ATTAIN vs OBTAIN

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The verb **attain** implies achieving an objective through hard work and effort whereas the verb **obtain** merely means to acquire. Although one can **obtain** something with effort, it isn't implied by the word obtain.

When to use attain - Attain is a verb that means to succeed in achieving something, especially after a lot of effort.

- After a lot of hard work, she **attained** her dream of being able to speak 7 languages.
- Not all athletes **attain** this standard of physical fitness.

Attain is often used to talk about academic or professional goals.

- He has **attained** the highest grade in his music exams.
- After working hard for many years, she finally **attained** success as an author.

When to use obtain - Obtain is a verb that means to get something or to gain possession of something.

- The men **obtained** the tools they needed to cut down the tree.
- He **obtained** some rare diamonds through his business connections.

Sometimes either attain or obtain can be used

Occasionally either attain or obtain can be used. They still have slightly different meanings. For example, if you attain your degree or diploma, it means you worked hard to get it. If you obtain your diploma, it means you received it upon graduation.

- If all goes well, she will **attain/obtain** her degree in July.

Attain for the acquisition of a physical item

It is also possible to use the word 'attain' for the acquisition of a physical item when there was a certain amount of effort put in to obtain it, in order to stress such a fact.

- They **attained** a Duke of Edinburgh's Award when applying for university.