Occupational Therapy (OT)

What does an Occupational Therapist do?

- OT's help people of all ages learn or regain the skills they need to function & live independently after a traumatic event.
- For example, OT's may work with:
  - children who have developmental or learning disabilities.
  - people recovering the ability to do their own personal care after a stroke or accident.
  - clients with mental illness in coping with the demands of daily living.
- OT's work in hospitals, mental health facilities, rehabilitation hospitals, public schools, community centers, nursing homes, and private practice.
- OT's develop customized treatment plans; analyze homes and job sites to make recommendations about adaptive needs; train people in using adaptive equipment; and provide support and guidance to family members and caregivers.

How do I become an Occupational Therapist?

- A master's degree or higher in OT is the minimum educational requirement.
- To attend an accredited OT program, you need a bachelor's degree, any major of your choice, with the appropriate prerequisite courses.
- Graduate programs in OT are available at the master and doctoral levels.
- For both the master and doctoral programs the professional content will be similar; however, the entry-level doctoral program will place a greater emphasis on management, theory, research, and critical thinking.
- At the masters level you can earn a MOT, MA, or MS degree depending on the program. All appropriate degrees. A master's program will generally take 2 years to complete.
- To obtain a license, you must graduate from an accredited educational program and pass a national certification examination to become an Occupational Therapist Registered (OTR).

What is the job outlook?

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a faster than average increase in demand for occupational therapists as the age of our population increases.
- To contain costs, OT's are increasingly supervising occupational therapy assistants and aides.
- In 2010, the median annual earnings of occupational therapists was $72,320 (Bureau of Labor Statistics).

What prerequisite courses do I need?

- OT programs do not have a standard set of requirements, however, many similarities in their requirements do exist.
- The initial courses are similar to other professional health care fields such as Physical Therapy programs, but some further courses are required.
- Individual programs vary considerably in the courses they require, but generally a broad academic background is sought including the following:

Prerequisite Course Equivalencies (specific courses may vary depending on major)

Course Subject	Purdue Course
Biology	BIOL 20300-20400 (Anatomy & Physiology), in addition BIOL 11000-11100 is highly recommended and may be required at some schools
Chemistry	Some programs require chemistry - CHM 11100 **OR** 11500
Physics	Some programs require physics - PHYS 22000
Social/Behavioral Science	PSY 12000 & PSY 35000 & HDFS 21000 (psychology courses should cover both theory and methodology) Additional anthropology and sociology courses are also helpful
Communications	Several courses including English composition (ENGL 10600 **OR** 10800), speech (COM 11400) and/or a literature course
Statistics	STAT 30100 **OR** 50300 **OR** SOC 38200 some schools would accept PSY 20100
Other Requirements	Medical Terminology HSCI 13100 **AND** Ethics (PHIL 20100 or equivalent)
Some schools require college algebra. Generally a grade below a C is not acceptable for prerequisite courses.	

What else do I need to do before I apply?

- Clinical experience is generally required (either paid or volunteer) and ideally will include a number of clinical practice settings.
- Some schools require a minimum of 40 hours of clinical observation time split between at least two clinical settings.
- Research experience is a plus and ideally includes learning about human subjects review boards.
- An aptitude test may be needed to apply to some programs—this would be the GRE general test (the Graduate Record Exam).
- If English is not your first language, a TOEFL exam may also be required.
- Application is made through an online system called OTCAS and/or directly with the schools you would like to attend.
- Early application is recommended as many programs take only a handful of students.

Where can I get more information?

American Occupational Therapy Association
http://www.aota.org/

American Occupational Therapy Foundation
http://www.aotf.org

OTCAS
https://portal.otcas.org/

Programs in Indiana

University of Indianapolis
http://ot.uindy.edu

IUPUI
http://shrs.iupui.edu/occupational_therapy/

Indiana State University (new program)
http://www.indstate.edu/amr/occupational-therapy/

University of Southern Indiana starting Master's degree in 2015

For more information about Occupational Therapy programs or your interests in the health professions, contact the Center for Pre-Professional Advising at 765-496-2690 or preprofessional@purdue.edu OR Rosemary Ricci in the Health Sciences Advising Office at rricci@purdue.edu.

Information for this career guide came from the above websites, the Bureau of Labor Statistics
http://stats.bls.gov/oco/ocos078.htm
and Explore Health Careers
http://www.explorehealthcareers.org