

10.1

The imperfect tense



ANTE TODO

In **Lecciones 6–9**, you learned the preterite tense. 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	cantaba	bebía	escribía
	tú	cantabas	bebías	escribías
	Ud./él/ella	cantaba	bebía	escribía
PLURAL FORMS	nosotros/as	cantábamos	bebíamos	escribíamos
	vosotros/as	cantabais	bebíais	escribíais
	Uds./ellos/ellas	cantaban	bebían	escribían

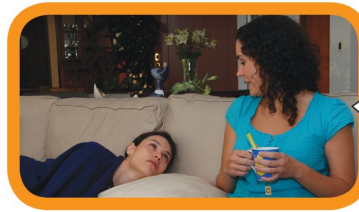
¡ATENCIÓN!

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.

De niña apenas me enfermaba.



Cuando me dolía el estómago, mi mamá me daba té de jengibre.



- 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.

- 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

AYUDA

Like **hay**, **había** can be followed by a singular or plural noun.

Había un solo médico en la sala.

Había dos pacientes allí.

CONSULTA

You will learn more about the contrast between the preterite and the imperfect in **Estructura 10.2**, pp. 346–347.

Uses of the imperfect

▶ As a general rule, the imperfect is used to describe actions that are seen by the speaker as incomplete or “continuing,” while the preterite is used to describe actions that 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?

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

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

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

▶ 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.

¡INTÉNTALO!

Indica la forma correcta de cada verbo en el imperfecto.

1. Mis hermanos _____ **veían** (ver) televisión todas las tardes.
2. Yo _____ (viajar) en el tren de las 3:30.
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.

recursos

