

- **Orthotists** fit external supports and braces (orthoses) for people with weakened or deformed body parts.
- Their goal is to enable individuals to function to the best of their ability.
- Orthotists may also be employed in industry as researchers and designers.
- **Prosthetists** produce and fit artificial (prosthetic) limbs to help people with limb loss function more fully.
- Prosthetists may also be employed in industry as researchers and designers.
- Both fields combine knowledge of medicine, engineering, and materials science to enhance the lives of people.
- They assess the patient's history, test muscle strength and range of motion, and evaluate devices for comfort, stability, and proper fit.
- Some professionals work as either a Prosthetist (CP) or Orthotist (CO), others are Certified Prosthetists Orthotists (CPO) and can practice in both disciplines.
- Orthotists and prosthetists work in a variety of settings: private practice, hospitals, rehabilitation facilities, specialty clinics, nursing homes, and industry.
- These are great careers for people who are problem solvers and who want to have extended relationships with their patients.
- Ultimately, these fields combine art, science, engineering, problem-solving, and patient care in unique and interesting ways.

## Education & Licensure

- A master's degree is the minimum educational standard to become a certified practitioner. Currently there are 14 accredited master's degree programs.
- Upon graduation from a CAAHEP-accredited O&P program, students must complete an NCOPE-accredited residency program to gain clinical training and experience in three primary areas: pediatrics, adult, and geriatrics.
- To practice as an Orthotist and/or Prosthetist, individuals must be certified by the American Board for Certification in Orthotics and Prosthetics, Inc.

## Preparation

- Applicants should gain experience in orthotics and prosthetics by volunteering or working at a hospital, clinical rehabilitation facility, clinical orthotics and prosthetics facility or research facility.
- Laboratory experience such as plaster work, laminating, and vacuum forming are all seen favorably, as is patient contact.
- A minimum of one year of prosthetics or orthotics experience is encouraged.
- Taking the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) is required. A TOEFL exam may be required if English is not your first language.
- Prerequisite courses vary between programs, but typical requirements are listed below.
- All required courses must have a minimum C grade.

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

Requirements	Purdue Equivalents (specific courses may vary by major)
General Biology with lab	BIOL 11000-11100 <b>or</b> 13100 & 23100 & 23200 (lab) <b>or</b> BIOL 23100 & ABE 22600* & upper-level biology (with lab), <b>or</b> BME 29500* & lab (BME 24300* <b>or</b> BME 32001* <b>or</b> BME 35400*) & upper-level biology (with lab)
Anatomy & Physiology	BIOL 20300-20400 (BIOL 30100-30200)
General Chemistry with lab	CHM 11510-11610 (with lab) <b>or</b> 12500-12600 <b>or</b> 12901 (CHM 11500 credit recommended—may earn this from course sequence) <b>or</b> CHM 13600 (with earned CHM 11500 credit)
Physics with lab	PHYS 22000-22100 <b>or</b> PHYS 23300-23400 <b>or</b> PHYS 17200 & 27200 <b>or</b> PHYS 17200 & 24100 & 25200 (lab) <b>or</b> ENGR 16100-16200*
Psychology	PSY 12000
College Algebra or higher math	MA 15300-15400 <b>or</b> 15800 <b>or</b> 15900
Additional Required & Recommended Courses at some programs	Gross Anatomy with dissection, Kinesiology, Biomechanics, Material Science, Public Speaking, Art/Drawing/Sculpture, and Business courses
*Ask individual orthotics/prosthetics programs if they will accept these courses toward requirements. <del>Courses</del> no longer offered.	

**Student Organization:** Pre-OT/PT/AT Club, Caduceus Club (pre-med/pre-health club)

## Program Information

[Commission on Accreditation \(CAAHEP\)](https://caahep.org/Students/Find-a-Program.aspx) <https://caahep.org/Students/Find-a-Program.aspx> (search for Orthotist/Prosthetist)

## Applying

- Application is made to some programs directly through their graduate programs and to others using a common application system called OPCAS (the Orthotics and Prosthetics Centralized Application Service) and also through their online graduate school applications.
- Competitive applicants will have:
  - Strong academic performance
  - High scores on the GRE
  - Leadership, teamwork, and communication skills
  - Volunteer and shadowing/observation experiences
  - Strong positive letters of recommendation
- Early application is recommended as many programs accept only a small number of students. OPCAS opens in mid-July and applications are most competitive if submitted within a month of the application opening.

## Fee Assistance

- Visit specific school websites to learn if fee assistance is available.
- [OPCAS Fee Waivers](https://help.liaisonedu.com/OPCAS_Applicant_Help_Center/Starting_Your_OPCAS_Application/Getting_Started_with_Your_OPCAS_Application/03_Application_Fees)  
[https://help.liaisonedu.com/OPCAS\\_Applicant\\_Help\\_Center/Starting\\_Your\\_OPCAS\\_Application/Getting\\_Started\\_with\\_Your\\_OPCAS\\_Application/03\\_Application\\_Fees](https://help.liaisonedu.com/OPCAS_Applicant_Help_Center/Starting_Your_OPCAS_Application/Getting_Started_with_Your_OPCAS_Application/03_Application_Fees)
- [GRE Fee Reduction Program](https://www.ets.org/gre/test-takers/general-test/register/fees.html) <https://www.ets.org/gre/test-takers/general-test/register/fees.html>

## Employment Outlook

- The [Bureau of Labor Statistics](https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/orthotists-and-prosthetists.htm#) estimates demand for orthotic and prosthetic services is expected to increase as much as 15% by 2033. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/orthotists-and-prosthetists.htm#>
- The Department of Health and Human Services also projects a large increase in diabetic limb loss in the coming years which further increases the need for these professionals.
- Most students are employed before leaving their training programs.
- The median wage of certified Orthotists and Prosthetists is between \$78.310 in 2024.

## Programs in the Region

- [Northwestern University](https://www.nupoc.northwestern.edu/education/masters-program/index.html) Chicago, IL | <https://www.nupoc.northwestern.edu/education/masters-program/index.html>
- [Eastern Michigan University](https://www.emich.edu/chhs/hphp/programs/orthotics-prosthetics/index.php) Ypsilanti, MI | <https://www.emich.edu/chhs/hphp/programs/orthotics-prosthetics/index.php>
- [University of Pittsburgh](https://www.shrs.pitt.edu/po) Pittsburgh, PA | <https://www.shrs.pitt.edu/po>

## More Information

- [OPCAS](https://opcas.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login) (application service) <https://opcas.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login>
- [American Academy of Orthotists and Prosthetists](https://www.oandp.org/) <https://www.oandp.org/>
- [Orthotics & Prosthetics \(from AAOP\)](http://www.opcareers.org) <http://www.opcareers.org>
- [National Commission on Orthotic & Prosthetic Education](https://ncope.org/) <https://ncope.org/>
- [What is POP?](https://whatispop.org/) (Prosthetics, Orthotics, Pedorthics) <https://whatispop.org/>

## Other Careers to Consider

Physical Therapy · Occupational Therapy · Athletic Training · Rehabilitation Therapy