

3. Uses of the Imperfect Tense

The imperfect tense expresses continuous or repeated past actions, events, or situations. It is also used to describe the circumstances surrounding a past action or event.

- a.** The imperfect is used to describe what was happening, used to happen, or happened repeatedly in the past:

Los pájaros **cantaban**.
Vivíamos en esta calle.
Tomás **llegaba** tarde a menudo.

The birds were singing.
We used to live on this street.
Thomas would arrive (arrived) often late.

- b.** The imperfect is used to describe persons or things in the past:

Pedro **era** rubio y **tenía** los ojos azules.
La sala **estaba** llena de gente.

Peter was blond and had blue eyes.
The living room was full of people.

- c.** The imperfect expresses a state of mind in the past with the verbs **creer**, **pensar**, **querer**, and **saber**:

Creían (Pensaban, Sabían) que era importante.
Queríamos comprar un coche nuevo.

They believed (thought, knew) that it was important.
We wanted to buy a new car.

- d.** The imperfect expresses the time of day in the past:

Eran las ocho.

It was eight o'clock.

- e.** The imperfect is used to describe a situation that was going on in the past when another past single action or event expressed in the preterite occurred:

Comíamos cuando nos llamó.

We were eating when he called us.