Attain vs. Obtain

Some words are commonly used interchangeably in popular media despite having different meanings. This is the case with the terms attain and obtain especially in situations wherein someone obtains something that is related to something that is usually attained. This post will help you determine which word to use in your sentence and avoid mixups in the future.

The word attain is used as a verb which means "to succeed in achieving something that one desires and has worked for" or "to reach a specified age, size, or amount."

> What Propelled Time Warner (TWX) to Attain New 52-Week High?
> Nasdaq

> Indian football team attain highest FIFA ranking in 21 years
> Deccan Chronicle

> Collie Art Gallery attain grant
> Collie Mail

On the other hand, obtain is a verb which means "to get, acquire, or secure something."

> A Warrant Is Needed To Obtain Text Messages, State High Court Rules
> WBUR

> Q Foundation helps bi woman obtain housing
> Bay Area Reporter

> Police Obtain Search Warrant as Chris Soules Investigation Continues
> E! Online

It is important to note that attain is associated with putting forth some degree of effort to produce results while it is not necessarily true for obtain. For example, a person certainly needs to exert effort in order to attain a PhD degree while you do not necessarily need to have effort to obtain a copy of the latest men's magazine. Another example is that a country needs to put effort on research to

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attain nuclear technology but they can opt to just obtain nuclear weapons from other countries.

Hopefully, this post helped you distinguish between the two terms and refrain from using attain and obtain interchangeably in the future.