

SQL Wildcard Characters

A wildcard character is used to substitute one or more characters in a string.

Wildcard characters are used with the **LIKE** operator. The **LIKE** operator is used in a **WHERE** clause to search for a specified pattern in a column.

Wildcard Characters in MS Access

Symbol	Description	Example
*	Represents zero or more characters	bl* finds bl, black, blue, and blob
?	Represents a single character	h?t finds hot, hat, and hit
[]	Represents any single character within the brackets	h[oa]t finds hot and hat, but not hit
!	Represents any character not in the brackets	h[!oa]t finds hit, but not hot and hat
-	Represents a range of characters	c[a-b]t finds cat and cbt
#	Represents any single numeric character	2#5 finds 205, 215, 225, 235, 245, 255, 265, 275, 285, and 295

Wildcard Characters in SQL Server

Symbol	Description	Example
%	Represents zero or more characters	bl% finds bl, black, blue, and blob
_	Represents a single character	h_t finds hot, hat, and hit
[]	Represents any single character within the brackets	h[oa]t finds hot and hat, but not hit
^	Represents any character not in the brackets	h[^oa]t finds hit, but not hot and hat
-	Represents a range of characters	c[a-b]t finds cat and cbt

All 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 LIKE '%a'	Finds any values that ends with "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"