Präteritum – Rules and Examples

German language is complex and often challenging for English speakers. One of the most difficult aspects of learning the language is mastering its verb tenses. Präteritum is one of the tenses that foreign language learners must understand in order to communicate effectively in German. The following article will explain the rules of Präteritum as well as provide examples of how to use it correctly.

What is Präteritum?

Präteritum, or the past tense, is a verb tense that is used to describe events that occurred in the past. It is the most common past tense used in the German language. Präteritum is used to describe events that are completed, or that have no continuity in the present. It is not used to describe events that are still happening or that are ongoing.

Rules of Präteritum

The rules of Präteritum are quite simple, but they must be followed in order to make sure that the verb tense is used correctly in German. The following are some of the most important rules to remember when using Präteritum:

1. Regular Verbs

Regular verbs are verbs that follow the same pattern when conjugated in Präteritum. The following is a list of the regular verb endings for Präteritum:

- ich: -te
- du: -test
- er/sie/es: -te
- wir: -ten
- ihr: -tet
- sie/Sie: -ten

2. Irregular Verbs

Irregular verbs are verbs that do not follow the same pattern as regular verbs when conjugated in Präteritum. These verbs have different endings and must be memorized. The following is a list of some of the most common irregular verbs in Präteritum:

- sein: war
- haben: hatte
- werden: wurde
- können: konnte

Examples of Präteritum

The following are some examples of Präteritum used in sentences:

- Ich ging gestern ins Kino. (I went to the movies yesterday.)
- Er hatte viel Freude. (He had a lot of fun.)
- Wir konnten nicht kommen. (We couldn't come.)
- Du hast den Film gesehen. (You saw the movie.)

Präteritum

Sherlock Holmes ____ (erforschen) viele Fälle.
Er ____ (besuchen) seinen Freund Watson.
Er ____ (haben) eine sehr scharfe Beobachtungsgabe.
Er ____ (lösen) Rätsel und ____ (befragen) Verdächtige.
Er ____ (entdecken) einige Hinweise.
Er ____ (verfolgen) die Spur des Täters.
Er ____ (liefern) die Lösung des Falls.
Er ____ (erhalten) viel Lob für seine Arbeit.

erforschte, entdeckte, lieferte, besuchte, verfolgte, erhielt, löste, befragte, hatte