

1.1 The imperfect tense

ANTE TODO You will now learn the imperfect, which describes past activities in a different way.

The imperfect of regular verbs					
		cantar	beber	escribir	
SINGULAR FORMS	yo	cant aba	beb ía	escrib ía	
	tú	cant abas	beb ías	escrib ías	
	Ud./él/ella	cant aba	beb ía	escrib ía	
PLURAL FORMS	nosotros/as	cant ábamos	beb íamos	escrib íamos	
	vosotros/as	cant abais	beb íais	escrib íais	
	Uds./ellos/ellas	cant aban	beb ían	escrib ían	

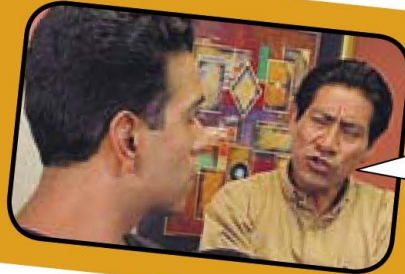
1.1 The imperfect tense

- ▶ **¡Atención!** Note that the imperfect endings of **-er** and **-ir** verbs are the same. Also note that the **nosotros** form of **-ar** verbs always carries an accent mark on the first **a** of the ending. All forms of **-er** and **-ir** verbs in the imperfect carry an accent on the first **i** of the ending.

*Sabes, Javier,
cuando era chico yo les
tenía mucho miedo a
los médicos.*



*De niño tenía
que ir mucho a una
clínica en San Juan. ¡No
me gustaban nada las
inyecciones!*



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- ▶ There are no stem changes in the imperfect.

entender (e:ie)

servir (e:i)

doler (o:ue)



Entendíamos japonés.

We used to understand Japanese.

El camarero les **servía** el café.

The waiter was serving them coffee.

A Javier le **dolía** el tobillo.

Javier's ankle was hurting.

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- ▶ The imperfect form of **hay** is **había** (*there was; there were; there used to be*).
- ▶ **¡Atención!** **Ir**, **ser**, and **ver** are the only verbs that are irregular in the imperfect.

The imperfect of irregular verbs				
		ir	ser	ver
SINGULAR FORMS	yo	iba	era	veía
	tú	ibas	eras	veías
	Ud./él/ella	iba	era	veía
PLURAL FORMS	nosotros/as	íbamos	éramos	veíamos
	vosotros/as	ibais	erais	veíais
	Uds./ellos/ellas	iban	eran	veían

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Uses of the imperfect

- ▶ As a general rule, the imperfect is used to describe actions which are seen by the speaker as incomplete or “continuing,” while the preterite is used to describe actions which have been completed. The imperfect expresses what was happening at a certain time or how things used to be. The preterite, in contrast, expresses a completed action.

—¿Qué te **pasó**?
What happened to you?

—¿Dónde **vivías** de niño?
Where did you live as a child?

—Me **torcí** el tobillo.
I sprained my ankle.

—**Vivía** en San José.
I lived in San José.

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- These expressions are often used with the imperfect because they express habitual or repeated actions: **de niño/a** (*as a child*), **todos los días** (*every day*), **mientras** (*while*).

Uses of the imperfect

1. Habitual or repeated actions

Íbamos al parque los domingos.
We used to go to the park on Sundays.

2. Events or actions that were in progress

Yo **leía** mientras él **estudiaba**.
I was reading while he was studying.

3. Physical characteristics

Era alto y guapo.
He was tall and handsome.

4. Mental or emotional states

Quería mucho a su familia.
He loved his family very much.

5. Telling time

Eran las tres y media.
It was 3:30.

6. Age

Los niños **tenían** seis años.
The children were six years old.

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Indica la forma correcta de cada verbo en el imperfecto.

1. Mis hermanos veían (ver) la televisión.
2. Yo _____ (viajar) a la playa.
3. ¿Dónde _____ (vivir) Samuel de niño?
4. Tú _____ (hablar) con Javier.
5. Leonardo y yo _____ (correr) por el parque.
6. Ustedes _____ (ir) a la clínica.
7. Nadia _____ (bailar) merengue.
8. ¿Cuándo _____ (asistir) tú a clase de español?
9. Yo _____ (ser) muy feliz.
10. Nosotras _____ (comprender) las preguntas.