

SER & IR • Imperfect & Preterite

Imperfect (non-specific) Past

These events happened repeatedly or over a period of time in the past... actions that a person "used to do" or "was doing".

IR = to go		SER = to be	
iba	íbamos	era	éramos
ibas	ibais	eras	erais
iba	iban	era	eran
(was/were OR used to go)		(was/were OR used to be)	

Examples

Yo era científico por veinte años.

Ella bailaba profesionalmente antes del accidente.

Yo siempre iba al mercado el viernes.

Nosotros íbamos a visitar, pero no hay tiempo.

I was (used to be) a scientist for 20 years.

She danced (used to dance) professionally before the accident.

I always went (used to go) to the market on Friday.

We were going to visit, but there's not time.

Preterite (specific) Past

These events happened once in the past and are done/completed. Because SER & IR have identical verb forms, the only way to determine whether the action is BE or GO is through context--the other words in the sentence.

IR = to go		SER = to be	
fui	fuimos	fui	fuimos
fuiste	fuisteis	fuiste	fuisteis
fue	fueron	fue	fueron
(went)		(was/were)	

Examples

Yo fui al mercado el viernes pasado.

Ella fue al dentista ayer.

Los hermanos Lopez fueron los ganadores.

Nosotros fuimos los perdedores anoche.

I went to the market last Thursday.

She went to the dentist yesterday.

The Lopez brothers were the winners.

We were the losers last night.