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SQL Wildcards

SQL Wildcard Characters

A wildcard character is used to substitute any other character(s) in a string.

Wildcard characters are used with 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 used in conjunction with the LIKE operator:

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

Note: MS Access uses a question mark (?) instead of the underscore (_).

In MS Access and SQL Server you can also use:

- [*charlist*] - Defines sets and ranges of characters to match
- [^*charlist*] or [!*charlist*] - Defines sets and ranges of characters NOT to match

The wildcards can also be used in combinations!

Here are some examples showing different LIKE operators with '%' and '_' wildcards:
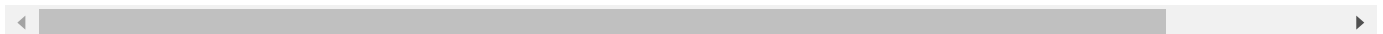
LIKE Operator	Description
WHERE CustomerName LIKE 'a%'	Finds any values that starts with "a"
WHERE CustomerName	Finds any values that ends with "a"

LIKE '%a'	
WHERE CustomerName LIKE '%or%'	Finds any values that have "or" in any position
WHERE CustomerName LIKE '_r%'	Finds any values that have "r" in the second position
WHERE CustomerName LIKE 'a_%_%'	Finds any values that starts with "a" and are at least 3 characters in length
WHERE ContactName LIKE 'a%o'	Finds any values that starts with "a" and ends with "o"

Demo Database

Below is a selection from the "Customers" table in the Northwind sample database:

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

Using the % Wildcard

The following SQL statement selects all customers with a City starting with "ber":

Example

```
SELECT * FROM Customers
WHERE City LIKE 'ber%';
```

Try it Yourself »

The following SQL statement selects all customers with a City containing the pattern "es":

Example

```
SELECT * FROM Customers
WHERE City LIKE '%es%';
```

Try it Yourself »

Using the _ Wildcard

The following SQL statement selects all customers with a City starting with any character, followed by "erlin":

Example

```
SELECT * FROM Customers
WHERE City LIKE '_erlin';
```

Try it Yourself »

The following SQL statement selects all customers with a City starting with "L", followed by any character, followed by "n", followed by any character, followed by "on":

Example

```
SELECT * FROM Customers
WHERE City LIKE 'L_n_on';
```

Try it Yourself »

Using the [charlist] Wildcard

The following SQL statement selects all customers with a City starting with "b", "s", or "p":

Example

```
SELECT * FROM Customers
WHERE City LIKE '[bsp]%';
```

Try it Yourself »

The following SQL statement selects all customers with a City starting with "a", "b", or "c":

Example

```
SELECT * FROM Customers
WHERE City LIKE '[a-c]%';
```

Try it Yourself »

Using the [!charlist] Wildcard

The two following SQL statements select all customers with a City NOT starting with "b", "s", or "p":

Example

```sql
SELECT * FROM Customers
WHERE City LIKE '[!bsp]%';
```

Try it Yourself »

Or:

Example

```sql
SELECT * FROM Customers
WHERE City NOT LIKE '[bsp]%';
```

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