Comparison with as...as

as big as... as well as... as many as you can... just as good as... nearly as many as... as soon as possible... as long as... not as strong as... not nearly as fast as... not quite as tall as... nowhere near as expensive as...

As...as shows that things are equal

Sally is 1 metre 65 cm tall. Her mother is also 1 metre 65 cm tall.

Sally is as tall as her mother.

As...as is used with adjectives, adverbs and quantity expressions

Adjectives: It’s as good as yours.
Adverbs: I’ll come as quickly as I can.
Quantity expressions: We ate as much as we could.

As...as can be followed by nouns, pronouns and clauses

He was as quiet as a mouse. (noun)
I can sing as well as you. (pronoun)
I brought as many as I could carry. (clause)

Just, quite and every bit give extra emphasis

The old phone is just as good as the new one.
(The new one is no better.)
I work just as hard as you do.
(Don’t try and say you work harder than me!)
Her new novel is every bit as exciting as the first one.
(If you thought the first one was exciting, you won’t be disappointed.)

Nearly and almost show small differences

She’s nearly/almost as tall as her mother.
(= Her mum is a little taller than she is.)
My son earns nearly/almost as much as I do.
(= I earn a little more than my son.)
I can run nearly/almost as fast as my brother.
(= My brother can run a little faster than me.)

Use twice as many etc. to compare unequal numbers

It costs twice as much as the old one.
The old one was three dollars and this one is six dollars.
There are only half as many students as there were last year.
There were 40 students last year but only 20 this year
It takes twice as long by car as it does by train.
It takes an hour by train and two hours by car.

As...as with can / possible means the maximum possible

It’s as good as you can get. (the best possible)
Let me know as soon as possible. (at the earliest possible time)
Do as much as you can. (the most possible)
I’ll be as quick as I can. (in the quickest possible time)
Things are as bad as they can be. (very, very bad)

As...as or the same?

Why not say Sally and her mother are the same height?
We use as...as when we want to emphasize one thing is not less than another thing.
Sally is a teenager. She has recently reached the same height as her mother.
So we want to emphasize that she is no longer shorter than her mother - she has grown.
Imagine a friend criticizes your English. She says:
Your English is terrible!
You might think that her English is no better than yours, so you could reply: My English is as good as yours!
(You wouldn’t say: Our English is the same as it doesn’t have the same emphasis.)

Don’t avoid as...as!

Students often avoid using as...as. Here are some reasons why:
It’s more complicated than other structures such as the same, a bit bigger, a little less etc.
It’s difficult to hear because the word as is unstressed so it becomes weak - the schwa sound.
It is as good as yours sounds like this: itsuz gooduz yours
Also, the word as has many other uses and it can be difficult to know which.

Why do you need as...as?

It adds meaning. As you can see from the examples, it often gives an emphasis that would be lost with other structures.
It’s very common. Native speakers use it a lot so if you can’t recognize it, you may misunderstand what people are saying.

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Comparison with *as...as*

*as big as... as well as... as many as you can... just as good as... nearly as many as... as soon as possible... as long as... not as strong as... not nearly as fast as... not quite as tall as... nowhere near as expensive as...*

**As...as** is used in some common idiomatic expressions

**As long as** *(provided /providing that)*
You can borrow the car as long as you bring it back before five.

**As far as I know / I can tell / I can remember** *(fairly sure)*
As far as I know, it’s about 100 km from here.

**As...as** is used in common similes

A simile is an expression where one thing is compared to another to give emphasis. Many of these are common fixed expressions such as *(as) brave as a lion.* Note the first *as* can be omitted.

He is **as brave as a lion**. - He is extremely brave.

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**as bald as a coot**
completely bald
*By the time he was thirty, he was bald as a coot.*

**as black as pitch / night**
very dark
*There were no stars and it was as black as pitch outside.*

**as deaf as a post**
unable to hear well
*You’ll have to shout - he’s deaf as a post.*

**as drunk as a lord**
very drunk
*He was singing at the top of his voice, clearly as drunk as a lord.*

**as flat as a pancake**
completely flat (land)
*The countryside was as flat as a pancake.*

**as free as a bird**
free to do what you want
*He walked out of court as free as a bird.*

**as fresh as a daisy**
refreshed; full of energy
*After a short nap I felt as fresh as a daisy.*

**as good as gold**
well-behaved
*The children were as good as gold all day.*

**as good as new**
in very good condition, especially after repairs etc.
*The car is as good as new now it’s been repaired.*

**as happy as a lark**
very happy
*He was playing in the sand as happy as a lark.*

**as hard as nails**
physically strong, violent, or unkind and insensitive
*The leader of the gang was as hard as nails and everyone was afraid of him.*

**as light as a feather**
light in weight
*His racing bike was light as a feather.*

**as mad as a hatter**
very silly, strange or unreasonable. (Usually humorous and not used for someone who is mentally ill.)
*He’s as mad as a hatter so I wouldn’t take too much notice of him.*

**as nutty as a fruitcake**
See mad as a hatter

**as old as the hills**
very old - (so old you do not know how old)
*The legend is as old as the hills.*

**as red as a beetroot**
having a red face, usually because you are embarrassed
*He went as red as a beetroot when he saw her.*

**as white as a sheet**
having a pale face because you are afraid or ill
*She went as white as a sheet when she heard the news.*

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Comparison with not as...as

as big as... as well as... as many as you can... just as good as... nearly as many as... as soon as possible... as long as... not as strong as... not nearly as fast as... not quite as tall as... nowhere near as expensive as...

Not as...as shows one thing is less than another

The Eiffel Tower is 324 metres tall. The Petronas Towers are 452 metres tall.

The Eiffel Tower isn’t as tall as the Petronas Towers.

Not as...as is used with adjectives, adverbs and quantity expressions

Adjectives: Her new flat isn’t as big as the old one.
Adverbs: It doesn’t work as well as we’d hoped.
Quantity expressions: My ticket didn’t cost as much as yours.

Not such...as is used with noun phrases

The journey doesn’t take such a long time as it used to.
I don’t have such an interesting job as Julia.

Not as...as can be followed by nouns, pronouns and clauses

London isn’t as big as Tokyo. (noun)
Mine isn’t as good as yours. (pronoun)
He didn’t play as well as he did last week. (clause)

Not nearly as and nowhere near as show a big difference

UK: 242,595 sq km; Australia: 7,692,024 sq km

The UK isn’t nearly as big as Australia.
The UK is nowhere near as big as Australia.

Bus fare = $20; air fare = $110

It isn’t nearly as much by bus.
It’s nowhere near as much by bus. (It’s far cheaper by bus.)

Not quite as shows a small difference

UK: 242,595 sq km; Italy: 301,230 sq km

The UK isn’t quite as big as Italy.
The UK is nearly as big as Italy.

Visitors this year: 551; visitors last year: 597

There weren’t quite as many visitors as last year.

Not so...as and not as...as have the same meaning

It’s not as good as yours.
It’s not so good as yours.

There’s no difference in meaning.

Note: We don’t use so...as when expressing equality.

He’s so tall as his dad is wrong.

Not as (big) as or (smaller) than?

Not as...as is often preferred to an opposite adjective, although sometimes there isn’t much difference in meaning:

My flat isn’t as big as yours.
My flat is smaller than yours.

It isn’t as expensive by bus.
It’s cheaper by bus.

At other times, an opposite adjective is too negative:

His new novel is worse than his first one.
This is correct if both novels are bad. If one or both are good, we should say:

His new novel isn’t as good as his first one.
As...as is better in these examples:

Canada is smaller than Russia.
Canada isn’t as big as Russia.
(Neither Canada nor Russia is small.)

Rome is newer than Athens.
Rome isn’t as old as Athens.
(Neither Rome nor Athens is new.)

Not as (expensive) as or less (expensive) than?

Either is possible but not as...as is more common in spoken English.

It’s less expensive by bus.
It isn’t as expensive by bus.

Don’t avoid not as...as!

Reasons why students tend to avoid not as...as:

Negative structures are more difficult to comprehend, and the use of nearly and quite can be confusing.
The confusion can be made worse because the word as is unstressed, while the subject and the verb to be are usually contracted.

It’s not nearly as big as yours can sound like this:

snot nearlyuz biguz yours (!)

Remember that this is a commonly used structure for comparison and it is important to be able to recognize it even if you don’t use it.