



OT = OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Introduce yourself

Hey everyone! Today, we're diving into the world of Occupational Therapy (OT) – a career that's all about helping people do what they LOVE.

I hope by the end of our time together today you all have a better idea of what occupational therapy is and how cool of a job it is!

What is **OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY** anyway?



Does anyone know what occupational therapy is?

Maybe you or someone you know has received OT in the past?

Does anyone want to take a go at guessing?

What are some of your favorite things to do?



Let's start by talking about some of your favorite things to do.

Think about everything you do in a day from the time you wake up until you sleep.

What do you love to do?

(call on a few kids - get them talking)

Notes: Get them to think about extracurricular activities, clubs, and hobbies. Something along the lines of "Maybe after school you're part of a sports team, or club, or like to do something for fun."

Occupations

=

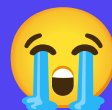
Things that make life meaningful

Those are all occupations.

The things that make your life meaningful.

Occupations also include the things you need to do, not just what you want to - to live life independently. These are called activities of daily living.....like getting out of bed, taking care of yourself, shopping, texting, viewing social media, taking care of your pet - everything and anything you do from the time you wake up until you sleep - which is also an occupation by the way!

**Imagine if you or the
people you love couldn't
do the things they love
to do anymore.**



Imagine if you couldn't do the things you love and need to do every day. Or what if it was your parents or siblings or friends that couldn't?

Think about how you would feel.

Maybe they can't do them because they had an accident, or maybe they have trouble doing things that were once easy to do because they had a bad fall or an illness.

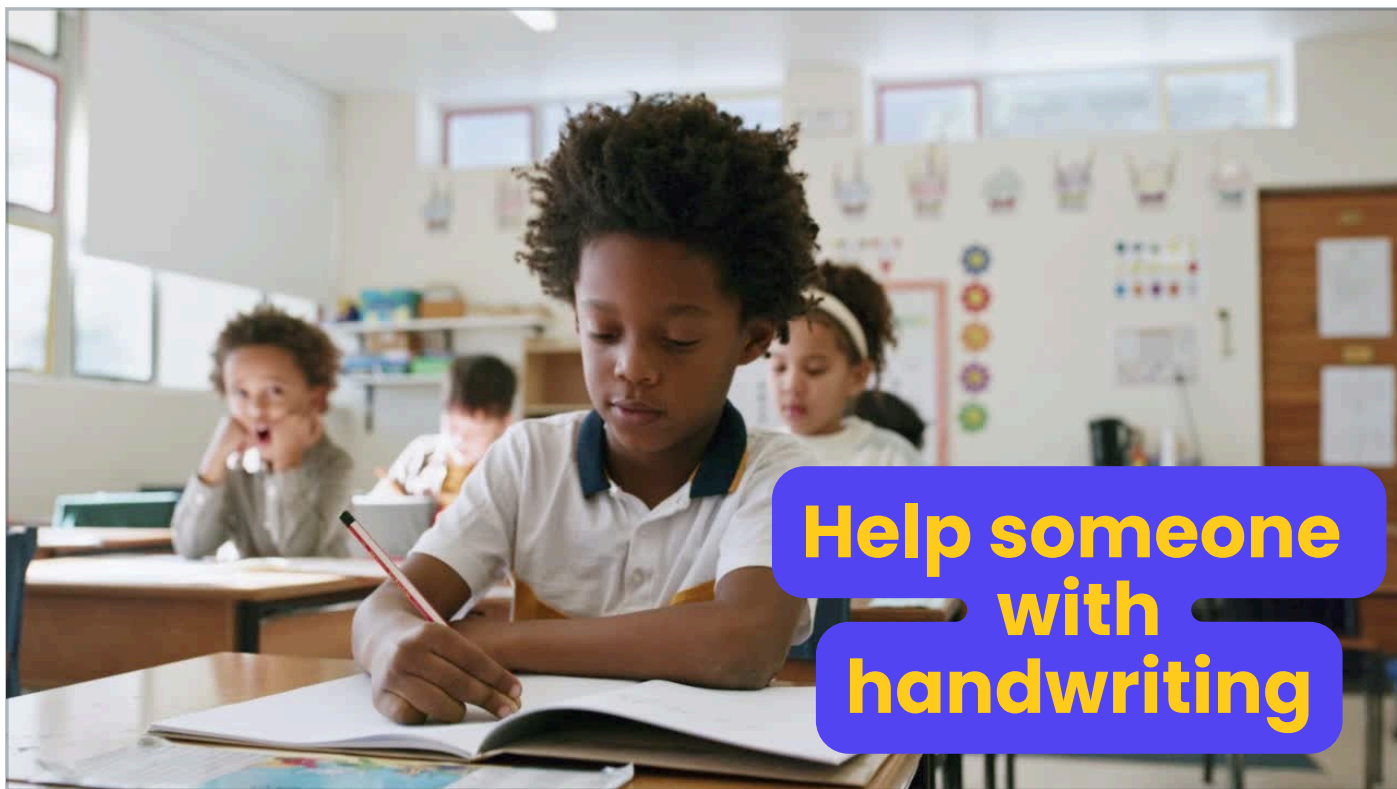
Or maybe you know someone who might need extra help with things.

Occupational Therapy helps people do the things they need and want to do!

Occupational therapy - what I do - helps people do the things they need and want to do.

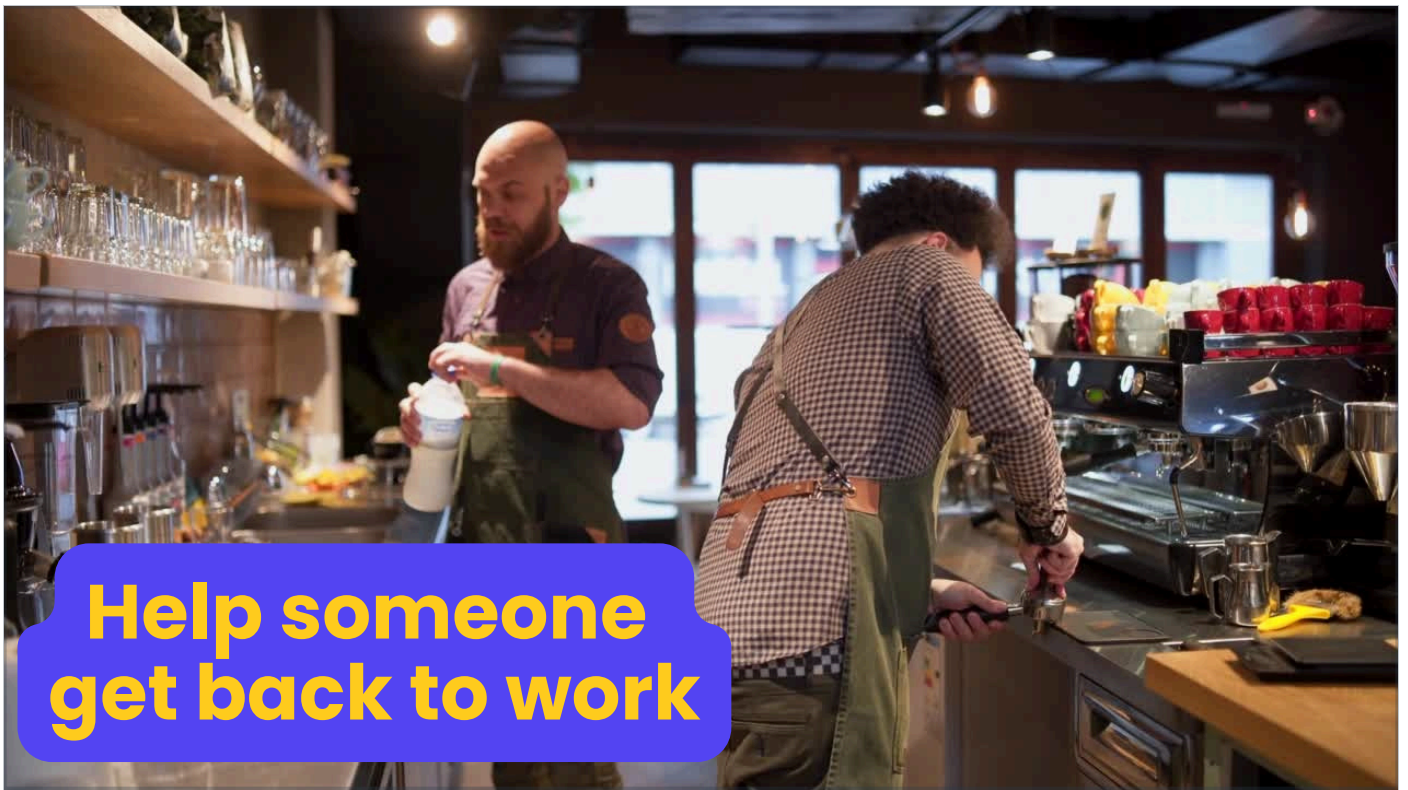


We can help someone get back to surfing after they have had an injury.



**Help someone
with
handwriting**

We can help people with handwriting - to learn how to grasp a pencil properly, to form and space out letters



**Help someone
get back to work**

We can help someone get back to work after struggling with a period of depression.



**Help someone
using a
wheelchair live
their life**

We can help people using a wheelchair by helping them learn how to get in and out of it safely.

How to make their home more accessible for their wheelchair.

How to dress, bathe, and get ready for their day.

We can help with power wheelchairs, using special controls for people who can't use their hands to steer, and voice tools for people who can't speak.

We help them live a full and independent life!

Help someone play



We can help kids and adults play or engage in leisure activities.

Play isn't just about fun and games; it's a powerful tool to help achieve specific therapeutic goals.

A child with fine motor challenges might play with Play-Doh to improve hand strength and dexterity.

An adult might enjoy gardening and can plant small seeds and trim/prune plants to work on fine motor skills and grip strength

An autistic person might engage in social skills games to learn turn-taking and communication skills.

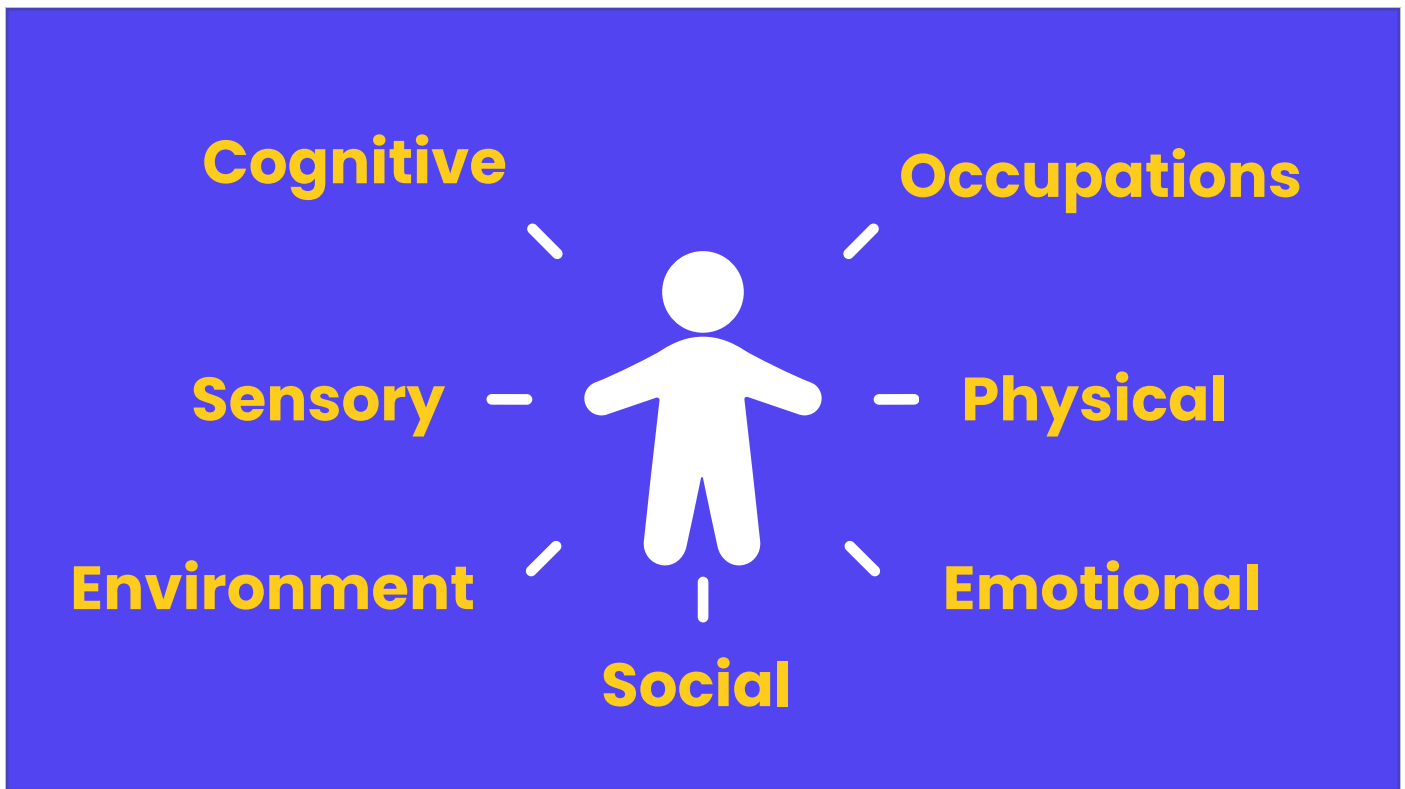
Occupational Therapy is HOLISTIC

What does that even mean?....



Occupational therapy is Holistic.

Does anyone know what I mean by that?



We consider the whole person when creating a therapy plan.

Their occupations, physical, emotional, social, sensory, and cognitive needs.

We assess their environments - homes, work, community -

This allows us to provide a client-centered therapy plan that will improve the individual's quality of life and overall well-being.

Cognitive
Memory
Attention

Sensory
Retrain

Physical
Strengthen



Environment
Modify
Adapt

Social
Connections

Emotional
Safe space

Imagine a person who has a stroke. Physically, they might have weakness on one side of their body, making activities like bathing or dressing challenging. Cognitively, they might struggle with memory and attention, leading to difficulty planning and completing tasks. Their sensory needs may be to retrain the brain to interpret sensory signals correctly. Socially, they might feel isolated due to difficulty leaving the house, which could trigger feelings of anxiety or depression. Emotionally the OTP creates a safe space for the person to express their emotions and develop coping mechanisms for anxiety or depression.

The OTP might recommend modification to the home or adaptive equipment to improve independence



We can work with individuals across the lifespan - meaning we can work with babies to individuals at the end of life.

And you don't need additional schooling or specializations to do it!

**A doctor will help
save your life.**

**An occupational therapy
practitioner will help
you live it!**

It's often said that a doctor will save your life, but an occupational therapy practitioner will help you live it!

It isn't much of a life if you can't do the things you need and want to do! Right?



**Help people
live their
BEST LIVES!**

We help people participate in meaningful activities that allows them to live their best life!

**Occupational therapy
is in many
different places.**

Occupational therapy can be found in many different places or settings.



We can work in hospitals. Helping people who have been sick or hurt get back to doing what they want and need to do.



We can work on horse farms.

The horse's movements help with things like balance, strength, and coordination.

This area of practice is called hippotherapy.

Schools



We can work at schools too. - making sure everyone is the best they can be!

You might have seen an OT or OTA at your school, or maybe even when you were younger



We can work in nursing homes. We can help older adults, or maybe even your grandparents do fun activities and stay strong so they can keep doing the things they love, like playing games and taking care of themselves.



You can become an occupational therapy practitioner while being in the military. You can also work with military personnel and veterans.



You can work in home health by visiting people's homes and helping them improve their ability to do daily activities. They assess the home environment and suggest changes to make it safer and easier to navigate. OTs teach new skills and provide strategies to help people reach their personal goals, such as bathing, medication management or cooking. They also support family members and caregivers with advice and guidance.



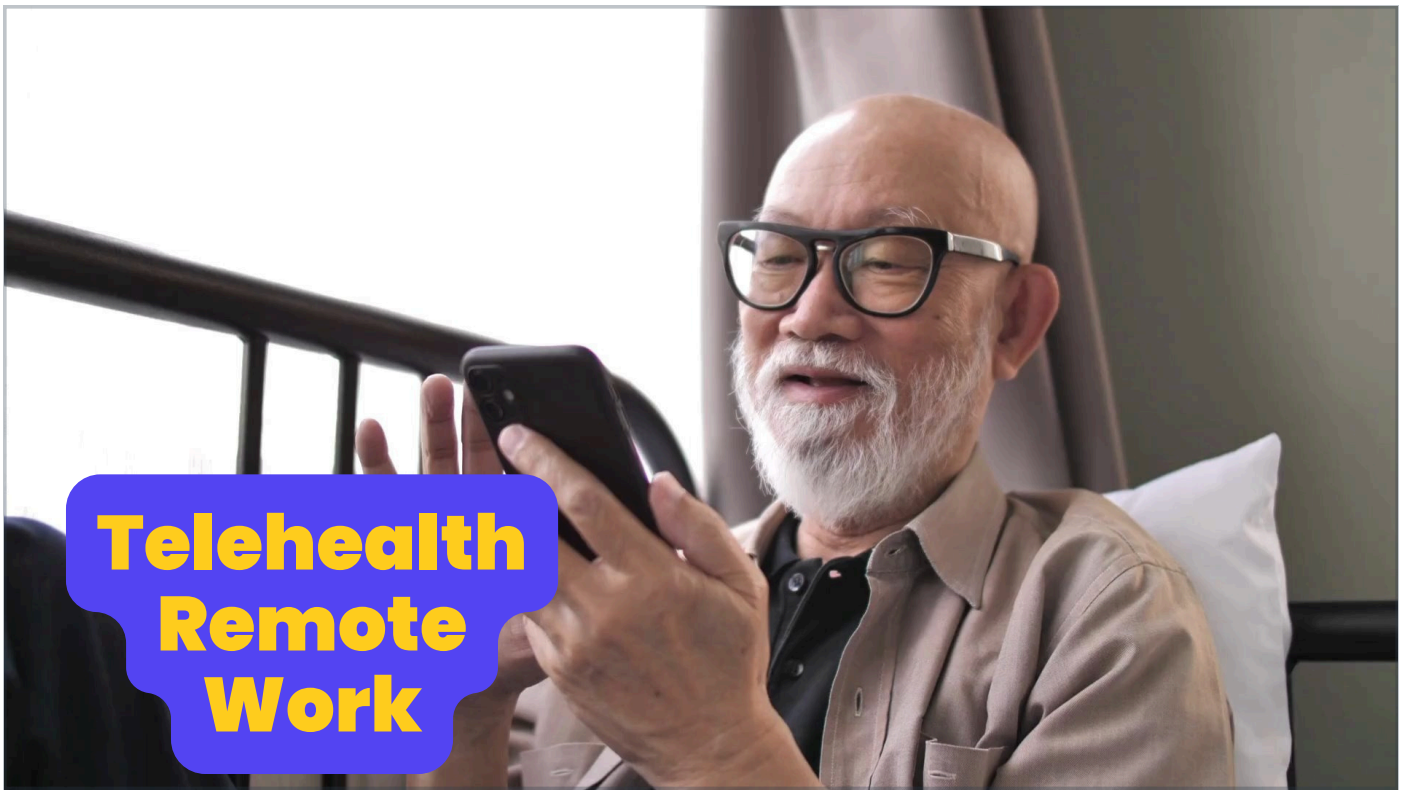
Outpatient Settings

We can provide one-on-one, personalized care in an outpatient setting, which could be a healthcare facility or private clinic.

Helping clients to address their specific needs and goals, which might include improving physical mobility, enhancing cognitive function, or adapting to changes in daily life due to injury or illness.



We can also work with people in community-based settings or their natural environment. This might be a community garden, vocational programs, adult or child day care, or parks.



OTPs can use telehealth to provide services to people in rural areas or who have difficulty traveling. This can be a great way to reach a wider range of clients and make occupational therapy services more accessible.





OTPs can work for companies that allow them to travel around the United States while working in various settings. Contracts are typically 13 weeks at a time but can vary. Some companies may assist with state license and relocation costs.

It's a great way to see the country while getting paid to do it!



Sensory Gyms



Occupational therapy professionals use aquatic therapy to help children and adults improve strength, balance, and coordination in a safe environment. The water supports the body - making it easier and safer to practice everyday movements like walking and reaching, helping clients build their confidence and return to meaningful daily activities.



Here's even more settings where you can find OT practitioners

As you can see, OT is an very versatile profession!

Occupational Therapy Practitioners can be:

clinical practitioners

researchers

professors

advocates

entrepreneurs

CEOs

influencers

You can be a clinical practitioner, a researcher, a professor, an advocate an entrepreneur, a CEO, an influencer

And so much more!

**Where there are people,
there is a need for
occupational therapy**

And so much more! Where they are people, there is a need for occupational therapy!

Qualities of an Occupational Therapy Practitioner



You might be thinking, what type of person is best suited to be an occupational therapy practitioner.

Here's some qualities that are good to have when working in OT



People Person

You have to like people to get into occupational therapy. That's the whole point of our job - to help people live their best lives!

We work with clients in one-on-one or small groups

You'll need

Empathy and compassion: Understanding and acknowledging the challenges clients face and showing genuine care for their well-being.



Creative Problem Solver

The ability to analyze situations, identify challenges, and develop creative solutions to help clients achieve their goals.



Communication

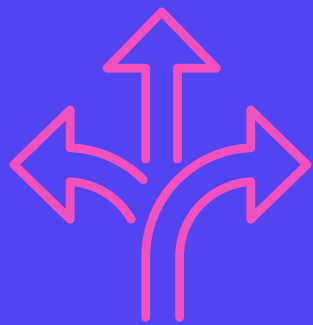
Excellent communication skills: The ability to clearly explain diagnoses, treatment plans, and recommendations to clients and their families in an understandable way.
and

Active listening skills: Giving clients a safe space to express their needs, concerns, and goals.



Patience

Patience and positive attitude: Recovery can take time, and a good OTP needs to be patient and supportive throughout the process.



Adaptability Flexibility

Adaptability and flexibility: Being able to adjust treatment plans and approaches as needed to meet the unique needs of each client - this goes back to what we talked about with holistic care - and what makes OT so unique, since we look at what matters to the client.



Collaboration

Teamwork and collaboration: Working effectively with other healthcare professionals, families, and caregivers to ensure coordinated care.



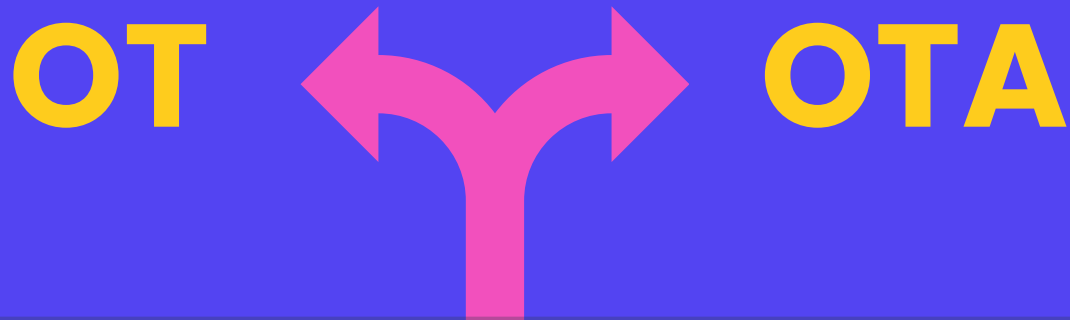
Learner

Lifelong learning: The field of OT is constantly evolving, and a good OTP is committed to ongoing learning and professional development.



Cultural humility: Understanding and respecting diverse cultural backgrounds and beliefs to provide culturally sensitive care.

There are 2 career paths in occupational therapy



There are 2 career paths in occupational therapy. You can be an occupational therapist or an occupational therapy assistant.

What is an Occupational Therapist (OT)?

What's an occupational therapist or an OT for short?



An OT assesses and designs interventions to enhance independence and overall well-being.

What is an Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA)?

So what's an OTA then?



An occupational therapy assistant (OTA) works under the supervision of an occupational therapist (OT) to implement those interventions.

An OTA works under the supervision of the OT to implement those interventions.

**You don't have to be a
science major to be an
OT or OTA!**

You don't have to be a science major to be an OT or an OTA.

Pathway to Becoming an Occupational Therapist

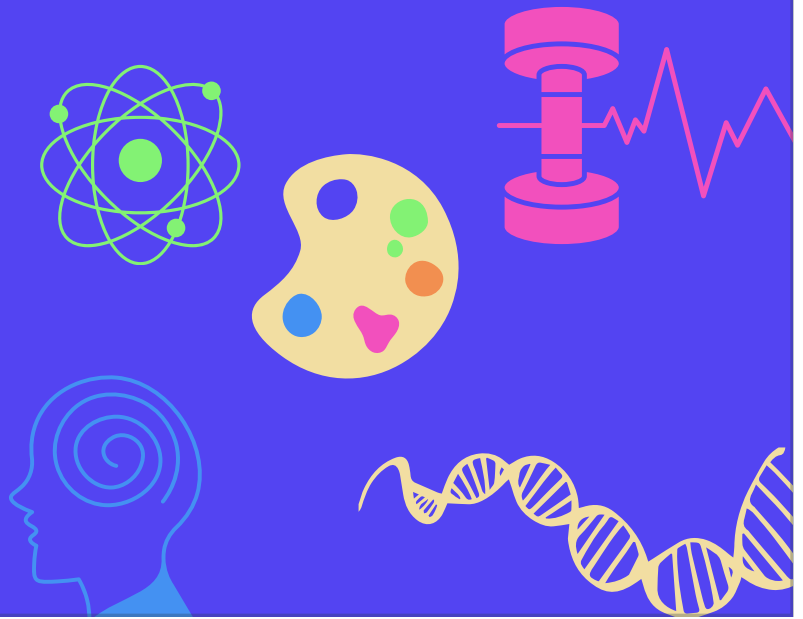
- 1 Complete an undergrad degree.
- 2 Explore and apply to an accredited Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) or Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) program.
- 3 Graduate with a MOT or OTD degree.
- 4 Pass the national occupational therapy board exam and earn OTR® certification.
- 5 Obtain a state license to practice.

You'll need to start with an undergrad degree. Then you can explore OT grad degrees. You can get either a Master's or Doctorate.

Once you graduate you will need to take and pass the national board exam which allows you to obtain a state license to practice.

Popular Undergraduate Majors

Kinesiology
Biology
Psychology
Exercise physiology
Chemistry
Health sciences
Education
Sociology
Therapeutic recreation
Non-traditional majors
(e.g. Art & Theater)



You don't need an undergrad in OT - it can be in any field you want. You just need to have the prerequisites required to get into OT or OTA school.

Some people do their undergrad in health sciences, or Kinesiology, some in art, theater, music

Pathway to Becoming an Occupational Therapy Assistant

- 1 Explore and apply to an accredited associate or bachelor's OTA program.
- 2 Graduate with an AA or BA OTA degree.
- 3 Pass the national occupational therapy board exam and earn COTA® certification.
- 4 Obtain a state license to practice.

You can earn an associate's or bachelor's to become an OTA.

Once you graduate, you'll need to take and pass the national board exam for pathway as well.

OT Employment Expected to Grow

14%
OT By 2035

20%
OTA By 2035

The US Bureau of labor and statistics reports that employment in OT is expected to grow by 15% for OTs and 20% for OTAs by 2035.

This is a great indicator of job stability

Financially Rewarding Career

\$100,300 **\$72,300**

OT Median Salary

OTA Median Salary

Also from the US Bureau of Labor in Statistics :

In 2026, the median salary for an OT was just over 100K, and for an OTA over 72K.

it can vary a bit by location (e.g., city or state).

Meaningful Client Relationships
Rewarding Work
Work-Life Balance
Constantly Evolving Field
Diverse Settings
Every Day is Different

Working in occupational therapy provides:

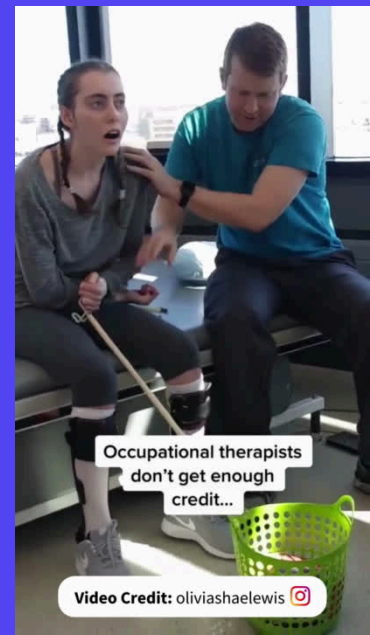
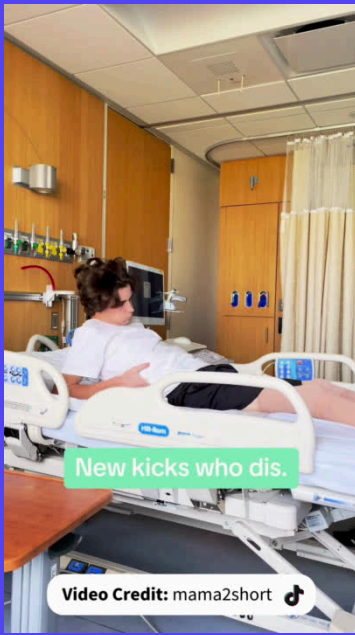
meaningful client relationships, which results in rewarding work.

You get a great work-life balance, by choosing where and how you want to work.

The field is constantly evolving and you get to work in so many different settings.

Everyday is different and allows you the opportunity to make a positive impact on someone's life.

Change Lives



Here's just a few examples of OT.

Helping a teenager reclaim his independence after a spinal cord injury

Helping individuals with dementia live as independently as possible.

Helping someone who has suffered a traumatic brain injury learn how to do everything again.

**Make a difference in
someone's life everyday!**



How Can You Prepare Now?



Shadow an OT or OTA

Research Schools 



Find a mentor

So if you are interested, how can you prepare for a future in occupational therapy now?

Shadow an OT or OTA. Volunteer in settings where occupational therapy happens so you can witness it and be a part of it.

Research schools - start looking to see where you might like to go and what prereqs are required.

Find a mentor - there are many OTPs who would love to help you discover this amazing career.



You can view all of the schools offering OT and OTA programs the program directory found at whychooseot.com.

You can search via the map or by state.

Each school listing contains links to all of their social media accounts, so you can see what it is like at that specific school.

Stay Connected



@WhyChooseOT

Stay connected. Learn more about occupational therapy by following WhyChooseOT on TikTok and Instagram.



WhyChooseOT.com

You can find the info we talked about today and more at whychooseot.com

Does anyone have any questions about what we talked about?

Thank you for letting me spend time with you today.