

Past Imperfective

Conjugation

It is constructed by adding a “می” prefix before past simple verbs.

Here is an example for the verb “to see”:

Verb Infinitive: دیدن Past Stem: دید

[I] used to see	می دیدم
[you] used to see	می دیدی
[he/she/it] used to see	می دید
[we] used to see	می دیدیم
[you (pl.)] used to see	می دیدید
[they] used to see	می دیدند

Usage

There is no exact English equivalent for Persian past imperfective. It is used to express habitual actions in the past. It is also sometimes used to express continuous actions in the past, which are more commonly expressed by the past continuous (discussed in the next lesson) in modern Iranian Persian.

The kings thought that they are God's delegates.	شاهان فکر می کردند نماینده ی خدا هستند.
At the time of the war we listened to the news every day.	در زمان جنگ هر روز به اخبار گوش می دادیم.
You didn't talk to me like this before.	قبلاً این طوری با من حرف نمی زدی.
-What were you doing? -I was studying.	-چه کار می کردی؟ -درس می خواندم.

Some verbs like “to know”, “to be able to” and “to want” correspond to states, rather than actions. As in English, the continuous form of these verbs in the past is never expressed with past continuous. In Persian, the past imperfective is used.

I didn't want anything from anyone.	از کسی چیزی نمی خواستم.
The government knew the name of all of the criminals but didn't say anything.	دولت اسم همه ی مجرمان را می دانست اما چیزی نگفت.
I wanted (lit. my heart wanted) but I couldn't.	دل من می خواست اما نمی توانستم.

Further usages of the past imperfective tense will be discussed later.

