



FELINE - FELINX! - Pointers - Purrfect - Calendars

Guide for Users of the Service

Version 1.2 - February 2004

This guide draws together information from the various web page "help screens" in FELINE and FELINX and adds more besides. Its aim is to help you get the best from the service.

Overview

FELINE and **FELINX** provide a steady stream of new, interesting (and often topical) material, in a "ready to use" form. Typically, 20+ items are added each week during term times - over 750 new items each year. As new material is added, older material is (mostly) removed, so there are always about 200-250 recent items available.

To get the best out of the service, please use it regularly!

FELINE is a weekly service, providing printable material complete with appropriate exercises (and answers). There are quotations from authentic news sources, on topics currently in the news. There is a choice of items every week, graded for different levels, in French, German, and Spanish. As long as you have access to a single computer connected to the Internet, and can use it once a week for a few minutes, you can make full use of this part of the service.

FELINX sections are usually updated three times per week. They provide exercises / exploitation for real Web pages in French, German and Spanish. The source page and exercises can be displayed on the screen together, and in most cases the exercises can be completed on-screen. After completion, the 'Show Answers' button can be pressed, to display your work against the correct/model answers. This can be printed out as a permanent record of the work done (as can the source page, if you wish).

Although we are based in England, modlangs.co.uk is widely used throughout the UK, reflecting the fact that we endeavour to make our output relevant in Scotland, Wales and N Ireland as well as in England.

Using FELINE in the classroom

The **FELINE** sections - Dernières Nouvelles, Aktuelle Nachrichten and Noticias - are designed to be used away from the computer. You can connect to the service and print out some items in a minute or two (provided you have reasonable access to the Web). You can make neat printouts of any sheet, either with or without the answers to the exercises. Choose which version(s) you want, and make as many copies as you need for your class(es).

We try to make most of these fit on a single sheet of A4: if they run over, usually it's only the web navigation (rather than a vital part of the worksheet) which runs onto the second sheet.

A **FELINE** sheet is the basis for a lesson - a recent news headline in the target country. It can save you preparation time, or be a handy resource when you need someone to cover a class.

Use it with a whole group or as differentiated worksheets allowing students to work at their own pace, individually or in small groups. Divide your class into groups and use it to encourage interchange of ideas and expression of opinions.

With some students, you could set them the task of downloading their own copies and completing them as homework. The work can be checked in class or students can check their own work by getting the answers from the site.

Using FELINX in the classroom

To use **FELINX** in a lesson, you really need to be in a room with a good number of computers connected to the Internet.

FELINX is designed to be used at the computer, displaying the original authentic French/German/Spanish web page on the screen alongside the **FELINX** exercise. Students can complete the exercise on screen and then print out their work. (Note that after the *Show Answers* button is pressed, an extra box appears at the top of the Exercises panel for the student to type their name. This is so that you can tell which sheet belongs to whom, when they are all being printed on the same printer.)

It's best to have the computers set up with the highest screen resolution available (see technical note 1, below), so that there is as much room as possible to display the source page and exercises alongside each other. If any parts are obscured, students can use the scroll bars to adjust the screen. It is also possible to "grab" the grey vertical dividing bar with the mouse, and drag it to the left or right, to give one of the panels more display room.

Because **FELINX** is complete in itself, it is also ideal for independent learning: using it in this way may also ease the pressure on computer resources.

Technical notes:

- 1. Whilst 800 x 600 pixel resolution is OK, the majority of computers are capable of higher resolution, which helps greatly in getting both the full source page and the exercises on the screen at once. If you are uncertain about the screen displays you have available, ask your local ICT support person to check it for you!*
- 2. The use of annoying pop-up windows on useful source sites is increasing - we recommend that you disable popups, either from your browser or using a separate program. Your local ICT support person will be able to do this for you.*

Other notes about FELINE and FELINX

Both **FELINE** and **FELINX** include answers - you can display them by clicking on the appropriate button at the bottom of each page.

To find **FELINX**, choose French, German, or Spanish from the MODLANGS front page, and then choose **FELINX** by clicking on the **FELINX** icon (to the right of the page). When you enter **FELINX**...

- ◆ Choose an item from the menu in the left-hand panel, by clicking on one of the item titles.
- ◆ This displays the exercises: to get the source page, click on the *Display Source Text>>>* link. (Normally the source appears in the panel, but occasionally, for technical reasons, we have to make it appear in a separate window. If this happens, resize the browser windows so they're convenient for working.)

At the bottom of the **FELINX** item menus, you will find a Cat Basket. (The top bar also provides a link to it.) The Cat Basket is used to retain a few selected feature items on a permanent basis (or at least, until the source page is no longer available). If you have a **FELINX** feature you'd like us to put in the basket, please let us know, and we'll include it if possible.

How FELINE/FELINX material is graded

We use a simple 3 level system in **FELINE** - 1,2,3. Level 1 is the lowest, and 3 the highest. In **FELINX**, we add an additional level B, below Level 1.

Please note that these levels do *not* refer to English Key Stages.

Sometimes, in **FELINX**, you will see a 'V' appended to a level number. This is to indicate a particular suitability for vocational classes.

In terms of courses and examinations, the levels correspond to...

- ◆ B - Beginners
- ◆ Level 1 - Pre - GCSE, Standard grade, NVQ Level 2 and similar qualifications.
- ◆ Level 2 - GCSE, Standard grade, NVQ Level 2 and similar qualifications.
- ◆ Level 3 - A and AS Level, Higher, NVQ Level 3 and similar qualifications.

Depending on the class concerned, you may find it useful and helpful to dip into material in adjacent levels from time to time. Also, please note that there is a slight trend for levels of difficulty to increase during the year, reflecting the progression of students through typical school courses.

Upload schedules for new materials

FELINE provides a new item in each language and at each level, each week.

FELINX provides a selection of items (typically 4) in each language, each week.

FELINE materials are loaded on Tuesday nights (late, for Wednesday mornings). **FELINX** materials typically load on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday nights. The service updates for 36 weeks per year, between September and the beginning of July.

Other uses/benefits of FELINE and FELINX

Monitoring the students' progress: You could set a short assessment every few weeks based on a **FELINE** (or **FELINX**) news item. This will help to reinforce the acquisition of contemporary vocabulary whilst keeping students abreast of cultural and political developments in the country concerned.

Revision: **FELINE** / **FELINX**'s continual stream of new material makes it an invaluable asset at revision time!

Developing key skills: Regular access to **FELINE** and **FELINX** will bolster confidence and develop the ICT skills required for independent use of the Internet. It can also provide evidence for the students key skills portfolios.

Professional development: **FELINE** (in particular) and **FELINX** are easy to use and offer a gentle introduction to the use of ICT in the language classroom. The more experienced teacher will find it a real timesaver allowing him or her to devote more time to other aspects of the curriculum - this service makes the benefits of using ICT obvious (for a change!) It is also a valuable tool for language teachers who wish to keep their language skills updated.

About Pointers

Pointers is a selection of useful sites which our authors have found and used. They are not lists of 'useful organisations' or lists of sites which *ought* to be useful (but aren't) - they are lists of sites they have selected for use in a classroom context. More than simply listing the sites, our authors provide commentary and advice about what the site is suitable for.

About the 'PURRFECT' sections

The PURRFECT sections gather together FELINE and FELINX material and arrange it by topic. The main aim is to help teachers and pupils at AS level, but it will be useful for A level and Higher Grade as well.

About the Calendar sections

These sections are a companion to Pointers. They provide information about and links to websites covering national festivals, special days and holidays. Our aim is to provide a useful 'background' resource which can be used at appropriate times of the year, to stimulate interest in this aspect of national culture and history.

Technical problems?

Printouts won't fit on the paper

Often, you can squeeze things on by adjusting the page margins in your Web Browser program. From the *File* menu of your browser, choose *Page Setup*. Look at the top/bottom/left/right margins. These are often quite a bit bigger than they need to be. Try reducing them to the smallest size that your printer can cope with. (If you use the Netscape browser, you can use the *Print Preview* facility for this. If - as is becoming more and more common - you use the Microsoft Internet Explorer browser, you'll just have to try a couple of printouts, until the settings are optimal.)

Printing the right part of the screen is a problem in FELINX

Click in the frame you want to print. If you are using Microsoft Internet Explorer, use your "opposite" mouse button - you will get a pop-up menu. From this, you can select the *Print* option. If you are using another browser and this doesn't work, look for a *Print Frame* option on the *File* menu.

Source pages don't appear in FELINX

Source pages come from Web servers all round the world (but largely France, Germany, and Spain). They are not stored on the modlangs.co.uk Web server. If you have problems getting source pages to appear sometimes, this will have one of two causes.

1. If it happens very rarely, it could be because the computer on which the source page resides is having some difficulty. There's not much that can be done about this, unfortunately: it does happen occasionally. Sometimes the page returns when the server recovers. Or it may be that the page has simply been removed from the server, and that you have noticed before we have! If you think this is the case, please tell us so we can remove the item from **FELINX**. (We trawl **FELINX** from time to time and check all links.)
2. If it happens more frequently, it is likely that something on your access route to the Web is blocking the page. This could be your establishment's or LEA's "proxy server".

Proxy servers can be used to restrict Web access, and there are valid reasons for doing this in a school or college, of course. But sometimes proxy servers are set up in draconian fashion, and they can be a bit heavy handed in what they restrict. The great majority of our pages come from sites which the person managing your proxy server should have no technical difficulty in including. The best thing is to ask them. If you want to refer them to us, we'll be happy to talk to them about the issues.

Answer boxes don't appear in FELINX

FELINE and **FELINX** both use a programming language called Javascript to make some features work. This is very common on websites, it is one of the most safe and secure programming tools web designers can use. Normally, web browsers are set up with Javascript enabled and there isn't a problem. However, if someone has "turned Javascript off" in your browser... there will be no answer boxes. (**FELINX** should warn you of this when you visit it.)

To fix the problem, you need to adjust your browser's settings. How you do this varies from browser to browser. For example in Microsoft Internet Explorer 5, you could choose *Internet Options* from the *Tools* menu, click on the *Security* tab, check 'Internet zone' is selected, and then click on the *Custom Level* button. Scroll well down the list, to 'Scripting', and click the radio button so that 'Active Scripting' is enabled.

Any other problems

Any other difficulties are almost bound to be something to do with your access route to the Web, but it is difficult to generalise on solutions. If something isn't working as you think it should, we'll be happy to help you or your local ICT support person in any way we can.

How to contact us

The best way to contact us is via the Feedback Form on www.modlangs.co.uk

Concluding note

This brief guide was created in response to a user request for a printable alternative to the existing 'help pages' on the website.

We hope you find it useful, and that it helps you get the best out of MODLANGS. If you have any suggestions for extra things to include, please let us know.

Meanwhile, use **FELINE** and **FELINX**. Regularly!

MCB 4/12/00 - 20/02/04