Using the preterite (indefinido) and the imperfect (imperfecto)

• This tutorial aims to help you understand how our minds make sense of the world and how we use language, more specifically grammar, to communicate our individual perspectives on situations and time.
• So, to understand how language works we need to understand what language allows us to do. We use grammar to describe a particular view of a situation (this is what we call aspect) and to locate situations in time by means of tense.

1. It’s a question of PERSPECTIVE…

2. …and FOCUS or SCOPE
The preterite... evokes distance or detachment

The imperfect... evokes closeness

We can also think about this as construing events (e.g., 'to eat') or states (e.g., 'to be') from different viewing frames.

• Juan was generally intelligent. However, he acted unintelligently when he bought that car.
• We 'zoom in' on the situation and thereby impose boundaries on it.
• We construe the situation as temporary.

Juan era muy inteligente. Sin embargo, fue muy tonto al comprar ese coche.