

USCDornsife

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# OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

## ADVISING SHEET

Occupational therapy is the art and science of helping people do the day-to-day activities that are important and meaningful to their health and well-being. Occupational Therapists (OT's) make it possible for people who face physical, cognitive, or mental health changes to participate more fully in their life roles at home and at the school, at work, and at play.



Common occupational therapy interventions include helping children with disabilities to participate fully in school and social situations, helping people recovering from injury to regain skills, and providing supports for older adults experiencing physical and cognitive changes. The types of services that OT's provide include customized treatment programs to improve people's ability to perform daily activities; evaluation and treatment to develop or restore sensorimotor, cognitive, and psychosocial performance skills; comprehensive home and job site evaluation with adaptation recommendations to make them safe, conserve energy, enhance comfort, independence and productivity; adaptive equipment recommendations and usage training; and guidance to family members and caregivers.

Successful completion of a master's degree in occupational therapy is required to practice as an occupational therapist in the United States. Optional degrees include a professional doctorate in occupational therapy (OTD) or Ph.D. degree. Potential students have a number of different program formats available to meet the requirement of a master's degree. In addition to the coursework, students complete at least 6 months of supervised clinical internships in a variety of health care and community settings. Upon graduation, an array of opportunities and practice settings are available to licensed OT's that include working in private clinics, hospitals, corporations, homes, schools, community centers, psychiatric hospitals, health centers, and wellness resorts. For licensing, students must graduate from an ACOTE-accredited program, as well as pass the NBCOT certification examination.

### COMMON PRE-OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PREREQUISITES

<b>Biology</b>	One semester is either required or recommended by some schools. Check with individual OT school.	BISC 120Lg or 220Lg
<b>Chemistry</b>	One semester is generally required	CHEM 105aLg
<b>Physics</b>	One semester is generally required	PHYS 135aLg
<b>Statistics</b>	One semester of statistics is generally required. Check with individual OT school for course equivalency	MATH 208x or MATH 114 with PSYC 274g or HP 340 with HP 350 or BUAD 310, or MATH 208x
<b>Anatomy</b>	One semester is generally required	OT 260 or HBIO 301L
<b>Physiology</b>	One semester is generally required	BISC 307L or OT 261
<b>English</b>	One year is required for most OT schools in the U.S	WRIT 150 and WRIT 340
<b>Sociology</b>	Introductory Sociology or Social/Cultural Anthropology is generally required. Check with individual OT school.	SOCI 200gm or ANTH 201 or OT 250
<b>Psychology</b>	At least <b>two courses</b> in psychology are generally required: <b>abnormal psychology and developmental/lifespan psychology</b> . Please note: Some schools will require an entire developmental/lifespan course that covers the entire lifespan (from birth to death). Check with individual OT school.	PSYC 360 and /or OT 251  Check with individual OT school for accurate course equivalency
<b>Medical Terminology</b>	One semester is either required or recommended by some schools	OT 200

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## Occupational Therapy School Information

- ⇒ Potential students have a number of different program formats available to meet this requirement, which include:
  - ⇒ **Combined Baccalaureate/Entry Level Masters Degree Programs**, typically 5 years duration; bachelor's and masters degree awarded
  - ⇒ **5-Year Entry Level Masters Degree Programs**, typically 5 years duration, master's degree awarded.
  - ⇒ **Entry Level Masters Degree Programs**, typically 2-3 years duration, master's degree awarded
  - ⇒ **Combined Baccalaureate/ OTD Degree Programs**, typically 6-7 years duration, bachelor's and OTD degree awarded
  - ⇒ **Combined Entry Level Masters/OTD Degree Program**, typically 4-5 duration, master's and OTD degree awarded
  - ⇒ **Entry Level OTD Degree Programs**, typically 2-3 years duration, OTD degree awarded
  - ⇒ **OTA to OT Degree Programs**, typically 2-3 years duration, Masters degree awarded
- ⇒ Cumulative grade point average (**GPA**) of **3.0 or higher** in undergraduate coursework.
- ⇒ Most OT programs require the Graduate Record Examination (**GRE**) for admission.
- ⇒ Experience (paid or nonpaid) in working with people in a health or OT setting is important.
- ⇒ Many occupational therapy schools require 1-3 **letters of recommendation** as a factor of the therapy school admissions process. another professional.
- ⇒ Occupational therapy continues to be the fastest growing profession in the country with employment expected to increase by 26% between 2008 and 2018 and is one of the top 5 recession-proof jobs (Forbes Business Magazine).
- ⇒ USC's OT program is rated 1 of the top 3 OT programs in the country and has been since 1998 (US News & World Report).

## RESOURCES

American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)  
[www.aota.org](http://www.aota.org)

Occupational Therapy centralized application service (OTCAS)  
<https://portal.otcas.org/>

List of OTCAS participating educational programs  
<https://portal.otcas.org/otcasHelpPages/participating-programs/>

National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT)  
[www.nbcot.org](http://www.nbcot.org)

Graduate Record Exam (GRE)  
[www.gre.org](http://www.gre.org)