

Unit 113

As if

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

- The house **looked as if** nobody was living in it.
- Ann **sounds as if** she's got a cold, doesn't she?
- I've just come back from holiday I feel tired and depressed. I don't **feel as if** I've had a holiday.

Compare:

- You look **tired**. (**look** + *adjective*)
You look **as if you haven't slept**. (**look** + **as if** + *subject* + *verb*)
- Tom sounded **worried**. (**sound** + *adjective*)
Tom sounded **as if he was worried**. (**sound** + **as if** + *subject* + *verb*)

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

- Ann sounds **as though** she's got a cold.

b You can also say **It looks/sounds/smells as if** (or **as though**):

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

After **It looks/sounds/smells**, many people use **like** instead of **as if** / **as though**:

- It looks **like** Tom isn't coming.

c You can also use **as if** with other verbs to say how someone does something:

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

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

- I don't like Norman. He talks **as if** he **knew** everything.

The meaning is *not* past in this sentence. We use the past ('as if he **knew**') because the idea is *not real*: Norman does *not* know everything. We use the past in the same way in **if** sentences and after **wish** (see **Unit 37**).

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

- Harry's only 50. 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.)

After **It looks/sounds/smells**, many people use **like** instead of **as if** / **as**

