

# As or like

## Introduction



He works **as** a chef in a big hotel, just **like** his father.

## Definition

'As' and 'like' are both prepositions and conjunctions.

## Uses

### As

| Use                                     | Examples   |
|---|--|
| Comparisons                             | January is <b>as</b> cold <b>as</b> February.<br>The ocean in Florida is <b>as</b> warm <b>as</b> a swimming pool.<br>[See <b>Comparative adjectives</b> ] |
| Presented as something/<br>someone else | All the children at the party were dressed <b>as</b> cowboys.<br>The spy camera was disguised <b>as</b> a book.  |
| To talk about a job or a function       | He works <b>as</b> an ecologist in the Tundra.<br>I had to use a knife <b>as</b> a screwdriver because I had no tools with me.                             |
| In the role of...                       | <b>As</b> your friend, I advise you not to take that job.<br>Dr Mugwort was speaking <b>as</b> an expert on the subject.                                   |
| In the same way or manner               | John was late for the meeting, <b>as</b> usual.<br>The letter 'K' before 'N', <b>as</b> in 'knife, isn't pronounced.                                       |
| To state a reason                       | <b>As</b> I didn't attend the meeting, I asked Susan to give me the minutes.<br>Mr Masomoto will need a translator <b>as</b> he doesn't speak English.     |

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <b>To mean 'while'</b>    | <p>He was painting the walls <b>as</b> I was sanding the door.</p> <p>He became more confident <b>as</b> he learned more about the job.</p>   |
| <b>To mean 'although'</b> | <p>Try <b>as</b> she might, she couldn't convince him to change his working practice. [although she tried hard]</p> <p>Confident <b>as</b> he was, he didn't manage to secure the contract. [although he was confident]</p> |

## Like

| Use  | Examples  |
|--|---|
| <b>Physical similarity</b>                 | <p>She looks <b>like</b> her mother.</p> <p>This cocktail tastes <b>like</b> tropical fruit.</p>  |
| <b>In a certain way</b>                    | <p>Jonathon swims <b>like</b> a fish.</p> <p>Why are you looking at me <b>like</b> that?</p>  |
| <b>To say something is normal or usual</b> | <p>It's just <b>like</b> John to be late for the presentation.</p> <p>That was so <b>like</b> her, telling everyone about it before the contract was signed</p>                   |
| <b>To mean 'for example'</b>               | <p>I prefer more classical music <b>like</b> Beethoven or Tchaikovsky.</p> <p>Arabian customers prefer natural fibres <b>like</b> silk or wool.</p>                               |
| <b>Similar to, or in a similar way</b>     | <p><b>Like</b> your friend Susan, I also think that you shouldn't take that job.</p> <p>He found getting a job in the city was very difficult, <b>like</b> many young people.</p> |

## Both 'as' and 'like'

| Use                            | Examples  |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>To mean 'in the manner'</b> | <p><b>Like/as</b> I said, you can always phone me if you need some advice.</p> <p>The meeting with the Swedish didn't go <b>like/as</b> he'd planned.</p> |

## Some verbs typically followed by 'as' or 'like'

| Verbs followed by 'like' |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Feel</b>              | <p>Your team feel <b>like</b> you don't appreciate them if you don't give them praise when it's due.</p> |

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| <b>Look</b>  | If looks <b>like</b> it's going to rain again.                               |
| <b>Seem</b>  | You don't seem <b>like</b> yourself today, are you feeling OK?               |
| <b>Sound</b> | I hear Joe and Peter talking in the hall it sounded <b>like</b> an argument. |
| <b>Smell</b> | The house smelt <b>like</b> someone had been baking bread.                   |
| <b>Taste</b> | Amy's shortbread tasted <b>like</b> strawberries.                            |

| Verbs followed by object + 'as' |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Accept</b>                   | The department found it difficult to accept Mark <b>as</b> their new manager.            |
| <b>Characterise</b>             | John characterised the move to a bigger building <b>as</b> the company's turning point.  |
| <b>Class</b>                    | I'd class this wine <b>as</b> a Grand Cru.   |
| <b>Count</b>                    | Bank holidays aren't counted <b>as</b> annual leave.                                     |
| <b>Define</b>                   | Our intranet can be defined <b>as</b> a private network which uses the world wide web.   |
| <b>Describe</b>                 | The journalist described the scene <b>as</b> one of the worst of the current conflict.   |
| <b>Express</b>                  | Can you express 33 <b>as</b> a percentage of 150?  |
| <b>Interpret</b>                | James interpreted his colleagues silence <b>as</b> shyness.                              |
| <b>Know</b>                     | Paris is known <b>as</b> the most romantic city in the world.                            |
| <b>Look on</b>                  | Today we look on a refrigerator <b>as</b> essential in our homes.                        |
| <b>Use</b>                      | Don't use a knife <b>as</b> a screwdriver.   |
| <b>Regard</b>                   | To be regarded <b>as</b> serious applicant your CV must be perfect.                      |
| <b>Refer</b>                    | The author referred to several academics <b>as</b> the source of his information.        |
| <b>Recognise</b>                | He was recognised <b>as</b> one of the greatest artists of the period.                   |
| <b>See</b>                      | Learning a new language is seen by many <b>as</b> vital in this period of globalisation. |
| <b>Treat</b>                    | Lydia treated her new husband's children <b>as</b> her own.                              |
| <b>Think of</b>                 | In western countries we think of clean water <b>as</b> a basic human right.              |

## Using 'like' as a conjunction

Some people and older grammar books state that it is incorrect to use 'like' as a conjunction but it has been common in everyday, informal situations for a long time. Both of these are correct:

Our new Sodasport is light, and refreshes **like** a sports drink should.  
 Our new Sodasport is light, and refreshes **as** a sports drink should.

## 'As if' and 'as though'

These are conjunctions which we use to make comparisons. They have the same meaning and are used to talk about situations that are imaginary, possible or likely. They are often used with verbs like 'look', 'feel', 'sound', 'seem' etc.

The meeting was so boring - it felt **as if** it would never end.  
It looks **as though** we'll have to work late again tonight.  
It sounds **as if** it's raining out there.  
I don't know why she isn't speaking to me; it's not **as though** I've done anything wrong.

In the examples above, we can also use 'like', although this is considered conversational and is best avoided in formal contexts.

We can also use these before an infinitive or a prepositional phrase. In these kinds of sentences, we can't use 'like':

He looked at me across the table **as if to say**, 'Please don't disagree with the client!'  
I was embarrassed by them. They were behaving **as though at school**.

## Choosing between 'as' and 'like'

### Meaning

In the tables above you can see that sometimes the choice of word changes the meaning.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| He works <b>as</b> an ecologist.                                | [This is his job.]   |
| He works <b>like</b> an ecologist does.                         | [His job is similar to that of an ecologist.]                          |
| <b>As</b> your mother, I promise I'll always be here for you.   | [The speaker is the listener's mother.]                                |
| <b>Like</b> your mother, I promise I'll always be here for you. | [The speaker is making the same promise as the listener's mother did.] |

### Formality

If both words have the same meaning, then consider the formality. 'As' is sometimes more formal than 'like'.

It was **as though** she wanted to lose the debate.  
It was **like** she wanted to lose the debate. [informal, conversational]

## Idioms and expressions with 'as' and 'like'

This isn't my ideal job but I might/may as well stay here till I find something better.  
[easiest or most logical action]

She loves her new dog; it's her baby, as it were. [the speaker gives their impression]

My office needs to be totally redecorated and as for the air conditioning, I need to call in a technician. [to introduce someone or something into a conversation]

He works like a dog to earn enough money for his studies. [works really hard]

What is she like? She's put her socks in the fridge again! [Informal, conversational in British English when someone does something annoying, silly etc.]

John said the car was worth \$20,000; more like \$2,000 with all the bumps he's had.  
[giving more accurate information]

There's nothing like a Sodasport after a good workout. [to praise something]

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