

- Occupational therapists help people of all ages learn or regain the skills they need to function and live independently.
- For example, OTs may work with:
 - Children who have autism or developmental or learning disabilities
 - People recovering the ability to do their own personal care after a stroke or accident
 - Clients with mental illness coping with the demands of daily living
- OTs work in hospitals, mental health facilities, rehabilitation hospitals, public schools, community centers, nursing homes, and private practice.
- OTs 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.

Education & Licensure

- To attend an accredited OT program, a bachelor's degree in any major and the appropriate prerequisite coursework is required. A master's degree leads to an O.T.R. (Occupational Therapist Registered). A doctoral program leads to an O.T.D. (Doctor of Occupational Therapy).
- Many programs are shifting to the doctoral degree, but it is possible to practice with either a master's degree or a doctorate. The doctoral program places a greater emphasis on management, theory, research, and critical thinking and will require 3 years rather than the 2 years required for the master's degree.
- Graduation from an accredited educational program and passing a national certification examination is required to become an occupational therapist.

Preparation

- Clinical experience is generally required and ideally will include a number of clinical practice settings. Many schools require a minimum of 40 hours of clinical observation time split between at least two clinical settings.
- Research experience is a plus, especially for doctoral programs, and ideally includes learning about human subjects review boards.
- OT programs do not have a standard set of requirements, although many similarities do exist.
- The initial courses are similar to other professional health care fields such as Physical Therapy programs, yet some further courses are required.
- Individual programs vary in the courses they require; a broad academic background is encouraged including completion of the following courses. Many programs require a grade of at least a C in prerequisite courses.

Common Prerequisite Courses (required courses determined by each OT program but similar to this list)

Requirements	Purdue Equivalents (specific courses may vary by major)
Anatomy & Physiology	BIOL 20300-20400 (BIOL 30100-30200)
General Biology (required at some schools)	BIOL 11000-11100 or BIOL 13100 & 23100 & 23200 (lab) [may only need 3-4 hours of general biology to meet most schools requirements]
Physics (required at some schools)	PHYS 22000 or equivalent
Social/Behavioral Science	PSY 12000 (Intro) & PSY 35000 (Abnormal) & HDFS 21000 (Lifespan); Other possible requirements: SOC 10000 (Intro), ANTH 10000 (Intro)
English (may need comp &/or literature courses)	ENGL 10600 or 10800 or SCLA 10100*
Communication	COM 11400
Statistics (some schools require from math department)	STAT 30100 or STAT 50300 or SOC 38200 or PSY 20100*
Other Requirements at some programs	HSCI 13100 (medical terminology); PHIL 11100 (ethics); some programs require college-level algebra, general chemistry, kinesiology
Pre-Med Planning Seminar (optional)	BIOL 39600-0 credit 10 week class covering how to apply to medical school and other health professions programs
*Ask individual OT programs if they will accept these courses toward their requirements. Courses no longer offered.	

Student Organization: Pre-OT/PT Club

Program Information Resource

[Accreditation Council for OT Education \(ACOTE\)](https://acoteonline.org/all-schools/) <https://acoteonline.org/all-schools/>

Applying

- An aptitude test, the GRE (Graduate Record Exam—general test) is required at many programs.
- If English is not your first language, a TOEFL exam may also be required.
- Application is through an online system called OTCAS and/or directly with the schools you would like to attend if they do not participate in OTCAS.
- Competitive applicants have:
 - Strong academic performance including a grade point average (GPA) of 3.5 or better
 - High scores on the GRE (where required)
 - Leadership, teamwork, and communication skills
 - Volunteer and shadowing/observation experiences
 - Strong positive letters of recommendation (mostly from faculty and OTs)
- Early application is key as many programs take only a small number of students. OTCAS typically opens in mid-July. Apply by mid-August of your senior year if possible (assuming a 4-year graduation timeline).

Fee Assistance

- Visit specific school websites to learn if fee assistance is available.
- [AOTA Financial Aid and Scholarship Information](https://www.aota.org/Education-Careers/Find-School/Aid.aspx): <https://www.aota.org/Education-Careers/Find-School/Aid.aspx>
- [GRE Fee Reduction Program](https://www.ets.org/gre/revise/general/about/fees/reductions/): <https://www.ets.org/gre/revise/general/about/fees/reductions/>

Employment Outlook

- The [Bureau of Labor Statistics](https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/occupational-therapists.htm) projects a faster than average increase in demand for Occupational Therapists (a 16% increase through 2029). <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/occupational-therapists.htm>
- To contain costs, OTs are increasingly supervising occupational therapy assistants and aides.
- The median annual earnings of occupational therapists in 2020 was \$86,280.

Diversity Matters

The occupational therapy profession needs therapists who look just like you, and who share your life experiences. Race or ethnicity, LGBTQ+ identity, disability, age, geographic region, socioeconomic status, social and cultural identity, and nationality add to a richer experience for all students in the OT program classroom, contribute to the OT profession, and ultimately lead to better outcomes for patients/clients.

Programs in Indiana

- [University of Indianapolis](https://www.uindy.edu/health-sciences/ot/) in Indianapolis (Doctoral & Masters) <https://www.uindy.edu/health-sciences/ot/>
- [IUPUI](https://shhs.iupui.edu/graduate-professional/occupational-therapy/index.html) in Indianapolis (Doctoral & Masters program) <https://shhs.iupui.edu/graduate-professional/occupational-therapy/index.html>
- [Indiana State University](https://www.indstate.edu/health/program/ot) in Terre Haute (Masters) <https://www.indstate.edu/health/program/ot>
- [University of Southern Indiana](https://www.usi.edu/health/occupational-therapy) in Evansville [Masters & Doctoral (applicant)] <https://www.usi.edu/health/occupational-therapy>
- [Indiana Wesleyan University](https://www.indwes.edu/adult-graduate/programs/doctorate-of-occupational-therapy/) in Marion (Doctoral) <https://www.indwes.edu/adult-graduate/programs/doctorate-of-occupational-therapy/>
- [Huntington University](https://www.huntington.edu/graduate/occupational-therapy) in Huntington (Doctoral) <https://www.huntington.edu/graduate/occupational-therapy>
- [Indiana University South Bend South](https://healthscience.iusb.edu/occupational-therapy/index.html) in South Bend (Masters) <https://healthscience.iusb.edu/occupational-therapy/index.html>
- [Valparaiso University](https://www.valpo.edu/college-of-nursing-and-health-professions/academics/occupational-therapy/) in Valparaiso [Doctoral—applicant program] <https://www.valpo.edu/college-of-nursing-and-health-professions/academics/occupational-therapy/>
- Hanover College in Hanover [Doctoral—developing program not yet admitting students]
- Manchester University in Fort Wayne [Doctoral—developing program not yet admitting students]
- Trine University in Angola [Doctoral—developing program not yet admitting students]

More Information

- [American Occupational Therapy Association](https://www.aota.org/) (AOTA) <https://www.aota.org/>
- [American Occupational Therapy Foundation](https://www.aotf.org/) (AOTF) <https://www.aotf.org/>
- [Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education](https://acoteonline.org/) (ACOTE) <https://acoteonline.org/>

Other Careers to Consider – Physical Therapy · Orthotics & Prosthetics · Occupational Therapy Assistant

Preparing for your Giant Leap

purdue.edu/preprofessional