
A question from Babak in Iran:

What is the difference between *intention* and *intent*?

Gareth Rees answers:

Hello Babak. Thank you for your question about *intent* and *intention*. Both words are nouns that come from the verb intend, which means to have something in mind as a plan or purpose.

In terms of meaning, there is little difference between these two nouns. They both mean a plan, or purpose, to do something. However, there is a difference in the way we use the words. Intent is used in more formal situations, such as in legal contexts, whereas intention is used in a wide range of situations; it is a more everyday word. Also, in grammatical terms, intent is an uncountable noun and intention is a countable noun.

So, for example, in a newspaper report about a court case you might read *he was carrying a gun with intent to commit a bank robbery*. Whereas, in a conversation with a friend, someone might say *I went to the bank with the intention of opening a bank account, but I forgot to take my passport, so I couldn't even do that*.

There is one other important difference. Intent is also an adjective, but intention is only a noun. If you are intent on doing something, you are determined to do something. For example, *she was intent on becoming an actress, so she went to drama school even though it was against her parents' wishes*.

So, my intention was to answer your question, and I hope, Babak, that I've managed to that.

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