

Path to Occupational Therapy

Occupational Therapists (OT) are healthcare professionals who help people to fully engage in the activities of daily living through individualized patient evaluations, goal setting, and customized interventions. Though most OTs work in hospitals or private practices, others work in schools, nursing homes, and home health services.

Most OT programs are two- to three-year programs that result in a master's degree. However, some students go on to obtain a Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) degree, which usually requires an additional three years of study. Admission requirements vary by school, so students should identify those that pertain to schools that interest them.

Applicants seeking admission to an OT program are assessed based on a variety of factors such as academic ability, interpersonal skills, leadership experience, and professionalism. Therefore, students are encouraged to develop a competitive application by gaining leadership experience, shadowing professionals in the field, and participating in research activities.

After obtaining an OT degree, graduates must take and pass the national examination administered by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT). Then, they must obtain licensure in the state in which they intend to practice. While practicing, OTs must maintain their certifications by taking continuing education courses.

Preparation Checklist

- Research programs that interest you.
- Shadow an Occupational Therapist.
- Volunteer with an organization that you like.
- Gain clinical experience.
- Develop core competencies.
- Get involved on campus.
- Take prerequisite courses.
- Maintain a strong overall and science GPA.
- Conduct undergraduate research.
- Take the GRE.



Common Prerequisites

- English Composition
- General Biology I & II with Labs
- Human Anatomy & Physiology I & II with Lab
- Statistics
- Sociology or Anthropology
- Medical Terminology
- Psychology
- Kinesiology



Metrics

- Minimum GPA: 3.0
- Minimum GRE: 290



Standardized Tests

- Graduate Record Examinations (GRE)



Helpful Organizations

- American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)
- American Occupational Therapy Foundation (AOTF)
- National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT)