

Did you know that there are five Spanish verbs that have a different meaning in the imperfect than in the preterit?

While recording our bonus podcast about the imperfect and the preterit Rosa taught me that there are five verbs that have a different meaning in the imperfect and in the preterit. Some of these examples are from the beautiful song, [Hasta que Te Conocí](#).

1. **saber** - imperfect - “to know (something)” preterit – to find out/to learn.

Examples:

imperfect: No **sabía** de tristezas. - I didn't know about sadness.

No **sabía** tu nombre. – I didn't **know** your name.

preterit: I found out the truth yesterday - **Supe la verdad ayer**.

Quando supe tu nombre, te reconocí. - When I found out/learned your name, I recognized you.

2. **conocer** – imperfect – “to know (someone)” preterit – “to meet someone”

Examples:

imperfect: **Conocía** a Maria. – I **used to know** Maria.

preterit: **Hasta que te conocí, vi la vida con dolor.** - Once **I met you**, I saw life as painful.

3. **querer** - imperfect - “to want” preterit – to try.
no querer - imperfect - “didn't want to” preterit – to refuse.

Examples:

imperfect: Ella **quería** ir a la fiesta. – She **wanted** to go to the party.

Ella no **quería** ir a la fiesta. – She didn't **want** to go to the party.

preterit: **Quisé** hacerlo pero no pude. – I tried to do it but I failed.

Ella **no quiso** ir a la fiesta. – She **refused** to go to the party.

4. **poder** – imperfect: “was able to (was capable of)” preterit: managed to / succeeded
no poder - imperfect - “wasn't able to (wasn't capable of)” preterit – failed to.

Examples:

imperfect: No **podía** ir a la fiesta. – I **couldn't** go to the party.

preterit: Los piratas **no pudieron** abrir el archivo. – The hackers **didn't succeed** in opening the file.

5. **tener** – imperfect: **used to have** preterit: **received**

Examples:

imperfect: **Tenía** un carro azul. – I **used to have** a blue car.

preterit: **Tuve** una carta de mi abuela. – I **received** a card from my grandma.

Did you know?

While *saber* means *to know*, *saber* + algo/nada + de + noun or noun phrase = to have news about something or someone.

No sé nada de Francisco. I don't have any news about Francisco.
Sabes algo de tu sobrino? Do you have any news about your niece?

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Have fun practicing: Here are some links to online games for practicing the imperfect and the preterit. If you find others, please add them to the [forum](#).

http://www.quia.com/pop/10816.html?AP_rand=129701293

http://www.colby.edu/~bknelson/exercises/pret_irregtrans.html (click on the green triangle at the bottom of the page to check your answers).