

Preterit

The Preterite Tense is used to describe a single, completed action in the past, or an action which took place over a defined period of time – however long.

SUBJECT	AR VERB ENDINGS	IR/ER VERB AR VERB ENDINGS
Yo	é	í
Tú	aste	iste
Él, ella, usted	ó	ió
Nosotros	amos	imos
Ellos, ellas, ustedes	aron	ieron

Some common Irregular verbs with radical changes in the Preterite are:

Verbo	Yo	tú	él, ella, usted	nosotros	ellos, ellas, ustedes
Andar	anduve	anduviste	anduvo	anduvimos	anduvieron
Conducir	conduje	condujiste	condujo	condujimos	condujeron
Dar	di	diste	dio	dimos	dieron
Decir	dije	dijiste	dijo	dijimos	dijeron
Estar	estuve	estuviste	estuvo	estuvimos	estuvieron
Hacer	hice	hiciste	hizo	hicimos	hicieron
Ir & Ser	fui	fuiste	fue	fuimos	fueron
Poner	puse	pusiste	puso	pusimos	pusieron
Poder	pude	podiste	pudo	podimos	podieron
Querer	quise	quisiste	quiso	quisimos	quisieron
Saber	supe	supiste	supo	supimos	supieron
Tener	tuve	tuviste	tuvo	tuvimos	tuvieron
Traer	traje	trajiste	trajo	trajimos	trajeron
Venir	vine	viniste	vino	vinimos	vinieron
Ver	vi	viste	vio	vimos	vieron

Spelling changes in the Preterite occur because the Preterite vowel endings affect the way some consonants sound.

In the preterite: verbs ending in *-car*, *-gar*, and *-zar* changes only in the [yo] form.

- **car** changes to **-que**,
- **gar** changes to **-gue**
- **zar** changes to **-ce**.

Some verbs change their meanings in the past tense:

Verb	Present tense	Preterite tense
Querer	<i>Quiero</i> "I want.."	<i>Quise</i> "I tried to.."
No Querer	<i>No quiero</i> "I don't want.."	<i>No quise</i> "I refused to.."
Conocer	<i>Conozco</i> "I know someone /some place"	<i>Conocí</i> "I met someone (first time)"
Saber	<i>Sé</i> "I know a fact.."	<i>Supe</i> "I found out.."
Poder	<i>Puedo</i> "I can"	<i>Pude</i> "I managed to.."
No Poder	<i>No puedo</i> "I can't"	<i>No pude</i> "I failed to.."

Preterite Uses:

- **Foreground / Focus event**, often one which presents an independent event or advances the story line
- **Achievement**: start or completion is relevant; often momentary events. "Closed box" or "snapshot"--no subdivisions of the event are examined.
- **Sequential development**
- **Repeated event** with clear start and finish and a specific number of repetitions
- **Specific time references**: ayer, el domingo, el año pasado