

4 Combined comparison

To describe how a change in one thing causes a change in another, we can use two comparative forms with *the*. Note the use of the comma after the first clause:

The longer you leave it, the worse it'll get.

We sometimes omit the verb *be* in the clauses:

The more sophisticated the product, the more substantial the potential profit.

5 Contrastive comparison

When we contrast two related qualities, we always use *more* (not *-er*):

✗ *I'm sadder than disappointed.* ✓ *I'm more sad than disappointed.*

✓ *Her eyes are more green than grey.*

We can also use *not so much ... as* or *rather than*:

I'm not so much disappointed as sad. Her eyes are green rather than grey.

6 like and as; similes and metaphors

We often describe something by comparing it to something else which has similar qualities. These comparisons are known as 'similes'. There are two forms:

- *as + adjective + as*: *Listening to her was as interesting as watching paint dry.*

(In informal English we sometimes omit the first *as*: *She looks white as a sheet.*)

- *like + noun or verb phrase*: *The cruise ship was like a skyscraper lying on its side.*

There are many idioms in which we use these two patterns:

You're as white as a sheet; I think you'd better see a doctor.

I feel full of energy today – I slept like a log last night.



We use *like* (not *as*) before a noun to compare two things which SEEM similar:

✗ *Although they looked as an innocent young couple, they were ruthless criminals.*

✓ *Although they looked like an innocent young couple, they were ruthless criminals.*

(They appeared to be innocent, but they weren't.)

When Mike puts on his dark suit he looks like a waiter. (= He resembles a waiter.)

Sometimes my boss acts like a dictator. (= He behaves in a similar way to a dictator.)

This fabric is so soft it feels like silk. (= similar to silk)



We use *as* (not *like*) before a noun when we are describing someone's actual job, role or identity, or something's function:

✗ *Simon's working like a waiter during the summer vacation.*

✓ *Simon's working as a waiter during the summer vacation.* (This is his job.)

Use your payroll number as a password for the computer. (This is its function.)

Jude Law appeared as Hamlet in a recent production of the play. (This was his role.)

The SAT tests are used as an entry test by many American universities. (This is their function.)

We can also describe something by comparing it with something similar without using *like* or *as*; this is known as a 'metaphor':

The new treaty will form a bridge between our two nations. (*a bridge* = metaphor for 'a link')

Metaphors are common in poetry and literary English:

I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed! (*thorns of life* = bad experiences)

7 as and such

We can use *as* and *not such* to introduce a comparison with nouns. There are two patterns:

- *as + adjective + a + noun + as*:

It wasn't as bad a result as I'd expected. (= better than expected)

- *not such a + adjective + noun + as*:

It wasn't such a bad result as I'd expected.

so dark/such a dark night that ... not light enough to, etc. ► Unit 59.4