

¿PRETERITE (PAST) or IMPERFECT?

Preterite (Past)

Type of action:

1. Action that advances the narration.
Tocó la puerta. **Entró**. **Saludó** a su madre. (He knocked. He entered. He greeted his mother.)
2. Action limited in time.
Estudió por tres horas. (He studied for three hours.)
Llamó cinco veces. (She called five times.)
3. An action began or completed in the past (not a description of a scene).
Cerró el libro. (He closed the book.)
Empezó a llover a las ocho. (It began to rain at 8:00.)
Se **fue** inmediatamente. (He went immediately.)
4. A change in emotional, physical, or mental state.
Se **puso** pálido. (He became pale.)
Supo que su amigo ganó la lotería. (He found out that his friend won the lottery.)
Todos se **alegraron** al oír las noticias. (Everyone became happy upon hearing the news.)

Imperfect

Type of action:

1. An expression that describes a situation or paints a picture of the scene or setting.
Era tarde. **Hacía** frío. (It was late. It was cold.)
2. A continuous action interrupted by another action.
Mirabamos la televisión cuando sonó el teléfono. (We were watching television when the telephone rang.)
3. A continuous or repeated action in the past.
De niña, **trabajaba** en una pequeña tienda. (As a little girl, she used to work in a small store.)
Íbamos a la playa todos los veranos. (We used to go to the beach every summer.)
4. Description of an emotional, physical, or mental state.
Quería casarme con ella aunque **estaba** gravemente enferma. (I wanted to marry her even though she was gravely ill.)
Creía que iba a llover. (I thought it was going to rain.)
5. Anticipated action in the past.
Creía que **iba** a llover.
Al día siguiente **iba** a tener una fiesta. (The following day I was going to have a party.)
Como **tenía** un examen la próxima semana, no **había** tiempo para divertirme. (Since I was having a test next week, there was not any time for me to enjoy myself.)
6. Telling time in the past.
Era la una de la tarde. **Eran** las ocho de la noche. (It was one o'clock in the afternoon. It was eight o'clock at night.)
7. Giving a person's age in the past.
Cuando él **tenía** ocho años, era muy inteligente. (When he was eight years old, he was very intelligent.)

Complete the following paragraph using the preteriten (past) or imperfect form of the verb correctly.

En una ciudad lejana, _____(1. haber) un castillo muy antiguo. _____(2. ser) un edificio enorme, hecho de piedra negra. Una noche cuando todos en el castillo (3. dormir), _____(4. llegar) un hombre que _____(5. vestir) todo de azul. Al ver que el castillo _____(6. estar) en silencio _____(7. decidir) esperar hasta que amaneciera para acercarse a la puerta. _____(8. saber) que su llegada _____(9. ir) a ser una sorpresa desagradable para los que _____(10. vivir) en la gran fortaleza. Se _____(11. sentar) debajo de un árbol y _____(12. apoyar) la cabeza en el tronco para descansar. Así _____(13. permanecer) por varias horas. Cuando _____(14. abrir) los ojos, el sol ya _____(15. salir). _____(16. estirar) las piernas y _____(17. caminar) hacia el castillo.

Answers

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| 1. description | 6. description | 11. completed action | 16. completed action that advances the narration |
| 2. description | 7. mental change | 12. completed action | 17. action begun in the past |
| 3. continuous action interrupted by another action | 8. mental state | 13. limited action in time | |
| 4. completed action | 9. anticipation | 14. completed action | |
| 5. description | 10. continuous action | 15. continuous action interrupted by another | |