

¿Pretérito o imperfecto?

When to use the preterit (indicative) tense

The preterit tense is used to talk about completed, past actions and events, as well as to focus on a *specific point in time in the past*.

Formation of the preterit

<u>-ar</u>	<u>-er/-ir</u>	<u>irregular stems</u>	<u>ser/ir</u>
-é -amos -aste -asteis -ó -aron	-imos -iste -isteis -ió -ieron	-imos fui -iste -isteis -o -(i)eron	fuimos fuiste fuisteis fue fueron

When to use the imperfect (indicative) tense

The imperfect tense is used to talk about something that was *ongoing* in the past, as well as something that happened *continuously* or *repeatedly* in the past. It also sets the scene with *background information* about time, conditions, feelings, or personality. Specifically, it is used for:

Description

Used to (ongoing, continual, repeated, or habitual past actions)

Was + -ing and were + -ing

Internal (mental) processes (feeling, knowing, needing, thinking, wanting)

Time (always expressed with the verb ser)

Formation of the imperfect

<u>-ar</u>	<u>-er/-ir</u>	<u>ir</u>	<u>ser</u>
-aba -ábamos -abas -abáis -aba -aban	-ía -íamos -ías -íais -ía -ían	iba íbamos ibas ibáis iba iban	era éramos eras eráis era eran

The meanings of the following verbs change depending upon the tense that is used:

Verb	Meaning	IMPERFECT	PRETERIT	NEGATIVE P.
conocer	to be familiar with	was familiar with	met	X
poder	to be able to	was not able	managed	was not able & didn't
querer	to want	wanted	tried	refused
saber	to know	knew	found out	X