

As if, as though, and like

A

You can use **as if** to say how somebody or something looks/sounds/feels, etc.:

- That house looks **as if** it's going to fall down.
- Ann sounded **as if** she had a cold, didn't she?
- I've just come back from vacation, but I feel tired and depressed. I don't feel **as if** I've just had a vacation.

Compare:

- You look **tired**. (*look + adjective*)
- You look **as if you didn't sleep last night**. (*look + as if + subject + verb*)

You can use **as though** or **like** instead of **as if**:

- Ann sounded **as though** she had a cold. *or* Ann sounded **like** she had a cold.

B

You can also say:

It $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{looks} \\ \text{sounds} \\ \text{smells} \end{array} \right\} + \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{like} \dots \\ \text{as if} \dots \\ \text{as though} \dots \end{array} \right.$

- Sandra is very late, isn't she? **It looks like** she isn't coming.
- We took an umbrella with us because **it looked as if** it was going to rain.
- Do you hear that music next door? **It sounds like** they're having a party.
- **It smells as though** someone has been smoking in here.

It sounds like they're having a party next door.



C

You can use **like / as if / as though** with other verbs to say how somebody does something:

- He ran **like** he was running for his life.
- After the interruption, the speaker went on talking **as if** nothing had happened.
- When I told them my plan, they looked at me **as though** I was crazy.

D

After **as if** we sometimes use the past when we are talking about the present. For example:

- I don't like Norma. She talks **as if** she knew everything.

The meaning is not past in this sentence. We use the past (**as if she knew**) because the idea is *not real*: Norma does *not* know everything. We use the past in the same way with **if** and **wish** (see Unit 36).

Some more examples:

- She's always asking me to do things for her – **as if** I didn't have enough to do. (I do have enough to do.)
- Harry's only 40. Why do you talk about him **as if** he was an old man? (He isn't an old man.)

When you use the past in this way, you can use **were** instead of **was**:

- Why do you talk about him **as if** he were (*or was*) an old man?
- They treat me **as if** I were (*or was*) their own son. (I'm not their son.)

Like and **as though** are not usually used in this type of sentence.

Exercises

114.1 Choose from the box to complete the sentences. Use *as if* or *like*.

he hadn't eaten for a week	she was enjoying it	she had hurt her leg
he meant what he was saying	he needs a good rest	she didn't want to come

1. Mark looks very tired. He looks as if he needs a good rest.
2. Sue was having trouble walking. She looked _____.
3. I don't think he was joking. He looked _____.
4. Peter was extremely hungry and ate his dinner very quickly.
He ate _____.
5. Carol had a bored expression on her face during the concert.
She didn't look _____.
6. I called Ellen and invited her to the party, but she wasn't very enthusiastic about it.
She sounded _____.

114.2 What do you say in these situations? Use *You look / You sound / I feel + as if . . .*
Use the words in parentheses to make your sentence.

1. You meet Bill. He has a black eye and some bandages on his face.
You say to him: You look as if you've been in a fight. (be / a fight)
2. Christine comes into the room. She looks absolutely terrified. You say to her:
What's the matter? You _____ (see / a ghost)
3. Sarah is talking to you on the phone about her new job and she sounds very happy
about it. You say to her: _____ (enjoy / it)
4. You have just run one mile. You are absolutely exhausted.
You say to a friend: I _____ (run / a marathon)

114.3 Make sentences beginning *It looks like . . . / It sounds like . . .*

you had a good time	there's been an accident	they're having an argument
it's going to rain	she isn't coming	we'll have to walk

1. Sandra said she would be here an hour ago. You say: It looks like she isn't coming.
2. The sky is full of black clouds.
You say: It _____.
3. You hear two people shouting at each other next door.
You say: _____.
4. You see an ambulance, some police officers, and two damaged cars on the side of the road.
You say: _____.
5. You and a friend have just missed the last bus home.
You say: _____.
6. Sue and Dave have just been telling you about all the interesting things they did while
they were on vacation.
You say: _____.

114.4 These sentences are like the ones in Section D. Complete each sentence using *as if*.

1. Brian is a terrible driver. He drives as if he were _____ the only driver on the road.
2. I'm 20 years old, so please don't talk to me _____ a child.
3. Steve has only met Maria once, but he talks about her _____
a close friend.
4. It was a long time ago that we first met, but I remember it _____
yesterday.