

Career Description

- 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 in 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.

Becoming an Occupational Therapist

- 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).
- Graduate programs in OT are available at the masters and doctoral levels. Programs are shifting to the doctoral degree by 2025. The doctoral program will place a greater emphasis on management, theory, research, and critical thinking and will generally require 3 years to complete.
- 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 (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.
- 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 with grades of C or better.

Common Prerequisite Courses (pre-reqs determined by each OT program but similar to this list)

Requirements	Purdue Equivalents (specific courses may vary by major)
Anatomy & Physiology	BIOL 20300-20400, in addition BIOL 11000-11100 highly recommended and may be required at some schools
General Chemistry	(some programs require chemistry) CHM 11100-11200 or CHM 11500
Physics	(some programs require physics) PHYS 22000 or PHYS 11800
Social/Behavioral Science	PSY 12000 & PSY 35000 & HDFS 21000 (psychology courses should cover both theory and methodology), additional anthropology/sociology also helpful
English	ENGL 10600 or 10800 (Several courses including composition &/or a literature course)
Communication	COM 11400
Statistics	STAT 30100 or STAT 50300 or SOC 38200 some schools would accept PSY 20100
Other Requirements	HSCI 13100 (medical terminology) & PHIL 20100 (ethics) or equivalent; some programs require college-level algebra
Pre-Med Planning Seminar (optional)	BIOL 39600-0 credit 10 week class covering how to apply to medical school and other health professions programs

Student Organization: Pre-OT/PT Club

Research Programs

- [AOTA Find a School](https://www.aota.org/Education-Careers/Find-School.aspx) <https://www.aota.org/Education-Careers/Find-School.aspx>

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 3.6 or better
 - High scores on the MCAT
 - Leadership, teamwork, and communication skills
 - Undergraduate research experience
 - 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. 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/revised_general/about/fees/reductions/): https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/about/fees/reductions/

Employment Outlook

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a faster than average increase in demand for Occupational Therapists (a 24% increase through 2026).
- To contain costs, OTs are increasingly supervising occupational therapy assistants and aides.
- The median annual earnings of occupational therapists in 2017 was \$83,200.

Programs in Indiana

- [University of Indianapolis](http://ot.uindy.edu) Indianapolis, IN -- Doctoral & Master's degrees -- <http://ot.uindy.edu>
- [IUPUI](https://shrs.iupui.edu/academics/occupational-therapy/index.html) Indianapolis, IN -- Doctoral degree -- <https://shrs.iupui.edu/academics/occupational-therapy/index.html>
- [Indiana State University](http://www.indstate.edu/health/program/ot) Terre Haute, IN -- Master's degree -- <http://www.indstate.edu/health/program/ot>
- [University of Southern Indiana](http://www.usi.edu/health/occupational-therapy) Evansville, IN – Master's degree -- <http://www.usi.edu/health/occupational-therapy>
- [Indiana Wesleyan University](https://www.indwes.edu/adult-graduate/programs/doctorate-of-occupational-therapy/) Marion, IN – Doctoral degree -- <https://www.indwes.edu/adult-graduate/programs/doctorate-of-occupational-therapy/>
- [Huntington University](https://www.huntington.edu/graduate/occupational-therapy) Huntington, IN – Doctoral degree -- <https://www.huntington.edu/graduate/occupational-therapy>

More Information

- [American Occupational Therapy Association](http://www.aota.org/) <http://www.aota.org/>
- [American Occupational Therapy Foundation](http://www.aotf.org) <http://www.aotf.org>
- [OTCAS](https://otcas.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login) (application service) <https://otcas.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login>

Other Careers You Might Want to Consider

- Physical Therapy
- Orthotics & Prosthetics
- Occupational Therapy Assistant

Information for this career guide came from the above websites, the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/occupational-therapists.htm) <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/occupational-therapists.htm> and [Explore Health Careers](https://explorehealthcareers.org/field/occupational-therapy) <https://explorehealthcareers.org/field/occupational-therapy>

