

# Preterite vs Imperfect: Part II

Remember, Spanish has two past tenses: preterite and imperfect. Most verbs can be put into either tense, depending upon the meaning. The preterite tells us **specifically** when an action took place. The imperfect tells us **in general** when an action took place.

Some words and phrases indicate specific time frames, and therefore signal the use of the preterite.

ayer .....	yesterday
anteayer.....	the day before yesterday
anoche.....	last night
desde el primer momento .....	from the first moment
durante dos siglos .....	for two centuries
el otro día .....	the other day
en ese momento .....	at that moment
entonces .....	then
esta mañana .....	this morning
esta tarde.....	this afternoon
la semana pasada.....	last week
el mes pasado .....	last month
el año pasado .....	last year
hace dos días, años .....	two days, years ago
ayer por la mañana .....	yesterday morning
ayer por la tarde.....	yesterday afternoon

Other words and phrases indicate repetitive, vague or non-specific time frames, and therefore signal the use of the imperfect.

a menudo .....	often
a veces.....	sometimes
cada día .....	every day
cada semana.....	every week
cada mes .....	every month
cada año.....	every year
con frecuencia .....	frequently
de vez en cuando.....	from time to time
en aquella época.....	at that time
frecuentemente .....	frequently
generalmente.....	usually
muchas veces.....	many times
mucho .....	a lot
nunca .....	never

por un rato .....	for awhile
siempre .....	always
tantas veces .....	so many times
todas las semanas .....	every week
todos los días .....	every day
todo el tiempo .....	all the time
varias veces .....	several times

Some of these are more obvious than others. The sure-fire way to learn these is to practice, practice, practice!

Speaking of practice, one of the most effective methods of practicing is your verb flashcards. Let's add two more flashcards so that you can become very familiar with the most common expressions that can provide a hint as to whether to use preterite or imperfect:

### Verb Flashcards

#### 49. Expressions that signal use of preterite

ayer .....	yesterday
la semana pasada.....	last week
anoche.....	last night
el mes pasado .....	last month
el otro día .....	the other day
el año pasado .....	last year
entonces .....	then
hace dos días, años.....	two days, years ago
esta mañana .....	this morning
ayer por la mañana .....	yesterday morning

#### 50. Expressions that signal use of imperfect

a menudo .....	often
generalmente.....	usually
a veces.....	sometimes
muchas veces.....	many times
cada día .....	every day
siempre .....	always
cada año.....	every year
todo el tiempo .....	all the time
de vez en cuando.....	from time to time
varias veces .....	several times)