

SQL LIKE Operator

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The SQL LIKE Operator

The **LIKE** operator is used in a **WHERE** clause to search for a specified pattern in a column.

There are **two wildcards** often used in conjunction with the **LIKE** operator:

- The **percent sign %** represents **zero, one, or multiple** characters
- The **underscore sign _** represents **one, single** character

You will learn more about wildcards in the next chapter.

Example

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Select all customers that starts with the letter "a":

```
SELECT * FROM Customers
WHERE CustomerName LIKE 'a%';
```

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Syntax

```
SELECT column1, column2, ...
FROM table_name
WHERE columnN LIKE pattern;
```

Demo Database

Below is a selection from the **Customers** table used in the examples:

CustomerID	CustomerName	ContactName	Address	City	PostalCode	Country
1	Alfreds Futterkiste	Maria Anders	Obere Str. 57	Berlin	12209	Germany
2	Ana Trujillo Emparedados y helados	Ana Trujillo	Avda. de la Constitución 2222	México D.F.	05021	Mexico
3	Antonio Moreno Taquería	Antonio Moreno	Mataderos 2312	México D.F.	05023	Mexico
4	Around the Horn	Thomas Hardy	120 Hanover Sq.	London	WA1 1DP	UK
5	Berglunds snabbköp	Christina Berglund	Berguvsvägen 8	Luleå	S-958 22	Sweden

The Wildcard

The  wildcard represents a single character.

It can be any character or number, but each  represents one, and only one, character.

Example

Return all customers from a city that starts with 'L' followed by one wildcard character, then 'nd' and then two wildcard characters:

```
SELECT * FROM Customers  
WHERE city LIKE 'L_nd__';
```

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The % Wildcard

The % wildcard represents any number of characters, even zero characters.

Example

Return all customers from a city that *contains* the letter 'L':

```
SELECT * FROM Customers  
WHERE city LIKE '%L%';
```

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Starts With

To return records that starts with a specific letter or phrase, add the % at the end of the letter or phrase.

Example

Return all customers that starts with 'La':

```
SELECT * FROM Customers  
WHERE CustomerName LIKE 'La%';
```

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Tip: You can also combine any number of conditions using **AND** or **OR** operators.

Example

Return all customers that starts with 'a' or starts with 'b':

```
SELECT * FROM Customers  
WHERE CustomerName LIKE 'a%' OR CustomerName LIKE 'b%';
```

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Ends With

To return records that ends with a specific letter or phrase, add the **%** at the beginning of the letter or phrase.

Example

Return all customers that ends with 'a':

```
SELECT * FROM Customers  
WHERE CustomerName LIKE '%a';
```

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Tip: You can also combine "starts with" and "ends with":

Example

Return all customers that starts with "b" and ends with "s":

```
SELECT * FROM Customers  
WHERE CustomerName LIKE 'b%s';
```

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Contains

To return records that contains a specific letter or phrase, add the % both before and after the letter or phrase.

Example

Return all customers that contains the phrase 'or'

```
SELECT * FROM Customers  
WHERE CustomerName LIKE '%or%';
```

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Combine Wildcards

Any wildcard, like `%` and `_`, can be used in combination with other wildcards.

Example

Return all customers that starts with "a" and are at least 3 characters in length:

```
SELECT * FROM Customers
WHERE CustomerName LIKE 'a__%';
```

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Example

Return all customers that have "r" in the second position:

```
SELECT * FROM Customers
WHERE CustomerName LIKE '_r%';
```

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Without Wildcard

If no wildcard is specified, the phrase has to have an exact match to return a result.

Example

Return all customers from Spain:

```
SELECT * FROM Customers  
WHERE Country LIKE 'Spain';
```

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Test Yourself With Exercises

Exercise:

Select all records where the value of the **City** column starts with the letter "a".

```
SELECT * FROM Customers  
;
```

Submit Answer »

[Start the Exercise](#)