*Like*

*Like* has a number of meanings and uses.

***Like* as a verb meaning ‘enjoy’**

We use *like* to talk about things or people which we enjoy or feel positive about:

*like* + noun phrase

*I****like****Sarah but I don’t****like****her brother much.*

*Do you****like****pasta?*

*She really****likes****the singing of Luciano Pavarotti.*

*like* + *-ing*

*I****like****swimming before breakfast.*

*He****likes****telling jokes.*

*like* + *to*-infinitive

*She****likes****to go and see her parents at the weekend.*

*I don’t****like****to cycle in the dark.*

*He****likes****his friends to call him Hank.*

*Do you think she would****like****us to bring some chocolates or flowers?*

*like* + *wh*-clause

*I don’t****like****what he did.*

*We****liked****how they cooked the fish.*

***Would like* in offers and requests**

We use *would like* or ***’****d like* to offer something to someone in a polite way or to ask them to do something politely (requests), or politely to say what we want. We use the *to*-infinitive form of verbs that follow:

***Would you like****another coffee?*

***Would you like****to watch a DVD?*

[At a fast food restaurant]

**A:** *How can I help you?*

**B: *I’d like*** *a cheese burger and fries please*.

[In an email to a company that has advertised a job]

*…****I’d like****to enquire about the Sales Manager position which you have advertised …*

***Would you like****to follow me, please?* (Please follow me)

***Like* as a preposition meaning ‘similar to’**

*Like* means ‘similar to’. We often use it with verbs of the senses such as *look, sound, feel, taste, seem*:

*My sister is****like****my mother.* (My sister and my mother are similar)

*I think this tastes****like****coconut.*

*That looks****like****Marco’s car.*

*He seems****like****a nice man.*

When we use *like* to mean ‘similar to’, we can put words and phrase such as *a bit, just, very, so* and *more* before it to talk about the degree of similarity:

*It’s****a bit like****skiing but there’s no snow.*

*Isn’t that****just like****the bike we bought you for your birthday?*

*That smells****very like****garlic.*

*The car was****more like****a green than a blue colour.*

***Like* as a conjunction**

In informal contexts, we can use *like* as a conjunction instead of *as*. Traditional grammar books consider this use of *like* incorrect:

***Like****any good cook book will tell you, don’t let the milk boil.* (or *As any good cook book* …)

***Like* as a suffix**

We can use *like* as a suffix at the end of a noun to mean ‘similar to’:

*There is something****child-like****about Marianne. She always seems so innocent.*

***Like* in spoken English**

In informal speaking, you will hear *like* used very commonly. It has a number of functions. It is important not to use these forms in formal writing such as academic essays.

Filler

We can use *like* to fill in the silence when we need time to think about what to say next or how to rephrase what we have just said:

*I want to …****like****… I think we need to think carefully about it. It’s …****like****… it’s a very difficult decision for us to make.*

Focusing attention

We can use *like* to bring attention to what we are going to say next. We do this especially when talking about quantities and times:

*There were****like****five hundred guests at the wedding.* (*like* brings focus to the large number of guests)

*It wasn’t till****like****12:00 that I actually got to start on the project.* (*like* brings focus to how late it was)

Asking for an example (*Like what?*)

In speaking, we often use *like what?* to ask for an example:

**A:** *Some really funny things happened on the last day of school*.

**B:** *Funny things?* ***Like what***?

It can also be used to ask a question, meaning ‘similar to what?’:

[talking about a new restaurant]

**A:** *There was kangaroo steak on the menu. I decided to try it*.

**B:** *Really?*

**A:** *Yeah. It actually tasted good*.

**B: *Like what?***

**A:** *I don’t know. Like steak but softer*.

Softening what has just been said

We can use *like* at the end of what we say to modify or soften what we have just said especially if we are not sure if it was the right thing to say:

[A and B are talking about B’s holiday]

**A:** *So did you buy anything there?*

**B:** *No. It was too expensive*, ***like***.

*I hated the film. It was very violent,****like****.*

Reported speech

It has become common in very informal speaking to use *like* as a reporting verb. It can be used to report what someone said or what someone thought. It is used especially by young people, and it makes what is reported sound more dramatic:

*Jason was****like****‘I’m not going to Alma’s party because Chris is going to be there’ and I’m****like****‘he’s so afraid of Chris’.* (in the first use of *like*, it means ‘he said’, but in the second use it means ‘I thought’)

Saying something is like something else

We can use the structure *it + be + like* to introduce an example or say that something is similar to something else:

***It’s like****when you go to the airport and you keep thinking that you have forgotten something important.*

[a woman talking about her husband Bob]

*Everyone is always saying hello to Bob.****It’s like****being married to a superstar!*

***Be like* or *what is … like?***

We can use *be like* to ask for a description of someone or something (e.g. their appearance, their character, their behaviour):

***What’s****your new apartment****like?***

Not: ~~How is your new apartment like?~~

***Be like* or *look like*?**

We use *be like* to talk about someone’s character or personality. We use *look like* to talk about someone’s appearance:

**A:** *What’s your new boss* ***like?***

**B:** *She’s nice. She’s very professional*.

Not: ~~She’s like a very professional person~~.

**A:** *What does your father* ***look*** ***like?***

**B:** *He’s very* ***like*** *me but taller and older!*

**Compare**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **A:** *What is Martina’s new boyfriend* ***like****?*  **B:** *He’s really nice*. | What is his personality like? Is he nice? |
| **A:** *What does Martina’s new boyfriend* ***look like****?*  **B:** *He’s tall, with blond hair*. | What is his appearance like? Is he handsome? |