

Wildcards

Wildcard characters are used with text data types, although you can sometimes use them successfully with other data types, such as dates.

Like Operator

The **LIKE** operator is used to find unknown characters. This is done with the use of wildcard characters. There are two main wildcards:

- **Percentage % which is pure SQL.** Asterisk * which is used in Access. These represent an unlimited amount of unknown characters.
- **Underscore _ which is pure SQL.** Question? mark is used in Access. These represent a single unknown character.

When using a wildcard the **LIKE** operator must precede the symbol. The symbol can be placed on the left, right, or within the word depending on where the unknown characters are.

Asterisk Wildcard

To view which members of staff live in south London.

The statement

Select firstname, lastname, postcode
From tblemployee
Where postcode like 's%'

The results

As the search is for text, single quotes are required. All the different postcodes beginning with the letter S have been retrieved.

firstname	lastname	postcode
Kathy	Loftus	SW1 1LM
Ann	Rizzo	SW10 7LL
Kelly	Drendon	SE1 4KM
Marilyn	Keegan	SE12 7NN
Bill	Rodan	SE1

X :0 Y :122 Result : 5 Rows

Question Mark Wildcard

To find out the missing character from this number plate X 222 K?A and make of the car.

The statement

```
Select make, reg
From tblcar
Where reg like 'x 222 k_a'
```

The result

SQL will ensure that the characters adjacent to the underscore correspond exactly.



make	reg
BMW	X 222 AwK

X :11 Y :12 Result : 1 Rows

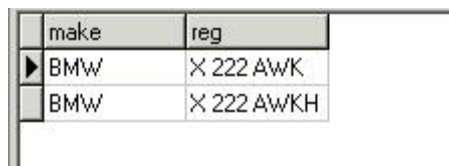
Do I use the Asterisk or the Question Mark wildcard?

By changing the wildcard from an underscore to a percentage sign the results could change, as the percentage sign will include an unlimited amount of unknown characters.

The statement

```
Select make, reg
From tblcar
Where reg, like 'x 222 aw%'
```

The result



make	reg
BMW	X 222 AwK
BMW	X 222 AwKH