Occupational Therapy (O.T.R.)

Career Description

• Occupational Therapists help people of all ages learn or regain the skills they need to function and live independently after a traumatic event.
• For example, OTs may work with:
  o Children who have developmental or learning disabilities,
  o People recovering the ability to do their own personal care after a stroke or accident,
  o 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

• A master’s degree or higher in OT is the minimum educational requirement.
• To attend an accredited OT program, a bachelor’s degree in any major and the appropriate prerequisite coursework is needed.
• Graduate programs in OT are available at the masters and doctoral levels. For both 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 master’s level options may include: MOT, MA, or MS degree depending on the program. All are appropriate degrees. A master’s program will generally take two years to complete.
• Graduation from an accredited educational program and passing a national certification examination is required to become an Occupational Therapist Registered (OTR).

Job Outlook

• The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a faster than average increase in demand for Occupational Therapists (a 27% increase through 2024).
• To contain costs, OTs are increasingly supervising occupational therapy assistants and aides.
• The median annual earnings of occupational therapists in 2015 was $80,150.

Prerequisite Courses

• OT programs do not have a standard set of requirements, however, many similarities 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 in the courses they require, but generally a broad academic background is sought 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)

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

Applying

- An aptitude test may be needed to apply to some programs; this will be the GRE (Graduate Record Exam) general test.
- 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 small number of students.

More Information

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

Programs in Indiana

- University of Indianapolis Indianapolis, IN http://ot.uindy.edu
- IUPUI Indianapolis, IN https://shrs.iupui.edu/admissions/apply/ms-occupational-therapy/index.html
- Indiana State University Terre Haute, IN http://www.indstate.edu/health/program/ot
- University of Southern Indiana Evansville, IN http://www.usi.edu/health/occupational-therapy
- Indiana Wesleyan University Marion, IN https://www.indwes.edu/adult-graduate/programs/doctorate-of-occupational-therapy/
- Huntington University Huntington, IN https://www.huntington.edu/graduate/occupational-therapy