

Preterite vs. Imperfect

Both are PAST tenses, but are used in different circumstances

Preterite TENSE

Used for : (C-S-S)

1. **COMPLETED actions in the past**

(I went home = Yo fui a casa / I ran a mile = yo corrí una milla /
you did the homework = Tú hiciste la tarea)

2. **Things that occurred / ended at a SPECIFIC TIME or date**

(The party ended at 10 = La fiesta terminó a las diez / The classes began yesterday =
Las clases empezaron ayer /

I went to Spain last year = Yo fui a España el año pasado)

3. **A SERIES of completed actions**

(Jorge showered, ate, and went to school = Jorge se duchó, comió, y fue a la escuela)

Preterite "KEY WORDS" - The follow words are almost always used before or after the preterite. Look for these key words when deciding if a verb should be preterite or imperfect.

*anoche = last night / anteayer = the day before yesterday / ayer = yesterday /
de repente = suddenly / el mes pasado = last month / la semana pasada = last week
/ el año pasado = last year / por fin = finally / un día = one day / una vez = once /
en seguida = at once*

IMPERFECT TENSE

REVIEW - p. 112, 134

used for ongoing, habitual, repeated actions in the past
Remember 'DR. LEWAIT' for when to use the imperfect

Description (in the past) => La casa de mi tío era grande - My uncle's house was big

Recurring Action (in the past) or "used to" => Ellos siempre estudiaban en Starbucks =
They always used to study at Starbuck's

Location (in the past) => La casa estaba en la calle 21 = The house was on 21st street.

Emotions (in the past) => Ella estaba muy enojada = She was very angry.

Weather (in the past) => estaba lloviendo = It was raining

Age (in the past) => Paco tenía siete años = Paco was 10 years old

Incomplete/Ongoing Action (in the past)=>María estaba estudiando=María was studying.

Time / date (in the past) => Eran las cinco = It was 5 o'clock. /

Era el cinco de mayo - it was May 5th

Imperfect "KEY WORDS" - The follow words are almost always used before or after the imperfect. Look for these key words when deciding if a verb should be preterite or imperfect.

a veces = sometimes /

cada (día / noche / semana / verano) = each/every day/night/week/summer

usualmente = usually / frecuentemente = frequently / mientras = while /

muchas veces = many times / siempre = always / cuando era niño(a) = when i was a child

todos los días / meses / años = every day / month / year /

todas las semanas = every week

Preterite or Imperfect?

When deciding between using the preterite or imperfect, follow these steps:

1. Look for key words
2. Go through "Dr. Lewait" - if none of the criteria (description, recurring action, etc.) match up, then it is probably preterite