

El pretérito

Use the preterit tense when referring to:

- actions that occurred at a fixed point in time.
- actions in the past that were performed a specific number of times.
- the beginning or end of a process.
- actions that occurred during a specific enclosed period of time.
- actions that are part of a chain of events.
- sudden changes in mood, feelings or opinions.

If the action is in the past, and you can determine precisely when it occurred, or how many times it occurred, then you will use the preterite.

El imperfecto

Use the imperfect tense when referring to:

- actions in the past that occurred repeatedly (i.e. habits).
- actions in the past that occurred over an extended period of time.
- background or "setting the stage" for an event that occurred in the past.
- actions which are not physical (feelings and mental actions).
- age.
- time of day.