, it is not used.

Image Captcha

Image captcha displays a number of images at random, and asks the user to click on the cat / mouse / dog / etc. It is a simplistic system that provides basic spam protection without making life difficult for potential customers.

Please be aware that picture based systems like this are less secure than traditional Captcha systems. Even picture systems with millions of images are not considered totally secure. Microsoft once developed a system with more than three million images, which researchers claim to have broken (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CAPTCHA).

To use the image captcha system, set the "Number of captcha images" in the menu item to a number greater than zero and less than or equal to the number of images installed. That number of images will be displayed at the bottom of the contact form, and the user must select the correct image for the email to be sent.

Configuration

You have already seen some of FlexiContact's options, in the menu item Basic Options.

FlexiContact has many more settings and options.

In the Joomla administration interface, click on Components, FlexiContact. You will see a menu with several configuration options for FlexiContact.

There is only one configuration and it applies to all contact forms. If you need multiple different forms, FlexiContactPlus is specifically designed for that.

General Configuration

Logging

Logging is off by default. If you switch it on, all contacts are logged to the database. They are then viewable in the log list. The log stores all details including the sender, subject, and message. It also stores the IP address and browser details of the user.

Send HTML

If set to Yes, emails are sent in HTML format, and so can include text formatting, links to images, etc. If set to No, emails are sent in plain text format.

Autofill

Controls automatic filling of the name and email address for users who are logged on to the front end of your site. You can choose whether the user's name or username is used to populate the name field.

Agreement Required

This option allows you to require that users click a checkbox to enable the Send button. This function is triggered by entering something in the Prompt field. For example:
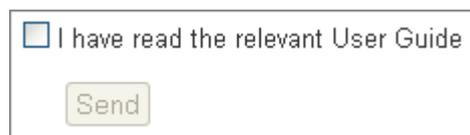
The send button is initially disabled. Clicking the checkbox enables the Send button.

The Name and Link fields are optional. If they are both non-blank, the link is added after the prompt, and when clicked, the link opens in a popup window, if the browser allows. In this example the Name is "Privacy Policy" and a link is specified:
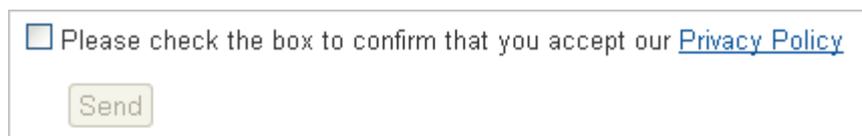
The Link can be any valid URL. Since the link opens a popup window, you might like the popup window to contain just the text of a Joomla article without the site template. You can do this using the Joomla "tmpl=component" URL parameter, which tells Joomla to display component output without the template or modules. For a non-SEF site you could add it like this:

index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4&Itemid=18&tmpl=component

For a SEF site (where tmpl is the first parameter) it needs to be like this:

---

index.php/privacy-policy**?tmpl=component**

Using the tmpl=component option, your template is not loaded and neither is the template css, so the text can look rather plain. If the format is important, one option is to create a formatted html page that is independent of Joomla.

Email to User

When a user successfully fills in the contact form, an email is always sent to the "Email To" address. You may or may not want an additional email to be sent to the user, or you might want to let the user choose whether or not to receive a copy of his enquiry.

Form Fields

On this page you can configure the fields that appear on the form.

Most fields can be either:

- Disabled   Not be shown on the form at all
- Optional   Shown and the user can enter text or leave it blank
- Mandatory   Shown and the user must enter some text in it

Show subject

You can select whether to display the subject field or not, and enter some text to pre-fill it when the form is displayed. If you select "No" for Show subject and you enter a default subject, the text you enter here will be the subject line of all emails.

Message

This controls the text input area where the user enters the main message. You can specify the height and width of the text area, but no matter what size you make it, the user can enter much more text than will visually fit. Scroll bars appear if needed. By default the prompt for the message area is blank, but you can enter a prompt here.

There are four different ways to specify the width of the text area. You might need to experiment to find the best method for your site.

- If you specify a number, the field width is specified in characters using the html "size" attribute.
- If you specify a number followed by "px", "em", or "%", the field width will be specified using an inline CSS style, for example: style="width:50%".
- If you leave the width blank or set it to 0 (zero), no width specification is given. The field width will be entirely dependent on your template CSS.

List

The list input field is disabled by default. To use it, specify a prompt, and a list of words or phrases separated by commas. For example:

Prompt: "How did you find us?"
List: "Select..., Recommendation, Magazine, Search engine, Other"

If mandatory is selected, the user cannot select the first item in the list so it needs to be either blank or something like "Please select…". For a blank first item, start the list with a comma.

Fields 1 to 5

These are optional fields that are not shown unless you enable them. They can be used for anything you want.

Top Text and Bottom Text

You can configure some content to appear above and below the contact form. It can include formatting, images, links, and calls to plugins.

Email to Admin and Email to Client

These options allow you to specify the exact contents and format of the emails sent. Email to Admin is the main email sent to the "Email To" address. Email to Client is the email sent to the user if he checks the box "Email a copy of this message to your own address". You can make these emails completely different if you wish. The emails are setup as templates, with data entered by the user represented by variables. The default admin email just shows the from name, from email, and the message. If you use additional fields you might prefer something like this:

```
From %V_FROM_NAME% at %V_FROM_EMAIL%
%V_MESSAGE_DATA%
%V_FIELD1_PROMPT% : %V_FIELD1_DATA%
%V_FIELD2_PROMPT% : %V_FIELD2_DATA%
```

The default user email just contains the input message. You could be a little more friendly:

```
Dear %V_FROM_NAME%,

Thank you for contacting Les Arbres Design. We have received
your message regarding %V_FIELD1_DATA% and we will respond as
soon as we can.

Best regards,
Les Arbres Design

The message we received from you was:

%V_MESSAGE_DATA%
```

You can remove any variables you don't want to see, change the layout, and add text wherever you want. The full list of variables is on the screen when you edit the emails.

Note that Joomla does not allow the following texts to appear in email content and will strip them out:

"From:", "To:", "Cc:", "Bcc:", "Subject:", "Content-type:"

The Confirmation Page

You can configure the page that is shown after a user sends an email. You can either configure a link to an article already on your site, or you can specify the contents of the page. If you specify a link and some text, the link is used. The link can be a full HTTP URL, or it can be a path relative to your site root.

Front end Styles

The contact form loads its own style sheet:

<site>/components/com_flexicontact/assets/com_flexicontact.css

You can edit this css file any way you want, but a simple editor is provided and is very convenient for making quick changes. Please be aware that if you reinstall Flexicontact or upgrade to a newer version, your changes will be lost, so you should save them to a safe place.

Captcha Images

If you add one or more of our captcha image packs, you might want to delete some images. The captcha image manager allows you to view all your images, filter by image pack, and delete one or more images at a time. To delete images, select them using the checkbox, and click the Delete toolbar button. The captcha system will work with as many images as are left.

Adding More Images

Twenty images are installed with FlexiContact. Additional image packs (Themes) are available from our website.

Each theme is a zip file containing the images and some language files (which contain the image descriptions). Download the zip file to your computer and use the Joomla Extension Manager to install it:

The themes install as a separate component called FlexiContact_Themes. During the install, the new images and language files are copied over to the FlexiContact component. After the install, you will notice a new component in the administration Components menu, "FlexiContact Themes". To remove this, you can uninstall this new component. Your theme will not be uninstalled.

There is currently no way to uninstall a theme. You can either uninstall FlexiContact and start again, or use the FlexiContact admin interface to delete the images you don't want.

Making Your Own Images

You can make your own captcha images. To be accepted by FlexiContact they must be less than 150 pixels wide. Add them to the directory:

```
components/com_flexicontact/images
```

To look good they need to be a consistent size and style, and they need to be clear and unambiguous.

For each image, you must add a description of the image to the language file, for example for the English language, edit the file at language/en-GB/en-GB.com_flexicontact.ini.

Each image must have an entry in the language file. For example an image called "018.gif" should have an entry "COM_FLEXICONTACT_IMAGE_018.GIF=pyramid".

Note the use of upper case in the language file tag, even if the filename is lower case.

```
COM_FLEXICONTACT_SELECT_IMAGE="Please click on the "
COM_FLEXICONTACT_IMAGE_001.GIF="light bulb"
COM_FLEXICONTACT_IMAGE_002.GIF="duck"
COM_FLEXICONTACT_IMAGE_003.GIF="plane"
...
```

Notes for Translators

Note that in English, the "article" is always "the", so it is part of the "SELECT_IMAGE" text.

```
COM_FLEXICONTACT_SELECT_IMAGE="Please click on the "
COM_FLEXICONTACT_IMAGE_001.GIF="light bulb"
COM_FLEXICONTACT_IMAGE_002.GIF="duck"
COM_FLEXICONTACT_IMAGE_009.GIF="suitcase"
COM_FLEXICONTACT_IMAGE_A_021.GIF="apples"
```

In some languages, the article depends on the object. For example, in French, we have:

```
COM_FLEXICONTACT_SELECT_IMAGE="S'il vous plaît cliquer sur "
COM_FLEXICONTACT_IMAGE_001.GIF="l'ampoule"
COM_FLEXICONTACT_IMAGE_002.GIF="le canard"
COM_FLEXICONTACT_IMAGE_009.GIF="la valise"
COM_FLEXICONTACT_IMAGE_A_021.GIF="les pommes"
```

Note that there is one space after "S'il vous plaît cliquer sur ", so that when the full text is displayed, it becomes:

S'il vous plaît cliquer sur l'ampoule
S'il vous plaît cliquer sur le canard
S'il vous plaît cliquer sur la valise
etc.

In some languages (such as Japanese) the object must come at the beginning of the sentence. For these languages you can add a special line anywhere in the front end language file:

COM_FLEXICONTACT_OBJECT_FIRST="Yes"

And FlexiContact will switch the order of the prompt, like this: "Light bulb, please click on the".

Language Files

The text used by FlexiContact is held in language files. Joomla has separate language files for the front end and the back end of components.

Site Front End

```
<site>/language/en-GB/en-GB.com_flexicontact.ini
<site>/language/fr-FR/fr-FR.com_flexicontact.ini
etc
```

## Site Back End

```
<site>/administrator/language/en-GB/en-GB.com_flexicontact.ini
<site>/administrator/language/en-GB/en-GB.com_flexicontact.sys.ini
<site>/administrator/language/fr-FR/fr-FR.com_flexicontact.ini
<site>/administrator/language/fr-FR/fr-FR.com_flexicontact.sys.ini
etc
```

For the supplied languages, FlexiContact should automatically work in your local language. If your language is not supplied, you will need to create the language file for your local language and copy it to the correct directory on your site. Most of the texts are in the .ini file. Only the main menu texts are in the .sys.ini files.

Make a copy of one of the existing language files to a new file of the correct name for your language, then translate the text on the right hand side of the = signs. For example:

en-GB.com_flexicontact.ini	COM_FLEXICONTACT_FROM_NAME="Your name"
fr-FR.com_flexicontact.ini	COM_FLEXICONTACT_FROM_NAME="Votre nom"

- Be careful to preserve any %s or %i markers. These mark the place where text or numeric values are inserted when the text is used.
- Each translation must be in "double quotes". Do not use double quotes inside the text.
- Please also refer to the note in the previous section about translating image file names.
- Use a text editor to edit the file, not a word processor. For example Notepad++.
- Save the file with UTF-8 encoding otherwise accented characters will not be displayed properly.
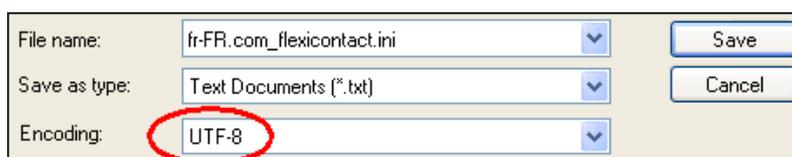
When you copy the new file to the correct place on your website, it becomes active immediately. There is no need to reinstall the component.

Please send new and updated language files to us so that we can include them with the product.

Miscellaneous

Linking to a Contact Page without a Menu Link

You might want to create a link to a component (such as FlexiContact) without having that link visible on a menu. For example, you might want to include the link within the text of an article. You can achieve this using a hidden menu:

- In Menu Manager, create a new menu. Call it "Hidden".
- Create a menu item of type FlexiContact on this new "Hidden" menu.
- Go to Module Manager and create a new module of type menu, select the hidden menu, and enable the module.
- Go to your site front end, where you should see the new menu somewhere. Click on the link to FlexiContact and make a note of the URL.

Now go back to Module Manager and disable the "Hidden" module. Now, this menu will never be shown on your site, but the URL that you saved remains valid. You can use this URL to create a link in an article.

Email Troubleshooting

There are many things that can go wrong with sending email from a web server. Google "php email not received" and you'll get millions of results - not very helpful, except to tell you that there is not much point sending us the same query. We don't know what your specific problem is any more than Google does. You need to investigate.

How Joomla Sends Email

All Joomla contact components call functions supplied by Joomla to send emails. So before you start trying to solve problems, it helps to understand a little about how Joomla sends email.

There are a number of relevant settings in Joomla Global Configuration, Server, Mail Settings, which tell Joomla how to interact with the email sending systems on your web server.

Joomla can use any one of three different mechanisms to send email. You only need to get one of these methods working.
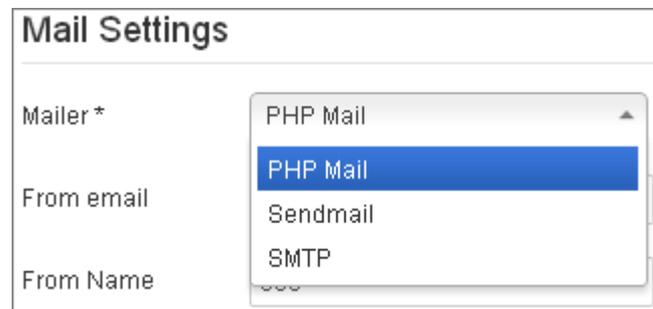
PHP Mail

This is the default option because on most servers, it just works without any further configuration. If your hosting provider has configured the server correctly, PHP Mail should just work, and this is the case on the vast majority of servers. All you have to do is provide a From email name and address. The other settings are not used for this option. Joomla uses this option simply by using the "mail" function of PHP.

Sendmail

Sendmail is the next easiest option. To use this option, Joomla must be able to find and execute the "sendmail" server command. Usually the server will have a pre-configured "path" to the sendmail command so you don't need to provide one, but if not, you will need to get the correct path from your hosting provider and enter it in the Joomla Mail Settings.

SMTP

SMTP is slightly more difficult to setup than the other two methods, but is often faster and more reliable than the other methods. Using SMTP avoids some bugs and problems introduced by recent versions of Joomla (see below).

Almost any server can send mail using an external SMTP server. You can even setup a server at home to send mail using a Gmail account. But you must get all of the settings exactly right or it won't work.

Try the Joomla Contacts Component

The first step in any investigation into email sending problems is to try the Joomla Contacts Component, which is automatically installed with Joomla.

The Joomla Contacts Component provides a definitive test of whether your Joomla installation is correctly setup to send email.

This is an absolutely vital step in any investigation into email sending problems, and is the most important item of information we will need if you intend to ask us for help about an email sending or delivery problem.

Problems After Upgrading to Joomla 3.2

Several people have reported that emails were no longer sent after they upgraded to Joomla 3.2. The following post should be very helpful if you experience similar problems:

> http://forum.joomla.org/viewtopic.php?f=706&t=825521

Email Sending Error Messages

Sometimes, an error message may be displayed on the screen after you click the Send button, Google the error. You should find some clues that will help you fix the problem.

Could Not Instantiate Mail Function

This error should only occur when Joomla is configured to use PHP Mail. This error occurs when the call to the PHP "mail" function fails.

You can either ask your hosting provider to fix this, or to try one of the other mail sending methods in Joomla Global Configuration.

Some versions of Joomla have a bug in this area. See this thread on the Joomla forums:

> http://forum.joomla.org/viewtopic.php?f=615&t=752981

A patch is given that you can try. Alternatively, it might be easier to try one of the other mail sending methods.

The Following From Address Failed

This error message usually means that the server refused to send the email because the from address is not a valid mailbox on the server. Some servers do not allow this. If you experience this error, you will have to enter a valid email address that exists on your server into the "From email address" in Joomla Global Configuration.

This error message can also occur when your email sending method is SMTP and an SMTP authentication failure occurs. Carefully check all of the SMTP authentication parameters against your hosting provider's documentation.

Email is Not Received

Getting email delivered is becoming more and more difficult due to spam control protocols. Your hosting provider has a hard job keeping up with the latest requirements, and some are doing a better job than others. If you are sure that your emails are being sent but not delivered, your hosting provider should help you, but there are a few things you can check first.

Check the "To" Address

Are you sure you are checking the email address that the mail was sent to? Check the *Email To* address in the FlexiContact menu item. Have you checked the Spam folder?

Check the "From" Address

If your emails are not being delivered, the first thing to try is to setup a valid address in the "From email address" in Joomla Global Configuration. Your emails have a much better chance of being delivered if the *From* address is from a domain registered on your web server.

Mail From and Mail To Should Not be the Same

Some servers won't send email if the from and to addresses are the same. To be safe, make sure you use two different addresses.

Reply-To Address is Ignored

You might experience this problem if you use Gmail. When you reply to a mail from your contact form, the reply comes straight back to you. It's very annoying!

If the *From* address is either the same as the *To* address, or is configured in your GMail Settings as one of the 'Send As...' accounts, Gmail replies to the *To* address instead of the *Reply-To* address. There has been some discussion about this problem here:

http://www.google.com/support/forum/p/gmail/thread?tid=74d00d5e2605242d&hl=en

The only solution is to specify a from address that is not related to your to address.

Emails Have Two Reply-To Addresses

This is caused by a bug in several recent versions of Joomla. The problem is fixed in Joomla 3.1, and there are tracker items to get this fixed in Joomla 2.5 and 3.0:

http://joomlacode.org/gf/project/joomla/tracker/?action=TrackerItemEdit&tracker_item_id=27177
http://joomlacode.org/gf/project/joomla/tracker/?action=TrackerItemEdit&tracker_item_id=29417

How to Report an Email Problem

If you contact us about an email delivery problem, please include the following information:

1. FlexiContact version
2. Joomla version
3. Which mailer are you using (PHP, Sendmail, SMTP)?
4. Does the problem occur with the Joomla Contacts Component, using the same from and to addresses?
5. The URL of the contact page with the problem.
6. The *exact text* of any error messages, preferably with a screenshot.

> **Unless you include all of this information, we will assume you have not yet found this section of the user guide and will ask you to work through this section before contacting us again.**

Other Troubleshooting

Captcha Images Don't Display Properly

Several users have reported this problem when using Rocketheme templates. The solution is to turn off 'smart load' in the features setting of the template manager.

Another problem can occur if you have enabled the System Cache Plugin. This is a standard Joomla plugin that can provide a good performance boost for sites that have fairly static content. This plugin is not very smart and will always serve content from the cache if the page is present and not expired. This prevents the component from serving the images. You cannot use this plugin if you use image captcha.

Deleting the Standard Captcha Images

If you use one of our Captcha image packs and you upgrade to a newer version of FlexiContact, you will not lose your image pack images, but the default images will be re-installed as well. To delete them, in the back end go to Configuration, Captcha Images, select "Standard" from the dropdown list, click the checkbox to the left of the dropdown list to select all of them, and then click the Delete toolbar button.

SH404SEF

A user contributed this solution to using SH404SEF with FlexiContact:

1.) Lookup the Flexicontact URL and ID in the Joomla menu manager. My URL was "index.php?option=com_flexicontact"

2.) Open the SH404SEF URL manager and create a new URL. Enter your desired SEF URL and then for the non-SEF URL rewrite the URL from step #1 to include the ID number (index.php?option=com_flexicontact&Itemid=XXX) where XXX is the ID number. Save. (Note that SH404SEF will rewrite the non-SEF URL to include the language "index.php?option=com_flexicontact&Itemid=188&lang=en")"

JoomSEF

Please see this thread:

http://www.artio.net/support-forums/joomsef/joomsef-paying-users/flexi-contact-problem

How to Change Text and Prompts

If you need to change any of the text or prompts used by FlexiContact, just change the language file for your language. See the Language Support section for details.

Language Translation Problems

FlexiContact comes with numerous language translations contributed by users. The full list is on our website. In order for a language file to be installed, the Joomla language pack for your language must be installed **before** FlexiContact is installed. When a Joomla language pack is installed, two directories are created to contain the translation files. For example:

    <site>/language/nl-NL
    <site>/administrator/language/nl-NL

The first directory contains the translations used by the front end, and the second contains the translations used by the back end. The Joomla extension installer **only** installs language files into the language directories that already exist when the extension is installed.

If you create or update language files, please send them to us so that we can include them in the next release of FlexiContact.

Help and Support

You can help us! If you use FlexiContact, please post a rating and a review at the Joomla Extensions Directory:

http://extensions.joomla.org/extensions/contacts-and-feedback/contact-forms/9743

FlexiContact is a free product. It is also extremely well tried, tested, and stable.

Unfortunately, over the years, the volume of support requests became a real problem for us. After responding to many hundreds of requests for help and advice, while receiving perhaps a dozen or so donations, it became clear that something had to change. Our current position is that we do not support FlexiContact unless you are an experienced Joomla user and you have encountered a real bug or problem that requires our attention. That is, of course, difficult to know, but we hope you understand.

If you are an experienced Joomla user and you see a bug or a problem that we need to be aware of, please contact us with as much detail as you can. We will deal with the problem very quickly.

If you are a Joomla newbie and need help with customisation or styling, we are sorry but we cannot help you. You may suggest enhancements to this user guide that would be helpful for all Joomla users, but please do not ask for personal support.

To use the contact form on our website, the magic word is: Contact

http://extensions.lesarbresdesign.info/contact-us

You can find a detailed version history for FlexiContact, and check whether you have the latest version, here:

http://extensions.lesarbresdesign.info/version-history/flexicontact