

Past Imperfect

Spanish · British English › Spanish

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The Imperfect Past Tense (Pretérito Imperfecto)

Hello there! Today we're diving into the Spanish Imperfect Past Tense, known as the **Pretérito Imperfecto**. This is a really important tense that will help you talk about what you **used to do** in the past, describe places or people, and discuss past habits. Think of it like the English 'I *was doing*', 'I *used to be*', or 'I *would read*'.

Forming this tense is quite straightforward! For most verbs, you simply remove the infinitive ending **-ar**, **-er**, or **-ir** and add the correct Imperfect endings.

Verb stem + **Imperfect endings**

Pronoun	-AR (hablar)	-ER (comer)	-IR (vivir)
yo	habl aba	com ía	viv ía
tú	habl abas	com ías	viv ías
él/ella/usted	habl aba	com ía	viv ía
nosotros/as	habl ábamos	com íamos	viv íamos
vosotros/as	habl abais	com íais	viv íais
ellos/ellas/ustedes	habl aban	com ían	viv ían

In the **Pretérito Imperfecto**, we only have **three** irregular verbs! Isn't that fantastic news? They are: *ser* (to be), *ir* (to go), and *ver* (to see).

Pronoun	SER (to be)	IR (to go)	VER (to see)
yo	era	iba	veía
tú	eras	ibas	veías
él/ella/usted	era	iba	veía
nosotros/as	éramos	íbamos	veíamos
vosotros/as	erais	ibais	veíais
ellos/ellas/ustedes	eran	iban	veían

So, when do we use the **Pretérito Imperfecto**? Here are the main situations:

- To describe people, places, situations, or states in the past. *What was something like?*
- For repeated actions or habits in the past. *What did you used to do regularly?*
- For ongoing actions in the past, often as background to another, shorter action. *What was happening when something else occurred?*
- To talk about age, time, or weather in the past.

Cuando era niño, jugaba en el parque todos los días.

When I was a child, I used to play in the park every day.

Ella leía un libro mientras yo cocinaba.

She was reading a book while I was cooking.

Antes vivíamos en una casa grande.

Before, we used to live in a big house.

Remember the **D.A.W.N.** acronym for the Pretérito Imperfecto:

Descriptions, **A**ge, **W**eather, **N**ever-ending (for habitual or ongoing actions)! This will help you recall its main uses.

Be careful not to confuse the **Pretérito Imperfecto** with the **Pretérito Indefinido** (the simple past/preterite)! The **Imperfecto** tells you **what something was like** or **what was happening**, while the **Indefinido** describes **what happened** (a completed action). This is a key difference!

HABÍA:

Part 1 — Choose the correct word

Circle the option that correctly fills each gap.

1. Cuando _____ niño, yo _____ a menudo al parque.

When I was a child, I often went to the park.

Gap 1: A) era B) seré C) soy D) sea

Gap 2: A) era B) veía C) iba D) ibas

2. De niño, tú _____ mucha fruta cada día.

As a child, you ate a lot of fruit every day.

A) comiste B) comerás C) comes D) comías

3. La película _____ siempre con un final feliz.

The film always ended with a happy ending.

A) terminaba B) termina C) terminó D) terminará

4. Antes usted _____ cada día en este edificio, ¿verdad?

You used to work in this building every day, didn't you?

A) trabajará B) trabajaba C) trabajó D) trabaja

5. Antes, tú _____ a pie a todas partes.

In the past, you went everywhere on foot.

A) eras B) iba C) veías D) ibas

6. La puerta siempre _____ sola con el viento.

The door always closed by itself because of the wind.

A) se cerraban B) se cerrará C) se cierra D) se cerraba

7. Mis abuelos siempre _____ juntos viendo las noticias.

My grandparents always used to have dinner together watching the news.

A) cenaban B) cenarán C) cenan D) cenaba

8. Siempre _____ en las fiestas del pueblo.

We always danced at village parties.

A) bailabais B) bailábamos C) bailaremos D) bailaríamos

Part 2 – Fill in the gap

Write the missing word or phrase on the line.

1. Yo _____ muchas postales de mi tía en verano.
I used to receive many postcards from my aunt in the summer.
2. Cuando _____ allí, vosotros _____ nuestros vecinos.
When we lived there, you were our neighbours.
3. Nosotros _____ a nuestros abuelos los fines de semana.
We used to visit our grandparents at weekends.
4. Cuando _____ joven, tú _____ mucho deporte.
When you were young, you did a lot of sport.
5. Yo _____ tostadas cada mañana.
I used to have toast for breakfast every morning.
6. Antes la ciudad _____ tranquila por la noche.
The city used to be quiet at night.

Part 3 – Put the verbs in the right form

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets on each line.

1. Cuando yo _____ (ser) niño, siempre _____ (hablar) con mi abuela.
When I was a child, I always talked with my grandmother.
2. Cuando _____ (llover), nosotros _____ (ver) películas en casa.
When it was raining, we watched films at home.
3. Tú _____ (bailar) muy bien cuando _____ (ser) más joven.
You danced very well when you were younger.
4. Cuando _____ (ser) niño, yo _____ (ir) a menudo al parque.
When I was a child, I often went to the park.

Part 4 – Translate

Write each word in Spanish on the line.

1. to go out › _____
2. to adore › _____
3. she watched › _____
4. to write › _____
5. to walk › _____
6. they went › _____

Part 5 – Match the pairs

Write the letter of the matching translation next to each term.

Term		Translation	
1.	ir	A	to start
2.	leer	B	to open
3.	empezar	C	to sing
4.	jugar	D	to play
5.	cantar	E	to like
6.	escuchar	F	to read
7.	abrir	G	to go
8.	gustar	H	to listen

Answer Key

Part 1 — Choose the correct word

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Gap 1: A) era; Gap 2: C) iba | 5. D) ibas |
| 2. D) comías | 6. D) se cerraba |
| 3. A) terminaba | 7. A) cenaban |
| 4. B) trabajaba | 8. B) bailábamos |

Part 2 — Fill in the gap

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1. recibía | 4. eras; hacías |
| 2. vivíamos; erais | 5. desayunaba |
| 3. visitábamos | 6. estaba |

Part 3 — Put the verbs in the right form

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. era; hablaba | 3. bailabas; eras |
| 2. llovía; veíamos | 4. era; iba |

Part 4 — Translate

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1. salir | 4. escribir |
| 2. encantar | 5. caminar |
| 3. veía | 6. iban |

Part 5 — Match the pairs

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. G (to go) | 5. C (to sing) |
| 2. F (to read) | 6. H (to listen) |
| 3. A (to start) | 7. B (to open) |
| 4. D (to play) | 8. E (to like) |