



The Imperfect Tense Grammar Note

The Imperfect Tense - Regular Verbs

This tense can also be referred to the "**used to**" or "**was**" tense. It is used to describe a particular action in the past which no longer has a link to the present. It's mainly used to write reports, articles or novels.

e.g. When I was young **played/used to play** violin.
He **was writing** a letter when I last saw him.

This tense is not used as often as the Perfect Tense and it does not require an auxiliary verb.

To make the imperfect tense of a regular verb in German is simple. Look at the verb below as a model for how the imperfect tense works with a regular verb.

Step 1: Start with the infinitive you need - tanzen

Step 2: Chop off the en or n- tanz (stem)

Step 3: Add the special endings to the stem

ich -te

du -test

er/sie/es /man -te

wir -ten

ihr -tet

Sie -ten

sie -ten

Regular Imperfect Tense of tanzen - to dance

ich tanzte

du tanztest

er/sie/es/man tanzte

wir tanzten

ihr tanztet

Sie tanzten

sie tanzten

The Imperfect Tense - Irregular Verbs

If the verb is irregular, you need to use the irregular verb stem then add slightly different endings.

The irregular imperfect verb stems can be found in a dictionary or on an irregular verb list.

For example, if you check the verb **trinken** (to drink), you will find that it is an irregular verb and that the irregular imperfect stem is **trank**. Then you need to add the imperfect endings to the imperfect stem.

Stem endings for irregular verbs in the imperfect tense

Step 1: Start with the infinitive you need- trinken

Step 2: Check dictionary for the irregular stem - trank

Step 3: Add the special endings to the irregular stem

ich -

du -st

er/sie/es /man -

wir -en

ihr -t

Sie -en

sie -en

Irregular Imperfect Tense of trinken - to drink

ich trank

du trankst

er/sie/es/man trank

wir tranken

ihr trankt

Sie tranken

sie tranken

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