AS / LIKE / AS IF / AS THOUGH

**As**  
As is a preposition or a conjunction.

As a preposition:

**We use as with a noun to refer to the role or purpose of a person or thing:**

- I worked as a waiter when I was a student. Most of us did.
- The Daily Telegraph appointed Trevor Grove as its Sunday editor.
- Internet shopping is seen as a cheaper alternative to shopping on the high street.
- A sarong is essential holiday gear. It can be used as a beach towel, wrap, dress or scarf and will take up no space in your bag.

**Warning:**

**We don’t use as + noun to mean ‘similar to’. We use like + noun:**

- It’s almost like a real beach, but it’s actually artificial.
- I would like to have a white cat like the one in my dream.

As a conjunction:

The conjunction as has several different meanings. We use as when one event happens while another is in progress (‘during the time that’). In this case the verb after is often in the continuous form:

- They arrived as we were leaving. (time conjunction meaning ‘while’ or ‘when’)

**We use as to connect a result with a cause:**

- I went to bed at 9 pm as I had a plane to catch at 6 am. (meaning ‘because’)

**We also use as to mean ‘in the way that’:**

- As the forecast predicted, the weather was dreadful for the whole of the weekend.
- She arrived early, as I expected.

The same as: we use as with the same to talk about identical things:

- Your jacket is the same colour as mine.

As: simultaneous changes

**We use as to introduce two events happening at the same time. After as with this meaning, we usually use a simple (rather than continuous) form of the verb:**

- As the show increases in popularity, more and more tickets are sold daily.

**Compare**

When you get older, moving house gets harder.  
As you get older, moving house gets harder.

One thing happens first and as a result the second thing is true.

The two things happen at the same time.

**Warning:**

**We don’t use as alone to introduce examples. We say such as:**

- They gave them gifts such as flowers and fruit and sang a special welcome song.
LIKE

Like as a preposition (meaning ‘similar to’)

Like means ‘similar to’. We often use it with verbs of the senses such as look, sound, feel, taste, seem:

- My sister is like my mother. (My sister and my mother are similar)
- I think this tastes like coconut.
- That looks like Marco’s car.
- He seems like a nice man.

When we use like to mean ‘similar to’, we can put words and phrase such as a bit, just, very, so and more before it to talk about the degree of similarity:

- It's a bit like skiing but there’s no snow.
- Isn’t that just like the bike we bought you for your birthday?
- That smells very like garlic.
- The car was more like a green than a blue colour.

Like as a conjunction

In informal contexts, we can use like as a conjunction instead of as. Traditional grammar books consider this use of like incorrect:

- Like any good cook book will tell you, don’t let the milk boil. (or As any good cook book …)

AS or LIKE?

As + noun means ‘in the role of’, like + noun means ‘similar to’ or ‘in the same way as’.

Compare

As your father, I’ll help you as much as I can. The speaker is the listener’s father.

Like your father, I’ll help you as much as I can. The speaker is not the father but wishes to act in a similar way to the father.

We use like (but not as) to compare two things:

- She’s got a headache like me.
- Like the other students, he finds it a bit difficult to get to lectures early in the morning.

When we compare appearance or behaviour, we use like, not as:

- That house looks like a castle.

As is commonly used to talk about jobs:

- He worked for a long time as a teacher in Africa.

The conjunctions as and like have the same meaning when used in comparisons. Like is a little more informal.

- Nobody understands him as I do. / Nobody understands him like I do.
AS / LIKE / AS IF / AS THOUGH

AS IF AND AS THOUGH

As if and as though are conjunctions. We use them to make comparisons. They have a similar meaning. We use as if and as though to talk about an imaginary situation or a situation that may not be true but that is likely or possible.

- The floods were rising and it was as if it was the end of the world.
- It looks as if they’ve had a shock. (It looks like they’ve had a shock → common in oral English, but incorrect in written British English.
- It looks as though you’ve not met before.

We can use both as if and as though followed by a non-finite clause or a prepositional phrase:

- She moved her lips as if to smile.
- They were shouting as though in panic.

As if and as though commonly follow the verbs feel and look:

- She felt as if all her worries had gone.
- They felt as though they had been given the wrong information.
- I’ve got so much work it looks as if I’ll have to stay at home this evening.

In informal English, like can be used in a similar way to as if, though it is not always considered correct in formal contexts:

- It felt like it could snow at any minute.

Source: http://dictionary.cambridge.org/

EXERCISE:

Now complete the following sentences with AS, LIKE or AS IF. Sometimes more than one option is possible.

1. It looked _________ it could rain any minute.
2. _________ the children got older, they learnt to handle their mother.
3. He got a degree in teaching, but he’s working _________ a waiter at the moment.
4. It was _________ being on holiday, but at work.
5. It started to rain, so we had to use our coats _________ umbrellas.
6. After all those years it still felt _________ she didn’t know him at all.
7. He opened his mouth _________ to speak.
8. The board elected Mr Reily _________ their spokesman.
9. Mobile phones can be seen _________ a useful tool in schools these days.
10. What’s in this soup? It smells _________ chicken but it tastes _________ fish!
11. _________ we were approaching the hut, we spotted them sitting in the porch.
12. I thought this was my jacket! It has exactly the same colour _________ mine!
13. _________ you might be able to understand, we can’t deal with all the applications at the same time.
14. We found many things in the box, _________ coins and stamps.
15. _________ you can see, we’re approaching the city walls which date from the 9th c.
16. She raised her hands _________ she wanted to stop us.
17. Nobody understands my feelings _________ he does.
18. I never understand what my teacher says, just _________ everybody else!
19. _________ your teacher, I really recommend you to read a bit every day.
20. _________ Catherine said earlier, there’s a new project to discuss today.