3.1

The preterite is the Spanish tense for completed actions in the past.

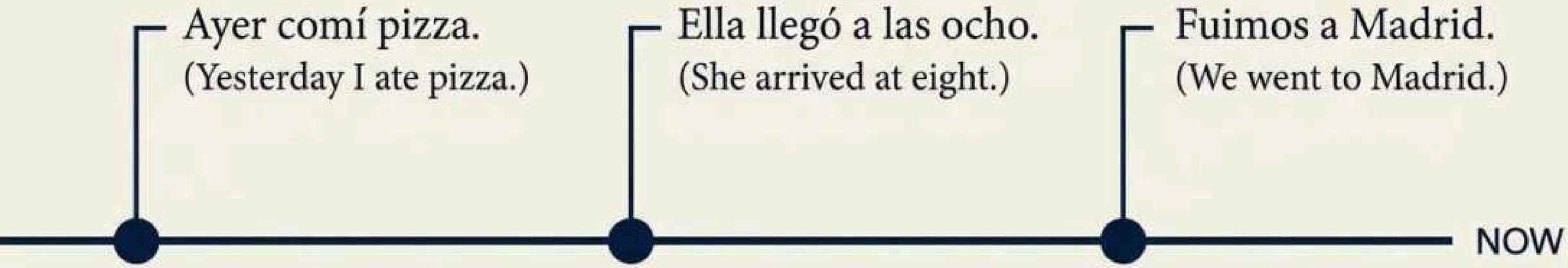


I ate | she arrived | we went

Objective: By the end of this lecture, you will be able to tell what you did yesterday.

3.2

Use the preterite when an action happened and is finished, often at a particular time. Each event has a clear end.



3.3

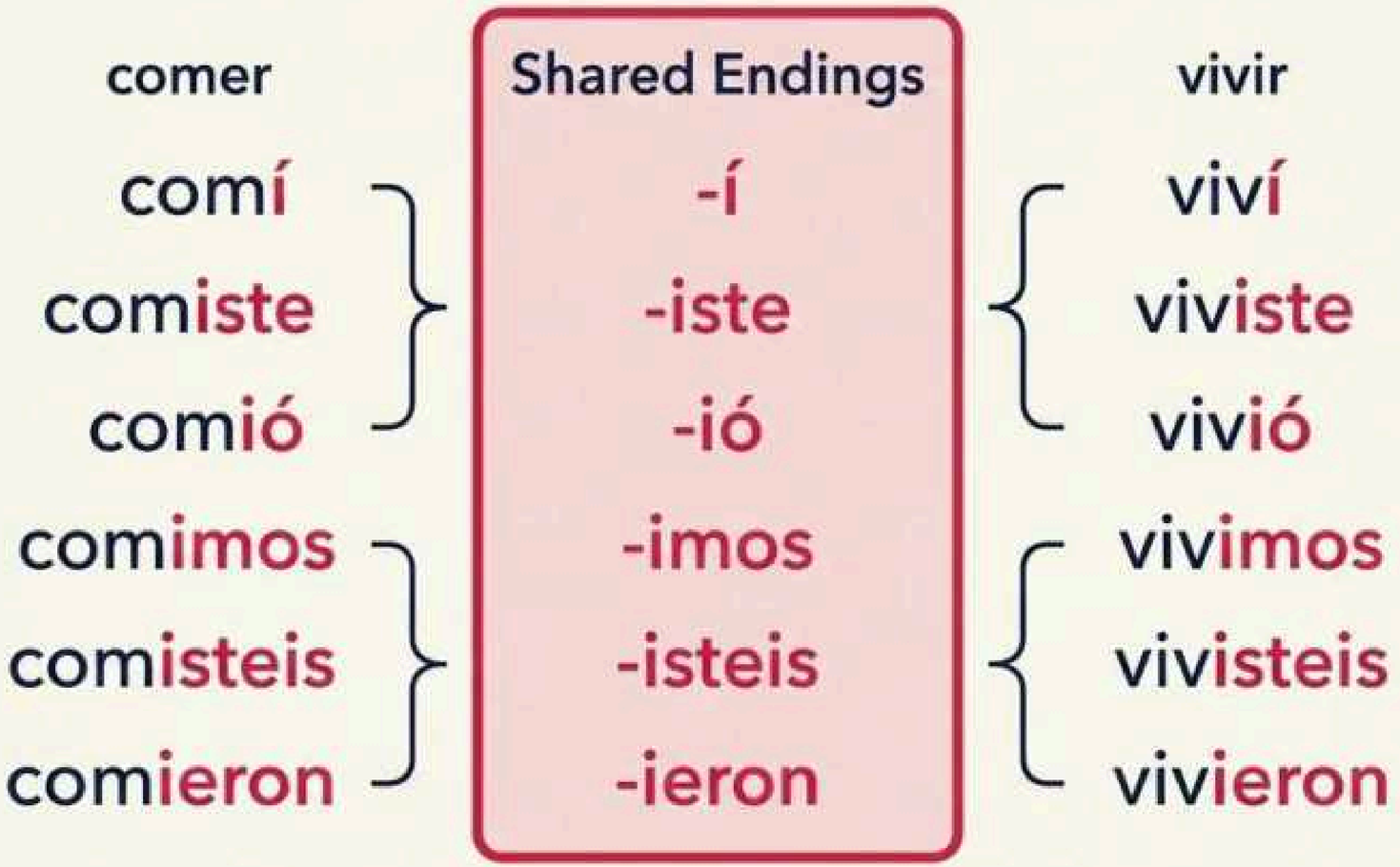
Regular -ar verbs

(yo)	hablé	hablamos	(nosotros)
(tú)	hablaste	hablasteis	(vosotros)
(él/ella)	habló	hablaron	(ellos/ellas)

Notice that the accents on *hablé* and *habló* are essential.

3.4

Regular **-er** and **-ir** verbs share one identical set of endings.



3.5

Hablo

Present (I speak)

Habló

Preterite (He or she spoke)

hablamos (Present: we speak) = hablamos (Preterite: we spoke)

Context (words like *ayer*) tells you which.

3.6

Three groups of verbs change spelling in the **yo** form ONLY, to keep the sound. Other forms are regular.

Verb ending in **-car** → change to **-qué**	(busqué, I looked for)
Verb ending in **-gar** → change to **-gué**	(llegué, I arrived)
Verb ending in **-zar** → change to **-cé**	(empecé, I began)

3.7

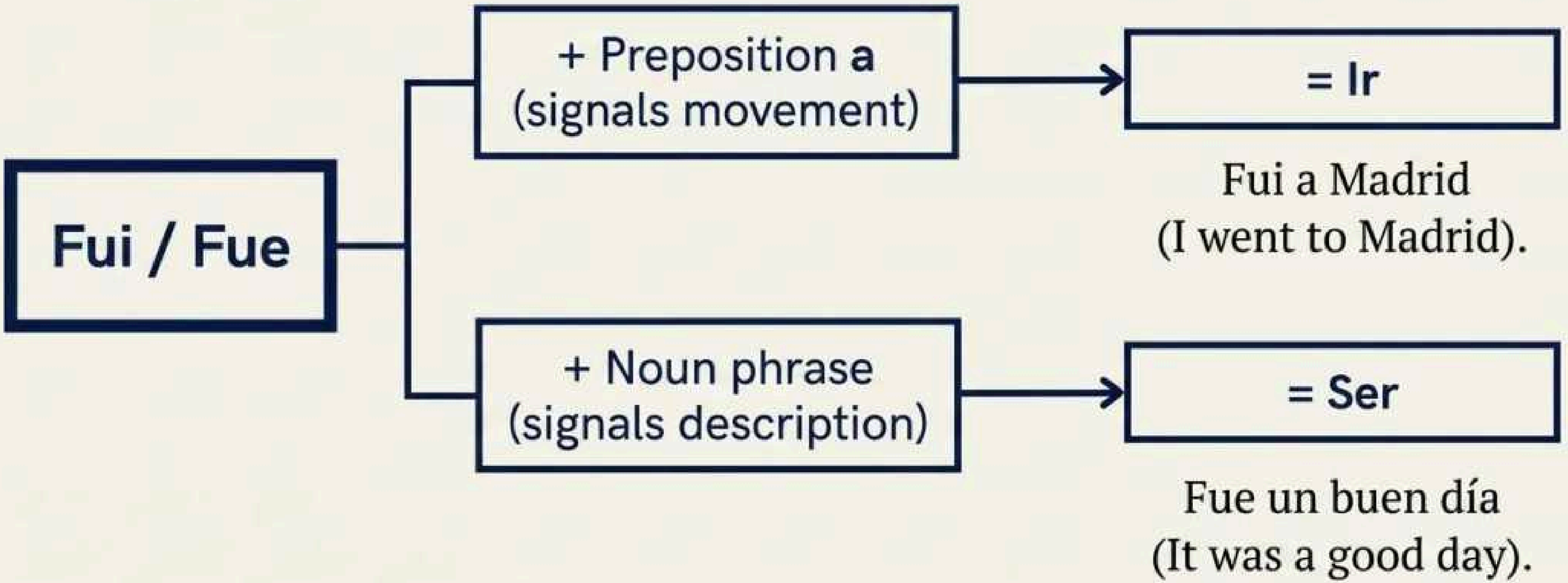
Two of the most common verbs share exactly the same preterite forms.

Ir (To go)	Ser (To be)
fui	fuimos
fuiste	fuisteis
fue	fueron



Memorize: They look like nothing else you have learned. Say them aloud five times.

3.8


Fui / Fue
+ Preposition a
(signals movement)
= Ir
Fui a Madrid
(I went to Madrid).
+ Noun phrase
(signals description)
= Ser
Fue un buen día
(It was a good day).

3.9

They take the -er and -ir endings but with no accents.

Dar	
di	dimos
diste	disteis
dio	dieron

NO ACCENTS

Single-syllable forms never carry written accents.

Ver	
vi	vimos
viste	visteis
vio	vieron

3.10

hice	hicimos
hiciste	hicisteis
hizo	hicieron

hizo is spelled with a z
to keep the soft sound.

"¿Qué hiciste ayer?"

(What did you do yesterday?
— One of the most useful
questions in the language).

3.11

Many other verbs use irregular stems with one shared set of unaccented endings.

NO ACCENTS	-e	-iste	-o	-imos	-isteis	-ieron
tener → tuv-	tuve					
estar → estuv-			estuvo			
poder → pud-				pudimos		
poner → pus-	puse					
querer → quis-						quisieron
venir → vin-	vine					
saber → sup-	supe					

3.12

Verbs whose stem ends in j use -eron rather than -ieron in the third person plural.

J-stem + -eron ~~-ieron~~

Decir → dije, dijiste, dijo, dijimos, dijisteis, dijeron.

Traer → traje, trajiste, trajo, trajimos, trajisteis, trajeron.

3.13

When an -er or -ir verb has a vowel before the ending, the i between vowels becomes y. Only the third person forms change spelling.

leí	leímos
leíste	leísteis
leyó	leyeron

Oír and *caer* do the same.

3.14

Stem-changing -ir verbs change in the preterite, but ONLY in the third person.

Dormir (o → u)

dormí	dormimos
dormiste	dormisteis
durmió	durmieron

Pedir (e → i)

pedí	pedimos
pediste	pedisteis
pidió	pidieron

Sentir → sintió, sintieron (e → i).

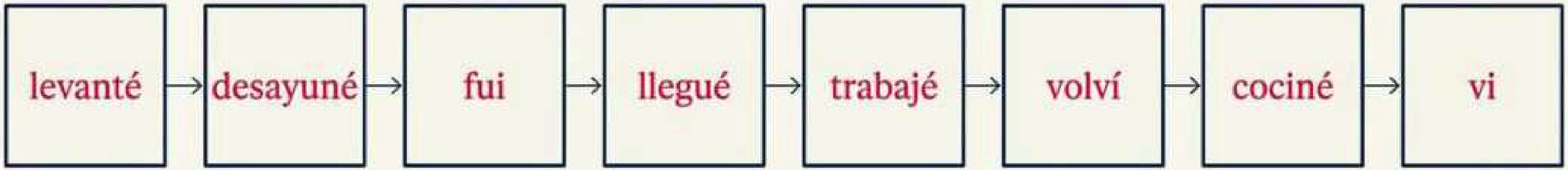
3.15

Time markers often signal the preterite.
Use them to anchor your stories in time.



3.16

Insight: Every verb names a finished event, and the events follow one another in order.



Ayer me levanté a las siete, desiyuné y fui al trabajo. Llegué a las ocho y trabajé hasta las cinco. Después volví a casa, cociné y vi una película.

3.17

Questions

¿Qué hiciste el fin de semana?
(What did you do at the weekend?)

¿Adónde fuiste?
(Where did you go?)

¿Con quién hablaste?
(Whom did you talk to?)

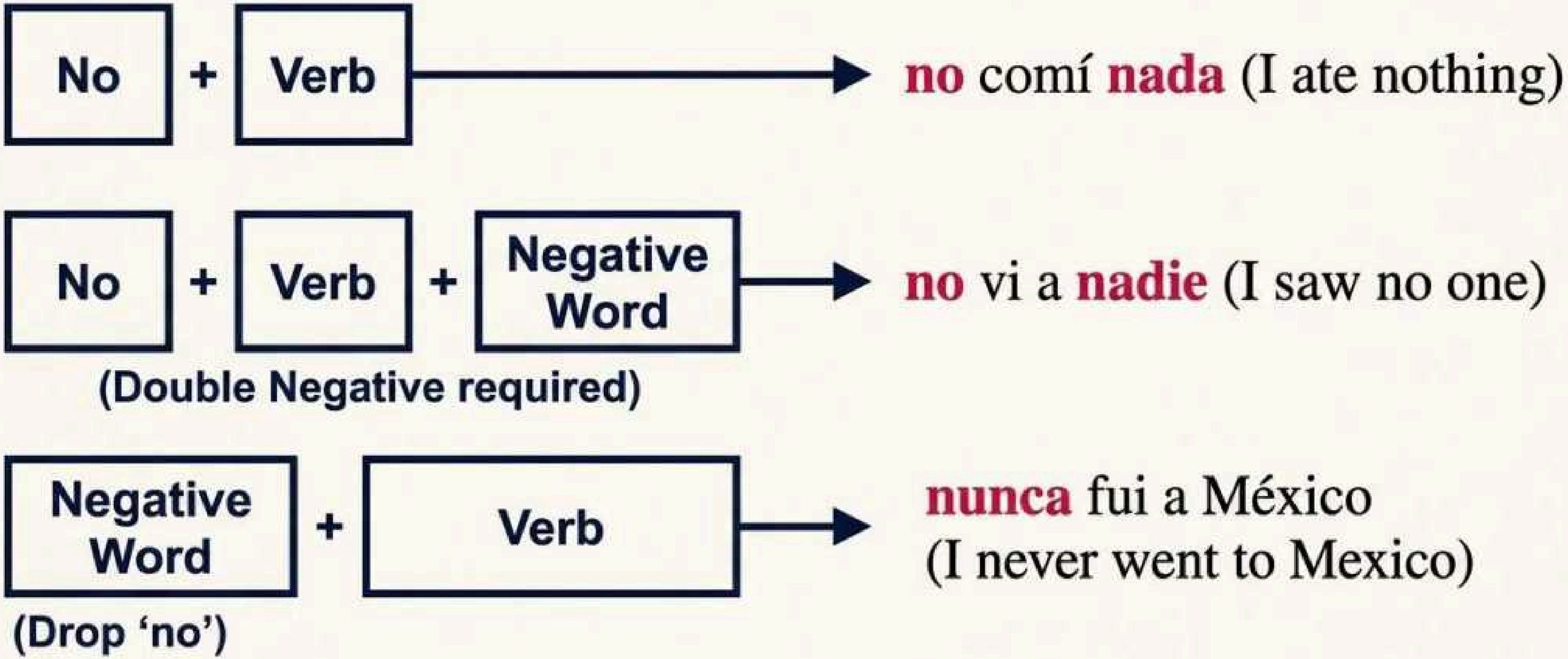
Answer Formulas

Fui a…

Hablé con…

Comí…

3.18


No + Verb
no comí nada (I ate nothing)
No + Verb + Negative Word
no vi a nadie (I saw no one)
(Double Negative required)
Negative Word + Verb
nunca fui a México
(I never went to Mexico)
(Drop 'no')

3.19

Person A ¿Qué hiciste el sábado?

Fui al mercado con mi hermana y compramos fruta. Person B

Person A ¿Y después?

Comimos en un restaurante y volvimos a casa. Person B

Read it aloud, switching roles, and then replace the details with your own.

3.20

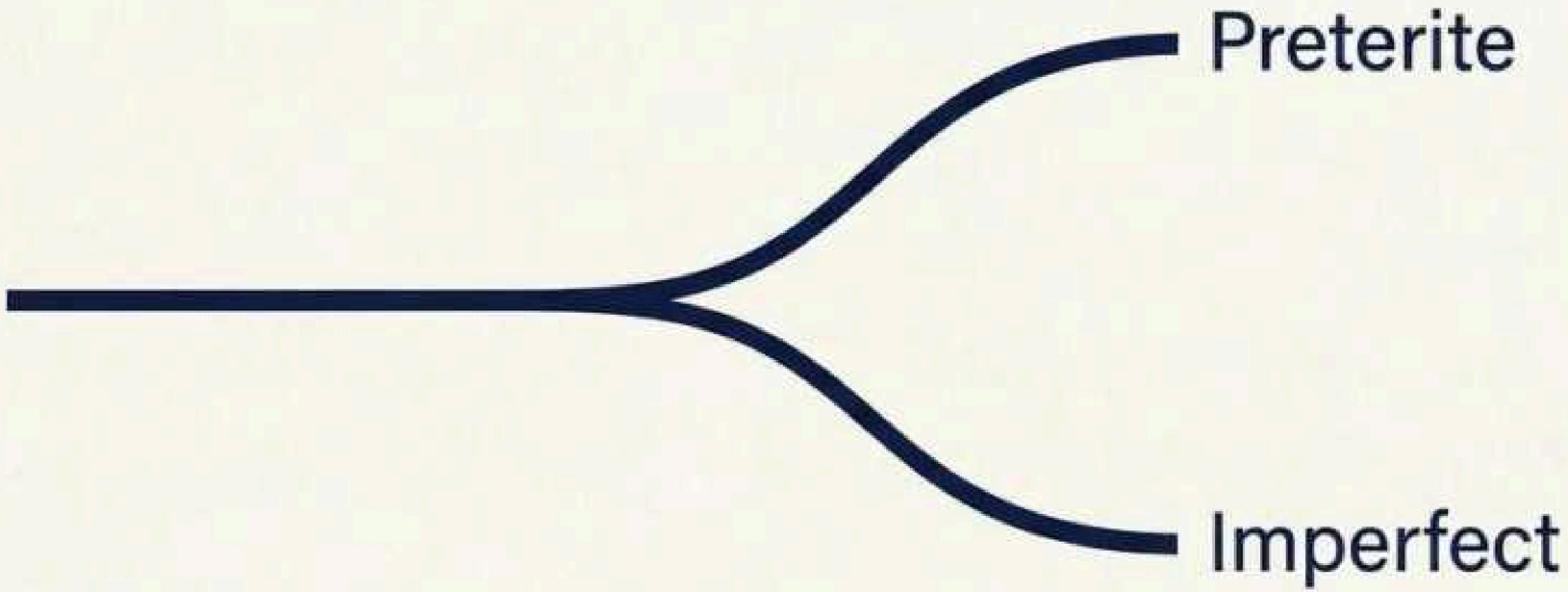
Practice for this lecture

Practice Checklist

- ❑ Write six sentences about yesterday.
- ❑ Use at least two irregular verbs and two time markers.
- ❑ Say them aloud today, and again tomorrow before looking.
- ❑ If you notice errors, circle them.

The pattern of your mistakes is your most useful guide to what to review.

3.21



In lecture four, we meet the other past tense, the imperfect,
and learn exactly how to choose between the two.