**SUMMARY OF THE USES OF THE PRETERITE**

**1. To talk about distinct, individual actions or events in the past.**

*[These may have occurred only once or be seen as having happened individually a number of times.]*

**2. To talk about changes in conditions.**

**3. To describe actions that occurred within a defined period of time.**

*[A time phrase, such as* ***por una hora*** *or* ***por un año****, is often used in these cases.]*

**SUMMARY OF THE USES OF THE IMPERFECT**

**1. To describe conditions that were ongoing in the past.**

*[This includes physical characteristics, states of mind, and emotions, as well as age.]*

**2. To talk about events that were ongoing (in progress) in the past.**

*[This includes simultaneous ongoing events, usually expressed with* ***mientras****.* ***Cuando*** *can have the meaning of* ***mientras*** *and thus can be followed by the imperfect.]*

*[The imperfect also expresses actions in progress that were interrupted by another action (expressed with the preterite).]*

*[The* ***ir a + infinitive structure*** *is almost always in the imperfect.]*

.

**3. To talk about habitual events in the past**

*[Often (but not always) this use of the imperfect is signaled by the use of words and phrases that emphasize the habitual nature of the action:* ***todos los días****,* ***siempre****, and so on.]*

**4. The imperfect is always used to tell time in the past in Spanish.**

**PRETERITE AND IMPERFECT TOGETHER**

When a sentence contains more than one verb, any sequence or combination of tenses is possible, depending on what you wish to express: all preterite, all imperfect, or a combination of the two. Remember that a frequent pattern is as follows: the imperfect describes what was happening when another action (expressed in the preterite) occurred.