

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

What does an occupational therapist do?

An occupational therapist works with patients who have conditions that are mentally, physically, developmentally, or emotionally disabling. They help these patients develop, recover, or maintain the skills needed for daily living and working.

The goal of an occupational therapist is to help patients with medical issues and complications to live more independently. Therapists are skilled in the social, emotional, and physical effects of an illness, injury, or disability. In doing so they may plan treatment programs and teach patients how to use adaptive equipment.

Scope of practice

Occupational therapists work with doctors, [nurses](#), [physical therapists](#), and occupational therapy assistants, and other team members to treat patients of all ages, from infants to the elderly. Common tasks and duties include:

- Evaluating patients and determining goals for treatment
- Customizing treatment to each patient's current ability and goals
- Re-evaluating patients to ensure goals are being met
- Adjusting treatment plans to reflect changes in ability

Specializations

Occupational therapists can seek board and specialty certifications from the American Occupational Therapy Association, including the following.

Board areas:

- Gerontology
- Mental health
- Pediatrics
- Physical rehabilitation

Specialty areas:

- Driving and community mobility
- Environmental modification
- Feeding, eating, swallowing
- Low vision
- School systems

Work environment

Occupational therapists work in hospitals, rehabilitation hospitals, psychiatric hospitals, offices and clinics, school systems, nursing homes, and home health agencies. They typically work 40 plus-hour weeks during daytime hours, including some weekends and holidays. Occupational therapists work most of their hours on their feet while treating their patients.



O.T.'S FOCUS ON ASSESSING A PATIENT'S FUNCTIONAL STATUS AND SETTING GOALS TO HELP MAXIMISE THEIR ABILITY TO CARRY OUT MEANINGFUL TASKS (OR "OCCUPATIONS") OF THEIR OWN

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IS ALL ABOUT PROBLEM SOLVING. OT'S AIM TO GET TO THE ROOT OF A PATIENT'S MAIN ISSUES, AND UNPICK THEM TO HELP THE PATIENT REACH THEIR OWN SPECIFIC GOALS, WHATEVER THEY MIGHT BE



OT'S WORK IN LOTS OF SETTINGS, SPECIALISING IN FRAILITY, PAEDIATRICS, MENTAL HEALTH, ORTHOPAEDICS, RHEUMATOLOGY... THEY WORK IN HOSPITAL WARDS, EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS, IN THE COMMUNITY, IN PRISONS... THE LIST GOES ON!

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST



EACH PATIENT RESPONDS DIFFERENTLY TO THERAPY, SO O.T.'S APPLY THE CONCEPT OF 'GRADING', WHERE THEY INCREASE OR DECREASE THE DIFFICULTY OF THE INTERVENTION DEPENDING ON HOW THE PATIENT RESPONDS



THE O.T. ROLE WITHIN THE MDT IS FREQUENTLY MISUNDERSTOOD, AND THEY'RE KEEN TO PROMOTE THEIR PROFESSION AND EDUCATE OTHERS IN THE VALUE THEY BRING TO THE TEAM

