

## Spanish Verb Tenses

They didn't believe me. \_\_\_\_\_

My family loved me a lot. \_\_\_\_\_

We were very sad for a long time. \_\_\_\_\_

He hated his new boss. \_\_\_\_\_

I liked the photo of your family. \_\_\_\_\_

I liked the flowers in their garden. \_\_\_\_\_

Even though he bothered me, I loved him. \_\_\_\_\_

She worried about you a lot. \_\_\_\_\_

Were you thinking about me? \_\_\_\_\_

What were you thinking about? \_\_\_\_\_

How did you feel during the trial (*el juicio*)? \_\_\_\_\_

He didn't get along with his mother-in-law (*la suegra*). \_\_\_\_\_

**“Would” and “could” in the past:** The words “would” and “could” are unusual with regard to tenses because they are markers for both the imperfect and the conditional tenses in English, and thus often present problems when shifting to another language. Consider the following sentences:

*I would go to the movies but I don't have time.*

*I would go to the movies every weekend as a child. (I used to go to the movies. . . .)*

The first sentence is in the conditional, because it refers to an action that *would* take place if a certain condition were met, namely, my having more time. The second sentence is in the imperfect, as it refers to an action that took place many times in the past. In the imperfect, “would” is the equivalent of “used to.”

The same holds true for “could.” Consider the following sentences:

*I'm so hungry, I could eat three hamburgers.*

*When I was younger, I could eat three hamburgers without gaining weight.*

The first sentence is conditional because it refers to an uncompleted action. The second, however, refers to what the person *used to be able* to do. In the imperfect, “could” is equivalent to “was/were able to.”

*examples:*

Quando yo era joven, **jugaba** al béisbol cada fin de semana.

When I was young, *I would play* baseball every weekend.

Cuando yo vivía en Florida, **podía** nadar todo el año.  
When I lived in Florida, I *could* swim all year long.

Juan **no estudiaba** porque no le gustaba la clase.  
John *wouldn't study* because he didn't like the class.

## ejercicio

## II-2-6

1. As a child, John would watch TV every day after school. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. When we lived in France, we would drink wine with every meal. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Last year they couldn't speak Spanish. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Why couldn't you go with me? \_\_\_\_\_
5. When I was young I would look under the bed every night before turning out (*apagar*) the light.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Lou Gehrig could play baseball better than Ty Cobb. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. When Jane worked (used to work) at the bank, she would drink fifteen cups ( *tazas*) of coffee every day. \_\_\_\_\_
8. When you (*sing. form.*) were younger, you could remember the capitals of every state. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. When Robert worked for the CIA, he would never tell anybody his real name. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. They couldn't vote because they didn't have identification. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. You were never home. Where would you go those nights? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. We couldn't call you because the telephone wouldn't work. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. For every party that we had, Mary would bring French fries and I would bring ketchup. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
14. The bread was moldy (*mohoso*). I couldn't eat it. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
15. As a girl, Vicky would have to make her bed every morning before leaving for school. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Key words and phrases:** Certain words or phrases, when used to describe frequency of a past action, imply repetitive, uncounted occurrences of that action. When one of these words or phrases appears in a sentence describing an ongoing past action, you will use the imperfect tense. Several of these words and phrases are listed below:

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

**ejercicio**      **II-2-7**

1. I always studied before a test. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
2. He frequently called me after 10:00 p.m. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. All my life I wanted to have a piano. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
4. They always cheated (*engañar*) us whenever we played cards. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
5. You ate there frequently. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
6. You (*pl. fam.*) often wrote long letters. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
7. From time to time we sent money to the organization. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
8. Sometimes he didn't earn as much money as his wife. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

9. All the time that I was there, you (*pl. fam.*) never said anything. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. He always sent a thank-you note after receiving a gift. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. She never bought anything without a coupon (*el cupón*). \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. He frequently lied to us, but we never said anything to him. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. I always wondered (*preguntarse*) why she washed her hands so many times every day. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. She was never happy. She complained every day, all day long. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. At times we read, and at times we wrote. \_\_\_\_\_

## ejercicio

II-2-8

Fill in the blanks with the appropriate *preterite* or *imperfect* form of the verb. Look for the "markers," i.e., *anoche* (last night) will set up the preterite, while *con frecuencia* (frequently) will set up the imperfect.

- Yo (hablar) \_\_\_\_\_ con Jorge esta mañana.
- De niño, Felipe (vivir) \_\_\_\_\_ en México.
- Anoche, Marcos (comer) \_\_\_\_\_ tres tacos.
- De niño, Marcos (comer) \_\_\_\_\_ tacos cada noche.
- Ayer, nosotros (ir) \_\_\_\_\_ al cine.
- Yo (comprar) \_\_\_\_\_ esta camisa en Macy's.
- Nosotros (llegar) \_\_\_\_\_ aquí a las dos de la tarde.
- Juanita (llegar) \_\_\_\_\_ a la una.
- María siempre (estudiar) \_\_\_\_\_ en la cocina.

10. Ayer María (estudiar) \_\_\_\_\_ por una hora.
11. A veces los señores Molino (comer) \_\_\_\_\_ en el patio.
12. El jueves pasado, los Yankees (jugar) \_\_\_\_\_ al béisbol contra los Twins.
13. Mi tío siempre (ser) \_\_\_\_\_ más alto que yo.
14. Tú nunca (ser) \_\_\_\_\_ tan alto como yo.
15. Ellos (ir) \_\_\_\_\_ al cine tres veces el fin de semana pasado.

**Clock time and age in the past:** When referring to the time of day or one's age in the past, *always* use the imperfect. There are only two verbs involved here: *ser* (for clock time) and *tener* (for age). Note that references to time and age often are made with regard to other actions, and that these actions often (but not always) are in the preterite.

*examples:*

Era la una cuando llegué.  
*It was one o'clock when I arrived.*  
 imperfect                      preterite

Eran las siete y media cuando me desperté.  
*It was seven-thirty when I woke up.*  
 imperfect                      preterite

Yo tenía diez años cuando conocí a Juan.  
*I was ten years old when I met John.*  
 imperfect                      preterite

No conocía a Juan cuando tenía ocho años.  
*I didn't know John when I was eight.*  
 imperfect                      imperfect

**ejercicio**

**II-2-9**

1. It was two-thirty when you called me. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Mary was twenty-two when she bought her first car. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. It was quarter after four when I found the money. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
4. They were eighteen years old when they graduated from high school. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
5. It was five to five when the tree fell down. \_\_\_\_\_
6. We worked hard when we were fifteen. \_\_\_\_\_
7. When I got up, it was six-fifteen. \_\_\_\_\_
8. I learned how to ride a bike when I was six years old. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

9. It was quarter to four when the telephone rang. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. She had a baby when she was forty. \_\_\_\_\_
11. We didn't know that it was twelve-thirty. \_\_\_\_\_
12. It was three o'clock in the morning when they left. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. Where did you live when you were fourteen years old? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. What time was it when you finished the book? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. How old was John when he got married (*casarse*)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**¿Te toca a tí?**

*Responde a las siguientes preguntas con frases completas:*

1. ¿Qué hora era cuando te acostaste anoche? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. ¿Qué hora era cuando te levantaste esta mañana? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. ¿Cuántos años tenías cuando comenzaste la escuela? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. ¿Cuántos años tenías cuando aprendiste a montar en bicicleta? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. ¿Qué hora era cuando saliste de tu casa esta mañana? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. ¿Qué hora era cuando volviste a tu casa anoche? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. ¿Cuántos años tenías cuando comenzaste a estudiar español? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. ¿Cuántos años tenías cuando aprendiste a nadar? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Había—the past of hay:** Just as *hay* in the present is both singular and plural (there is, there are), its imperfect form, *había* (from the verb *haber*), means both *there was* and *there were*. *Había* is used to express existence, *not* action.

*examples:*

**Había** leche en el refrigerador.  
*There was* milk in the refrigerator.

**Había** tres hombres y un bebé en la película.  
*There were* three men and a baby in the movie.

**No había** dinero en el banco.  
*There wasn't any* money in the bank.

**No había** hojas en el árbol.  
*There weren't any* leaves on the tree.

**ejercicio**

**II-2-10**

1. There was a spider under my bed this morning. \_\_\_\_\_
2. There were twenty people at the party. \_\_\_\_\_
3. There was a fly in my soup. \_\_\_\_\_
4. There were one hundred questions on the test. \_\_\_\_\_
5. There was a lot of noise during the storm. \_\_\_\_\_
6. There were five hundred pages in the book. \_\_\_\_\_
7. There wasn't any gasoline in the tank. (*Any* does not translate here.) \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
8. There weren't any leaves on the tree. \_\_\_\_\_
9. There wasn't enough time for questions. \_\_\_\_\_
10. There were more women than men at the meeting. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
11. There was garbage (*la basura*) on the table. \_\_\_\_\_
12. There was so much fog (*la niebla*) that I couldn't drive. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
13. In January there wasn't anybody outside. \_\_\_\_\_





**“Going to” do something in the past:** The expression of intent, *ir + a + infinitive*, e.g., “*Voy a comprar un carro*” (*I am going to buy a car*) is a mental expression: there is no physical action taking place. Such sentences in the past, therefore, will be in the imperfect.

Yo iba a comprar un carro.  
I was going to buy a car.

Íbamos a comer.  
We were going to eat.

¿Ibas a llamarme?  
Were you going to call me?

Ibais a darme dinero.  
You were going to give me money.

Él iba a cantar.  
He was going to sing.

Ellos iban a contar las ovejas.  
They were going to count the sheep.

**ejercicio**      **II-2-12**

1. I was going to eat. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Were you going to tell me something? \_\_\_\_\_
3. He was going to wear his white shirt but it was dirty. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. We were going to shovel (*quitar*) the snow. \_\_\_\_\_
5. They were going to spend the day in the country but it was bad weather out. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. When were you (*pl. form.*) going to sit down? \_\_\_\_\_
7. I was going to go to bed at ten-thirty but there was a good program on television. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. How were you going to do this? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Why was she going to build a house in the woods? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Who was going to fix this faucet (*el grifo*)? \_\_\_\_\_
11. We were going to brush our teeth but there wasn't any toothpaste (*la pasta de dientes*). \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. I was going to give him money for his birthday. \_\_\_\_\_
13. Where were you (*pl. fam.*) going to send this package? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

14. When were you going to bring us the flowers? \_\_\_\_\_
15. Why wasn't he going to fill the glasses with water? \_\_\_\_\_

**Progressive mood in the past:** There are two ways to show *-ing* in the past in Spanish (and you may use whichever you wish): one is simply to use the imperfect tense (see "ing" in the past on page 106), or you can use *estar* in the imperfect + present participle. The structure of the latter is identical to that covered in Unit 12 of the Present Tense, **The Present Progressive**; however, in the past *estar* will be in the imperfect.

*examples:*

**Yo estaba hablando.**

*I was speaking.*

**Estábamos comiendo.**

*We were eating.*

**Estabas leyendo un libro.**

*You were reading a book.*

**Estabais arreglando (reparando) el coche.**

*You were fixing the car.*

**Él estaba cepillándose los dientes. Ellas estaban mirándose.**

*He was brushing his teeth.*

*They were looking at each other.*

### ¿Qué estabas haciendo anoche?

*Escribe una X delante de las cosas que hiciste.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Yo estaba estudiando español.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Yo estaba jugando a los naipes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Yo estaba duchándome.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Yo estaba escribiendo una carta.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Yo estaba pagando las cuentas.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Yo estaba limpiando la casa.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Yo estaba cocinando.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Yo estaba contando el dinero.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Yo estaba durmiendo.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Yo estaba pensando en mis amigos.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Yo estaba sirviendo una comida especial a mi familia.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Yo estaba escuchando la radio.

## ejercicio

II-2-13

1. I was eating. \_\_\_\_\_
2. You were studying. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Dumbo was flying. \_\_\_\_\_
4. She was eating lunch. \_\_\_\_\_
5. We were drinking milk. \_\_\_\_\_
6. You (*pl. fam.*) were telling the truth. \_\_\_\_\_
7. They were going to bed. \_\_\_\_\_
8. You (*pl. form.*) were brushing your hair. \_\_\_\_\_
9. I was taking a bath. \_\_\_\_\_
10. John was shaving. \_\_\_\_\_
11. Mary was playing the piano. \_\_\_\_\_
12. Mary was playing tennis. \_\_\_\_\_

## traducción

II-2-14

(Preterite and imperfect mix)

I watched "The People's Court" this afternoon while I was eating lunch. I love that show. There was a woman—who was not happy—who was suing the owners of a pet store because she bought a puppy, took it home, didn't train it, and after a few weeks the puppy began to chew and destroy the furniture. This woman wanted a reimbursement for the cost of the dog, its food, shots, even for its toys! The owners seemed normal. This woman seemed to be nuts. The judge was probably thinking the same thing because she lost the case. Afterwards, she told the announcer that she was going to put the dog to sleep. After some commercials, the announcer told his faithful viewers that he bought the dog and named it P.C. (for People's Court).

