You will use the Imperfect

- When you "set a scene" describing what your house or dog used to look like and what your family was like. Think of looking at a photograph and describing the people in it and what they were doing. Since the photograph is static, the people in it can't start doing something different. So you can only describe the scene you see.
- When you are describing what people were doing (in the process of doing) or used to do or when you describe what it was like when you arrived at the party last night.

However, the stories that occur within these settings happen in the ***Preterite!*** (which we will look at after our example.)

For example, let's set a scene:

- *Eran las nueve de la noche. Era viernes. Hacía mal tiempo. Llovía. Todos estábamos en casa. Mamá y Papá miraban la televisión; yo leía una novela de StarTrek; mi hermana hablaba por teléfono con su novio en su cuarto. Esnupi (nuestro perro) dormía detrás del sillón en la sala.*
- It was 9:00 at night. It was Friday. It was bad weather. It was raining. We were all at home. Mom and Dad were watching television; I was reading a StarTrek novel; my sister was talking on the phone with her boyfriend in her room. Esnupi (our dog) was sleeping behind the armchair in the living room.

This has all been written in the [Imperfect](#).

But now let's get to the action:

- *De repente, ¡Entró un ladrón! Pasó por la escalera y caminó hasta la recámara de mis padres. Miró en el cuarto cuando oyó la voz de mi hermana. Se volvió y bajó las escaleras. Trató de huir de la casa, pero Esnupi se despertó y mordió la pierna del ladrón.*
- Suddenly, a robber entered! He went upstairs and walked down to my parent's bedroom. He looked in the room but then he heard my sister's voice. He turned and went down the stairs. He tried to flee the house, but Esnupi woke up and bit the robber's leg.

This is a series of actions in the Preterite that happened within the setting established by the Imperfect.

The focus of the Preterite is on completed action(s). The Imperfect focuses on a state of being.