Imperfect Tense

The imperfect tense (l'imperfetto) in Italian is used to describe past actions that were ongoing, habitual, or repeated, as well as to describe background situations and states of being. It's often translated as "used to" or "was/were + -ing" in English.

The general format of an imperfect tense verb in Italian is formed by removing the infinitive ending (-are, -ere, or -ire) from the verb and adding the imperfect endings: -vo, -vi, -va, -vamo, -vate, -vano. These endings are attached to the stem of the verb, which is the infinitive minus the final -re.

Here's a breakdown:

1. **Identify the infinitive:** For example, parlare (to speak), vedere (to see), dormire (to sleep).

2. **Remove the infinitive ending (-are, -ere, or -ire):** This leaves you with the verb stem. For the examples above, the stems are parl-, ved-, and dorm-.

3. **Add the imperfect endings:**
   - **-vo**: (for io - I)
   - **-vi**: (for tu - you)
   - **-va**: (for lui/lei/Lei - he/she/formal you)
   - **-vamo**: (for noi - we)
   - **-vate**: (for voi - you all)
   - **-vano**: (for loro - they)

Example with parlare (to speak):

- io parl-avo (I was speaking/used to speak)
- tu parl-avi (you were speaking/used to speak)
- lui/lei/Lei parl-ava (he/she/formal you were speaking/used to speak)
- noi parl-avamo (we were speaking/used to speak)
- voi parl-avate (you all were speaking/used to speak)
- loro parl-avano (they were speaking/used to speak)

Note: The verb essere (to be) is irregular in the imperfect tense.

Here are some examples of verbs in the imperfect tense:

Regular -are verbs:

- **Parlare (to speak):**
  Parlavo (I used to speak/ I was speaking), parlavi (you used to speak/ you were speaking), parlava (he/she used to speak/was speaking), parlavamo (we used to speak/were speaking), parlavate (you all used to speak/were speaking), parlavano (they used to speak/were speaking).

- **Mangiare (to eat):**
  Mangiavo (I used to eat/I was eating), mangiavi (you used to eat/you were eating), mangiava (he/she used to eat/was eating), mangiavamo (we used to eat/were eating), mangiavate (you all used to eat/were eating), mangiavano (they used to eat/were eating).