

Occupational Therapy

- Occupational therapists help people with disabilities, injuries, and illnesses improve or recover their ability to perform everyday activities. They may develop interventions that help a disabled child participate in school and social situations, help the elderly lead more active and independent lives, and make recommendations on how a person's home can be improved to better suit their health needs. Occupational therapists should be compassionate, patient, and relate well to other people; they should also have strong communication and writing skills. Therapists may spend many hours standing and might need to lift or move patients. Some of them travel to provide their services at multiple sites.
- **Degree Level**
 - Master's degree is required
- **Degree Field**
 - Occupational therapy
- **Licensure and Certification**
 - State licensure is required
 - CPR or Basic Cardiac Life Support (BCLS) certification may also be necessary
 - optional certifications in areas of specialization are available
- **Experience**
 - Some employers prefer applicants with 1-2 years of experience
- **Key Skills**
 - Excellent communication and interpersonal skills, compassion and patience, strong writing skills
- **Median Salary** (May 2015)--\$80,150 per year* Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, CareerBuilder.com job postings (August 2012)
- **Find schools that offer these popular programs**
 - Art Therapist
 - Dance Therapist
 - Kinesis therapist

- Music Therapist
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Prosthetics and Orthotics
- Rehabilitation Technologies
- Therapeutic Recreation
- Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

- **Education Requirements**

- According to the American Occupational Therapy Association, a variety of undergraduate majors can prepare aspiring occupational therapists for the graduate-level study they need to work in the field. These include kinesiology, psychology, anthropology, biology, and sociology. Some schools offer accelerated or dual degree programs, through which students can obtain a bachelor's and master's degree in occupational therapy after about five years of study.
- Master's degree programs in occupational therapy typically take two years to complete and include courses in functional anatomy, medical and social conditions, assistive technology, patient care concepts, and research methods. Students also participate in approximately 24 weeks of field experiences in rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, acute hospital settings, school systems, and private practices.
- Application requirements can include a GPA of 3.0 in chemistry, human anatomy and physiology, statistics and psychology, or other prerequisite coursework. Many graduate programs in occupational therapy also require previous experience working with individuals who have mental, developmental, or physical disabilities. Some schools prefer applicants who have about 40 hours of experience in more than one occupational therapy setting.

- **Licensing**

- Occupational therapists must obtain a state license. Requirements include completion of an accredited occupational therapy program, fieldwork experiences, and a passing score on the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) exam. Successful candidates for licensure receive the Occupational Therapist Registered (OTR) credential through the NBCOT. Continuing education coursework is required in order to maintain the OTR designation.
- Voluntary Certification
 - Occupational therapists can pursue board or specialty certifications from the American Occupational Therapy Association in such areas as gerontology, low vision, pediatrics, environmental modification, and

physical rehabilitation. Certification requirements include the submission of a professional portfolio for review by practicing occupational therapists. Occupational therapists may also need to be certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or Basic Cardiac Life Support (BCLS).

- **Employment and Salary**

- Occupational therapists may find employment in hospitals, nursing care facilities, home health care services, and the private offices of other health care professionals. Some employers prefer applicants with one to two years' experience. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), job opportunities for occupational therapists were expected to increase by 27%, or much faster than average, from 2014 to 2024. Once employed, occupational therapists earn a median annual salary of \$80,150 as reported by the BLS in May 2015.
- Occupational therapists need a master's degree in occupational therapy and a state license. As reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in May 2015, they earn a median annual salary of \$80,150.