

Preterit/Imperfect Usage

Preterit – Simple, direct, completed events.

- A completed action (where the entire action is over at the point of reference mentioned.)
- An action specifically referring to the beginning or the ending (It began to rain. / The parade ended at 4:00.)
- An action specifically placed in time (Suddenly, at 1:00, on Monday, etc.)
- One or more specific occurrences of an action, rather than a recurring action (They went skiing six times).
- A sudden change in the story (all of a sudden, I felt sad), even if it deals with emotion.

Imperfect – The “background” or descriptive past. Past without focusing on completion.

- Any action where the point of reference occurs *during* the action (after the beginning or before the end) rather than at the beginning or at the end.

Descriptions in general:

- Appearance, age, physical condition, emotional state, attitudes, desires, location, date, time, weather
- An action told in the narrative: I was walking, it was raining, etc.
- Something that used to happen. “I used to walk to school every morning.”
- A continuous, habitual or repeated action where the moment of beginning or ending is not important. (happened multiple times, but we don’t know or care how many times)
- Mental processes (thought, feeling, desire)
creer, desear, querer, tener ganas de, pensar, preferir, poder, saber, etc.

Preterit: Take off the last 2 letters and add:

AR	ER/IR
é amos	í imos
aste asteis	iste isteis
ó aron	ió ieron

Irregulars:

- group 1: yo-form spelling:** (-gar → gué, -car → qué, -zar → cé)
- group 2: i:y + accent “i”:** “i” changes to “y” between 2 vowels; accent other “i”s (ex: leí, leíste, leyó, leímos, leísteis, leyeron)
- group 3: stem-changing.** -ir stem-changing verbs change o:u and e:i in the él and ellos forms (ex: dormir: durmió, durmieron)
- group 4: very irregular.** (ir, ser, ver, dar)
- group 5: regular-irregulars: use new endings with new roots:**

<u>new endings</u>	tener: tuv	poner: pus
e	imos	andar: anduv
iste	isteis	poder: pud
o	(i)eron	estar: estuv
		saber: sup
		hacer: hic(z)
		decir: dij
		querer: quis
		traer: traj
		venir: vin
		conducir: conduj

Imperfect: Take off the last 2 letters and add:

AR	
aba	ábamos
abas	abais
aba	aban

ER / IR

ía	íamos
ías	íais
ía	ían

Irregulars:

- ir: iba, ibas, iba, íbamos, ibáis, iban
- ser: era, eras, era, éramos, erais, eran
- ver: veía, veías, veía, veíamos, veíais, veían