

like and as: similarity, function

We can use *like* or *as* to say that things are similar. We can also use *as* to talk about function – the jobs that people or things do.

1. *like* (similarity): *like me*

Like can be a preposition. We use *like*, not *as*, before a noun or pronoun to talk about similarity.

like + noun/pronoun

My sister looks like me. (NOT ...~~as me.~~)

He ran like the wind. (NOT ...~~as the wind.~~)

Like his parents, he is a vegetarian.

We can use *very*, *quite* and other adverbs of degree before *like*.

He's very like his father.

She looks a bit like Queen Victoria.

We can use *like* to give examples.

She's good at scientific subjects, like mathematics. (NOT ...~~as mathematics.~~)

In mountainous countries, like Peru, ...

2. *as* (similarity): *as I do*

As is a conjunction. We use it before a clause, and before an expression beginning with a preposition.

as + clause

as + prepositional clause

Nobody knows her as I do.

We often drink tea with the meal, as they do in China.

In 1939, as in 1914, everybody seemed to want war.

On Friday, as on Tuesday, the meeting will be at 8.30.

3. *like I do* (informal)

In modern English, *like* is often used as a conjunction instead of *as*. This is most common in an informal style.

Nobody loves you like I do.

You look exactly like your mother did when she was 20.

4. inverted word order: *as did all his family*

In a very formal style, *as* is sometimes followed by **auxiliary verb + subject** (note the inverted word order)

She was a Catholic, as were most of her friends.

He believed, as did all his family, that the king was their supreme lord.

5. *as you know etc*

Some expressions beginning with *as* are used to introduce facts which are 'common ground' – known to both speaker/writer and listener/reader.

Examples are *as you know, as we agreed, as you suggested.*

As you know, next Tuesday's meeting has been cancelled.

I am sending you the bill for the repairs, as we agreed.

There are some passive expressions of this kind – for example, *as is well known, as was agreed.* Note that there is no subject it after *as* in these expressions.

As is well known, more people get colds in wet weather. (NOT ~~*As it is well known...*~~)

I am sending you the bill, as was agreed. (NOT ... ~~*as it was agreed*~~)

6. *comparison with as and like after negatives*

After a negative clause, a comparison with *as* or *like* usually refers only to the positive part of what comes before.

I don't smoke, like Jane. (Jane smokes.)

I am not a Conservative, like Joe. (Joe is a conservative.)

Before a negative clause, the comparison refers to the whole clause.

Like Mary, I don't smoke. (Mary doesn't smoke.)

Like Bill, I am not a Conservative. (Bill is not a Conservative.)

7. *function or role: He worked as a waiter*

Another use of *as* is to say what function or role a person or thing has – what jobs people do, what purposes things are used for, what category they belong to, etc. In this case, *as* is a preposition, used before a noun.

He worked as a waiter for two years. (NOT ... ~~*like a waiter*~~)

Please don't use that knife as a screwdriver.

A crocodile starts life as an egg.

Compare this use of *as* with *like*.

As your brother, I must warn you to be careful. (I am your brother.)

Like your brother, I must warn you to be careful. (I am not your brother, but he and I have similar attitudes.)