

## El imperfecto

The imperfect tense is a past tense. It is used to talk about ongoing, habitual, or repeated actions in the past. It is always used to talk about time and age.

- Ex: I used to eat broccoli every night. (habitual action)  
We went to the store every Sunday. (repeated action)  
I ate at McDonalds a lot. (habitual action)  
I was five years old. (ongoing condition for a year)  
I was skinny. (ongoing condition for ? time period)



### -AR verbs

yo	nosotros
tú	vosotros
él, ella, Usted	ellos/as, Uds.

I was talking.

You used to work.

We used to study Spanish.

### -ER/-IR verbs



yo	nosotros
tú	vosotros
él, ella, Usted	ellos/as, Uds.

He lived in Panama.

They ate spaghetti every day.

### Verbos irregulares:

- SER yo era, tú eras, él era, nosotros éramos, vosotros erais, ellos eran  
IR yo iba, tú ibas, él iba, nosotros íbamos, vosotros ibais, ellos iban  
VER yo veía, tú veías, él veía, nosotros veíamos, vosotros veíais, ellos veían

## Use the imperfect...

...for things that used to happen or be true.

I used to be a student.

I used to study math.



...to give basic, simple descriptions in the past.

The car was blue.

My father was a doctor.

The test was difficult.

The cat was in the bathroom.



...to say “was \_\_\_ing” (use with the verb ‘estar’)

I was washing the clothes.

We were sleeping.

...to describe mental, emotional, or physical states

I was tired.

We wanted to read.

They knew the answer.

...to say “would” or “could” when referring to habits

I would walk to school every day.

I could eat six hamburgers.

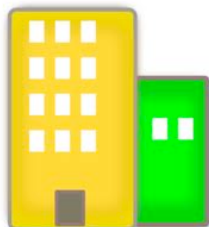


### Imperfect catch phrases:

a menudo	often	nunca	never
a veces	at times	por un rato	for a while
cada día (año, etc.)	every day (year, etc.)	siempre	always
con frecuencia	frequently	tantas veces	so many times
cuando	whenever	toda la vida	all one's life
de vez en cuando	from time to time	todo el día	all day long
frecuentemente	frequently	todo el tiempo	all the time
muchas veces	many times	varias veces	several times
todos los _____	every _____ (day, Friday, etc.)		

Read this story about a girl reflecting on her younger years living in Venezuela.

Cuando yo era niña, yo vivía en Venezuela con mi familia. Mi padre trabajaba en una oficina y mi mamá se quedaba en casa con mis hermanos y yo. Había cinco hijos en mi familia, pero sólo había tres habitaciones en nuestro apartamento. Mis hermanos dormían en una habitación y mis dos hermanas y yo dormíamos en la otra, y la tercera habitación obviamente era la de mis padres. Yo era una niña buena, pero a veces causaba problemas para mis padres o para mis hermanos. Yo iba a la escuela todos los días. Era una estudiante responsable y sacaba buenas notas en mis exámenes. Yo siempre quería ir a otros países y ver cómo vivía la gente en otras partes del mundo. Pero mi familia no tenía mucho dinero y por eso no podíamos ir de vacaciones mucho. A veces, íbamos a la playa o a las montañas durante un fin de semana, pero mi padre tenía que trabajar y por eso no podíamos pasar mucho tiempo allí.



Responde a las siguientes preguntas con frases completas en español:

1. ¿Cuántas personas vivían en el apartamento?
2. ¿Qué quería hacer la niña?
3. ¿A dónde iba la niña? Escribe dos lugares, por lo menos.
4. ¿Cómo era la niña?
5. ¿Qué hacían los padres de la niña?

**Now, re-write the story in the present tense by following these steps:**

- 1) Underline or highlight all verbs in the imperfect tense.
- 2) Circle the subject (or highlight it with the same color) that goes with each verb that you identified in #1.
- 3) Write the present tense form of each verb that you identified in the space above it.
- 4) Using the verbs from #3, write the new version on a separate sheet of paper.

## El imperfecto

The imperfect tense is a past tense. It is used to talk about ongoing, habitual, or repeated actions in the past. It is always used to talk about time and age.

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### -AR verbs

yo	<b>-aba</b>	nosotros	<b>-ábamos</b>
tú	<b>-abas</b>	vosotros	<b>-abais</b>
él, ella, Usted	<b>-aba</b>	ellos/as, Uds.	<b>-aban</b>

I was talking. **Yo hablaba.**

You used to work. **Tú trabajabas.**

We used to study Spanish. **Nosotros estudiábamos español.**

### -ER/-IR verbs



yo	nosotros
tú	vosotros
él, ella, Usted	ellos/as, Uds.

He lived in Panama. **Él vivía en Panamá.**

They ate spaghetti every day. **Ellos comían espagueti todos los días.**

### Verbos irregulares:

SER yo era, tú eras, él era, nosotros éramos, vosotros erais, ellos eran

IR yo iba, tú ibas, él iba, nosotros íbamos, vosotros ibais, ellos iban

VER yo veía, tú veías, él veía, nosotros veíamos, vosotros veíais, ellos veían

## Use the imperfect...

...for things that used to happen or be true.

I used to be a student. Yo era estudiante

I used to study math. Yo estudiaba las matemáticas



...to give basic, simple descriptions in the past.

The car was blue. El carro era azul.

My father was a doctor. Mi padre era médico.

The test was difficult. El examen era difícil.

The cat was in the bathroom. El gato estaba en el baño.



...to say “was \_\_\_ing” (use with the verb ‘estar’)

I was washing the clothes. Estaba lavando la ropa.

We were sleeping. Estábamos durmiendo

...to describe mental, emotional, or physical states

I was tired. Estaba cansado/a.

We wanted to read. Queríamos leer.

They knew the answer. Sabían la respuesta.

...to say “would” or “could” when referring to habits

I would walk to school every day. Caminaba a la escuela todos los días.

I could eat six hamburgers. Comía seis hamburguesas. (Podía comer)



### Imperfect catch phrases:

a menudo	often	nunca	never
a veces	at times	por un rato	for a while
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muchas veces	many times	varias veces	several times
todos los _____	every _____ (day, Friday, etc.)		

### Notes for the teacher:

I recommend that grammar notes be given after students are already familiar with whatever you are trying to expose. In this case, I recommend that students have already learned various imperfect verb forms (tenía, quería, era, podía, pensaba, etc.) so that these notes are more of a way to organize or expand their knowledge of imperfect verb forms than to establish it.

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If you teach traditional verb conjugation, your students should be familiar with verb charts and probably don't need the written reminder of the steps to go through (start with the infinitive, drop the ending, add the new ending). You should go through these steps with your students when you give the notes to them.

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If you are a storytelling teacher and use less formal verb conjugation, I recommend asking students what the present tense form of each verb that needs to be conjugated is. Follow the example below, and repeat it for each of the sentence translations.

Ex: "I was talking"

- ¿Cómo se dice 'talks' en español?
  - Habla
- ¿Qué significa la 'a'?
  - She is doing it (talking) now (in the present)
- So looking at the chart, how would you change it to say "I was" the one doing the talking?
  - add -aba / Yo hablaba

Remember to keep the focus on MEANING, and always ask which part of the word tells the action being done (habl-, in the case of the example) and which part says who used to do it (-aba, in the example).

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Remind students of the meaning of the irregular verbs, since they are used to seeing them in very different forms. Remind them of their present tense equivalents (soy, vas, va, es, ve..., etc.) so that they make the connection between the different tense forms of the same verbs.

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When you give the reading, discuss it! Milk the life out of the text so that students hear many repetitions of the verb forms. Ask expository and personalized questions to engage the students in the content.