Imperfect

<u>The imperfect tense</u> tells you what used to happen, or what the situation was at some point in the past. It is used in three main ways:

a) to indicate what **used** to happen
Cuando vivíamos en Barcelona, teníamos que hablar catalán

b) description
Antes del siglo XVI Madrid no era más que un pueblo sin importancia, situado en un río que quedaba vacío lo más del año

c) to say what was happening at a particular time [-ing form]
Hablaba al teléfono
Arreglaba mi cuarto

Imperfect uses:

- **Background process** on which a (completed) foreground event is "superimposed"

- **Duration, non-achievement**--event viewed as ongoing, incomplete, or even interrupted ("was/were <u>verb</u>-ing"). "Open box" or "movie"--the event is subject to subdivision and examination.

- **Simultaneous development**

- **Habitual event** ("used to", "would")

- **General time references:** <u>siempre, con frecuencia</u>

There are two sets of endings, one for *–ar* verbs and one for *–er* and *–ir* verbs. Remember that *ser, ver* and *ir* are irregular.

Regular Verbs Endings

Verb Ending in:	Yo	Tu	Usted, El, Ella	Nosotros	Vosotros; Ustedes
AR	aba	abas	aba	ábamos	abais; aban
ER	ía	ías	ía	íamos	íais; ian
IR	ía	ías	ía	íamos	íais; ian

Irregular Verbs:

Subject	Ser	Ir	Ver
Yo	era	iba	veía
Tú	eras	ibas	veías
Él	era	iba	veía
Nosotros	éramos	íbamos	veíamos
Vosotros; Ellos	erais; eran	ibais; iban	veíais; veían

The <u>imperfect continuous</u> is used to describe ongoing actions in the past. The imperfect itself is usually adequate to describe such actions, but this continuous tense is used where extra emphasis is required to stress the ongoing nature of the action.

Instead of the present tense of 'estar', you use the imperfect. The gerund stays the same.
estábamos hablando – we were speaking