

### Imperfect or the Preterite tense Help Sheet

This help sheet was created by the Streicher family, and adapted by Señora Swenson

#### Reasons to use the preterit (é, aste, ó, amos, asteis, aron / í, iste, ió, imos, isteis, ieron)

1. **\*Over & done with** – The apple **fell** on the ground.
2. **Change in emotional, physical, or mental state.** She **became** sad. (Implies a change)
3. **Chain of events/actions in the past (doesn't work on the first verb)** – Yesterday, I got up at 7, ate breakfast at 7:30, and left at 7:45.
4. **Interrupts an action already in process (Think wavy line and X – the X is the preterit and the wavy line is what was already going on.** I was watching TV when the electricity went out. (watching TV = action in process / Electricity went out = interrupted the action of watching TV.
5. **The action has a definite beginning or end.** Last year I moved to California.
6. **The subject can't keep “\_\_(verb) \_\_ing”.** She left for school. (In this sentence, she can't “keep leaving”. It's an action that's completed.)

PRETERIT TRANSLATION = I \_\_\_\_\_ed.

**\*This is the preterit's strongest “weapon” against the imperfect.**

#### Reasons to use the imperfect (aba, abas, aba, ábamos, abais, aban / ía, ías, ía, íamos, íais, ían)

**Key word** in the Imperfect tense: **mientras = while**

1. **\*Description in the past** – Her name was Bonita and she had long, red hair.
2. **Story-telling tense** – Once upon a time... (use this reason for the beginnings of stories only) Two ways to say “Once upon a time...” are “Erase una vez...” and “Había una vez...”.
3. **Telling time in the past when you want to say a time on the clock** – It was 7 o'clock. You will use era & eran for this (era la una...eran las cinco...)
4. **Age in the past** – I was eight when we moved. In Spanish, the verb will be tener.
5. **Weather in the past** – It was warm. Often you will use hacer = hacía frío = It was cold.
6. **Setting the stage** – In a land far, far away... or “The forest was calm and dark when we set out for Grandma's house...”
7. **No definite beginning or end** – I was singing...The television was on..., etc.
8. **Habitual action in the past** – When I was young, I played with dolls / On Saturdays we would go to the movies...
9. **An action going on at the same time as another action** – My dad was cooking dinner and my brother was drawing pictures at 8 o'clock.
10. **Emotional, physical, or mental state in the past** – I was scared / I was hungry, etc.
11. **“Was wuzzing”** = I was jumping, I was running, She was eating, They were talking, etc.

#### IMPERFECT TRANSLATIONS:

- 1) I was \_\_\_\_\_ing
- 2) I would \_\_\_\_\_ (in the past).
- 3) I used to \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) **VERY RARELY: I \_\_\_\_\_ed (Usually you use the preterit to say this.**