

Proferis and Imperfect Made Easy

Hoja de reglas para el pretérito y el imperfecto

The following guidelines on the use of preterite and imperfect, while not foolproof, should work well in the great majority of cases. Of course, there can be exceptions; how does the speaker interpret the context of a given sentence? When in doubt, choose one of the guidelines and follow it, knowing that in the great majority of cases, that decision will be correct in the given context.

Use the Imperfect

Rule One

Background information; a customary/repeated action or state in the past.

- A. With the seasons—*Era verano*. (It was summer.)
- B. With the weather—*Hacía frío*. (It was cold.)
- C. With time of day—*Eran las seis*. (It was 6:00.)
- D. With age—*Tenía veinte años*. (He was 20 years old.)
- E. With “was or used to” to indicate an ongoing action in the past—*Manejaba y comía*. (He was driving and eating or used to drive and eat.); *Vivía en Nueva York*. (He was living or used to live in New York.)
- F. With “was or used to” to indicate a state in the past—*Estaba cansado*. (He was tired or used to be tired.)