

## The Imperfect Tense

**Basic Idea:** Views the action as an unfolding event, “from inside”  
**Indicative Mood:** Almost always past time (more time-bound than aorist)  
**Non-Indicative Moods:** -- (does not occur)

Single-event	<b>Progressive</b> (Descriptive)	“was (continually) doing” “was (right then) happening”	Past time. Action viewed as <i>in progress</i> from the speaker’s viewpoint. Emphasizes <i>vividness</i> or the fact that the action <i>happens at the same time</i> as another action.
		Matt 8:24 αὐτὸς δὲ ἐκάθευδεν	“But he <b>was sleeping</b> ”
	<b>Ingressive</b> (Inchoative, Inceptive)	“began doing”	Past time. Emphasizes the <i>beginning</i> of an action. Implies that the action <i>continued</i> open-endedly.
		John 4:30 καὶ ἤρχοντο πρὸς αὐτόν	“And they <b>began coming</b> to him”
Multiple-event	<b>Iterative</b>	“kept on doing” “were repeatedly doing”	Past time. Emphasizes that the action was performed <i>repeatedly</i> , either by the same individual or by various members of a group.
		John 19:3 ἔλεγον, Χαῖρε	“ <b>They kept on saying</b> , ‘Hail!’”
	<b>Customary</b> (Habitual)	“used to do” “often did” “used to be”	Past time. Emphasizes that an action was performed <i>regularly</i> , habitually, or that a state continued over an extended time. Such customary action takes place over a <i>broader span of time</i> than with the iterative imperfect.
		Luke 2:41 ἐπορεύοντο οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ κατ’ ἔτος	“His parents <b>used to go</b> every year.”
Special Uses	<b>Conative</b> (Voluntative, Tendential)	“was trying to do” “wanted to do”	Usually past time (occasionally present). Emphasizes the <i>desire to begin</i> an action or <i>complete</i> an action already begun.
		Matt 3:14 ὁ δὲ Ἰωάννης διεκώλυεν αὐτόν	“But John <b>was trying to prevent</b> him.”
	<b>Indirect Discourse</b>	“had done”	Sometimes in indirect discourse the imperfect is used in a “past perfect” sense. In these cases it loses its characteristic perspective on the action as ongoing.
		John 2:22 ἐμνήσθησαν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι τοῦτο ἔλεγεν.	“His disciples remembered that <b>he had said</b> this.”