

Using the preterite and imperfect to begin a story

1 You have used the **preterite** and **imperfect** to:

- **talk about what happened on a specific occasion**
- **talk about a sequence of events**
- **talk about a change or a reaction to something**
- **talk about an event that began or ended** while something else was going on
- **say what people, places, and things were generally like**
- **set the scene**
- **explain the circumstances surrounding an event**
- **say what was going on** when something else happened

2 When telling a story in the past, use both the **preterite** and the **imperfect**. Use the **imperfect** to tell what people and things were like, to give background information, and to set the scene. Use the **preterite** to tell what happens. To begin a story use these words.

Érase una vez

Once upon a time

Había una vez

There once was

Hace unos (muchos, cinco...) años *A few (many, five . . .) years ago*

3 Use these words with the **preterite** to tell what happened.

de repente *suddenly* **en seguida** *right away* **un día** *one day*

Hace unos años yo **iba** al desierto los fines de semana a explorar. Casi siempre **hacía** mucho calor y mucho sol, pero **un día** el tiempo cambió.

Eran las tres de la tarde cuando **de repente** **vi** muchos relámpagos y **empezó** a caer granizo...

Preterite and imperfect to continue and end a story

1 Remember that the **imperfect** tells what people *used to do*, what people, things or situations *were like*, how things *used to be*, and what *was going on* when something else happened. The **preterite** tells what *happened* or what *changed*.

2 Use these phrases to continue your story:

fue cuando	<i>that was when</i>
entonces	<i>so, then</i>
luego	<i>then, later</i>
después	<i>after, afterward</i>

3 Use these phrases to end your story:

por fin	<i>finally</i>
al final	<i>in the end</i>
vivieron felices	<i>they lived happily ever after</i>
así fue que	<i>so that's how</i>