

Spanish listening comprehension text + audio helps you learn grammar in context. Below you will find a short Spanish narrative followed by clear English explanations that highlight how the **preterite** and the **imperfect** are used to tell an unforgettable day. Use the Spanish text to practise listening and the English notes to check understanding.

How preterite and imperfect work together

The **imperfect** sets the scene: it describes ongoing actions, habitual past actions, background information, physical or emotional states, and possessions. The **preterite** narrates completed actions that move the story forward. Below, each Spanish sentence shows one or both tenses in action, with an explanation in English.

Short Spanish listening comprehension text

Antes vivíamos en Maryland.

Mi padre era profesor en la Academia Naval.

También tenía familia en México.

Una de las personas en el laboratorio era el hermano de una mujer que estaba casada con un actor famoso.

Mis padres nos querían mucho.

En casa teníamos dos gatitos nuevos.

Un día los llevamos al veterinario porque parecían enfermos.

El veterinario tenía un perro.

Al final mis padres dijeron que íbamos a tener tres mascotas: dos gatitos y un perro.

Sentence-by-sentence notes (English)

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Antes vivíamos en Maryland. — “Vivíamos” is imperfect. It describes a past situation or background (where we used to live). Use imperfect for ongoing past contexts.

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Mi padre era profesor en la Academia Naval. — “Era” is imperfect. This is a description of a person’s profession in the past, a background detail rather than a single event.

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También tenía familia en México. — “Tenía” (imperfect) indicates possession or an ongoing relationship in the past.

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Una de las personas en el laboratorio era el hermano de una mujer que estaba casada con un actor famoso. — Multiple imperfect verbs (“era”, “estaba”) give background and describe relationships and states rather than specific completed actions.

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Mis padres nos querían mucho. — “Querían” (imperfect) expresses an ongoing emotional state in the past: love, feelings, or attitudes.

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En casa teníamos dos gatitos nuevos. — “Teníamos” (imperfect) describes possession and the ongoing condition of having pets at that time.

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Un día los llevamos al veterinario porque parecían enfermos. —

“Llevamos” (preterite) is a completed action: we took them (one specific event). “Parecían” (imperfect) describes the ongoing state that motivated the action (they seemed sick).

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El veterinario tenía un perro. — “Tenía” (imperfect) again gives background detail about the veterinarian’s possession.

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Al final mis padres dijeron que íbamos a tener tres mascotas: dos gatitos y un perro. — “Dijeron” (preterite) is a completed action (they said).

“Íbamos a tener” expresses a result or future-in-the-past idea that follows from that completed action.

Quick rules and examples

- **Use the imperfect** for: background descriptions, habitual actions, ongoing states, time, age, and emotions. Example: “Vivíamos en Maryland.”
- **Use the preterite** for: completed actions and events that advance the story. Example: “Los llevamos al veterinario.”
- **Mix them** when you need background + action. The imperfect sets the scene; the preterite tells what happened next.

Practice tip

Read the Spanish text aloud, then translate each sentence and identify whether the verb is imperfect or preterite. Repeat while listening to an audio version of the text to build listening and grammar recognition at the same time. Combining text and audio reinforces the connection between sound, form, and meaning.

Use the phrase **Spanish listening comprehension text + audio** as a search term when looking for more materials that pair short narratives with recordings. Practising with purpose—text and audio together—will speed up your ability to hear and use preterite and imperfect naturally.

Have learners (or you, if you are independently studying), practice the task yourself. Talk all about an unforgettable day you experienced.

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