

## Pre-Occupational Therapy

**IMPORTANT:** The required prerequisites for individual schools vary extensively. It is very important to review the requirements for schools you may choose to attend in the future.

Most occupational therapy programs require a bachelor's degree. For occupational therapy assistant programs a 2-year associates degree is generally sufficient. Both programs often require paid or volunteer work experience. Prerequisite requirements vary greatly, but most schools typically require these classes:

General Areas	BYU-I Courses
Anatomy and Physiology	Biology 264 and Biology 265
Statistics	Math 221
Intro or General Psychology	Psychology 111
Human Development/Developmental Psychology	Psychology 201
Abnormal Psychology	Psychology 342

\* Some schools may require specific English or writing classes

Other common prerequisites include biology, general chemistry, general physics, English/writing social sciences, and humanities. Other requirements may include taking the GRE (graduate record examination), around 40 hours of experience in an occupational therapy setting, CPR certification, and sometimes first aid training.

### **Example of Occupational Therapy Class Prerequisites:**

#### **Idaho State University, Pocatello Idaho**

Information found on ISU's website:

[http://www.isu.edu/departments/dpot/occupational\\_therapy.html](http://www.isu.edu/departments/dpot/occupational_therapy.html)

ISU Prerequisite classes 2003/2004	BYU-I Courses
Anatomy	BIO 264
Physiology	BIO 265
Chemistry (2 semesters w/Labs)	CHEM 105/106
Physics w/Lab (1 semester required; 2 semesters highly recommended)	PHYS 105/106 and 107/108
Statistics	MATH 221
Human Development over the Life Span	PSYCH 201
*Sociology (at least 3 units)	SOC 111
Abnormal Psychology	PSYCH 342
Cultural Anthropology	ANTH 101

\*There may be additional accepted prerequisite courses in these categories.

#### **Additional Prerequisites:**

**English/Communications:** One English composition course (at least 3 units) and one speech communication course (2-3 units) required; one technical writing course highly recommended.

**Fine Arts/Liberal Arts:** A minimum of five courses (to total at least 15 credits) from the following categories: Fine arts (studio/performing arts, including visual arts, theater, music, or dance), ethics, philosophy, education, humanities, literature, economics, foreign language, and history.

## Occupational Therapists

### **Job Description and Worker Requirements:**

Occupational therapists (OTs) help people improve their ability to perform tasks in their daily living and working environments. They work with individuals who have conditions that are mentally, physically, developmentally, or emotionally disabling. They also help them to develop, recover, or maintain daily living and work skills. Occupational therapists not only help clients improve basic motor functions and reasoning abilities, but also compensate for permanent loss of function. Their goal is to help clients have independent, productive, and satisfying lives.

**Specific Duties:** Occupational Therapists plan activities, which help the patient become more self-sufficient.

**Education:** A bachelor's degree in occupational therapy is the minimum requirement for entry into this field. All States, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia regulate occupational therapy. To obtain a license, applicants must graduate from an accredited educational program, and pass a national certification examination. Those who pass the test are awarded the title of registered occupational therapist. Completion of 6 months of supervised fieldwork also is required.

**Employment:** Occupational therapists held about 78,000 jobs in 2000. About 1 in 6 occupational therapists held more than one job in 2000. The largest number of jobs was in hospitals, including many in rehabilitation and psychiatric hospitals. Other major employers include offices and clinics of occupational therapists and other health practitioners, school systems, home health agencies, nursing homes, community mental health centers, adult daycare programs, job training services, and residential care facilities. Some occupational therapists are self-employed in private practice. They see clients referred by physicians or other health professionals, or provide contract or consulting services to nursing homes, schools, adult daycare programs, and home health agencies.

**Outlook:** Employment of occupational therapists is expected to increase faster than the average for all occupations through 2010. Federal legislation imposing limits on reimbursement for therapy services may adversely affect the job market for occupational therapists in the near term. However, over the long run, the demand for occupational therapists should continue to rise as a result of growth in the number of individuals with disabilities or limited function requiring therapy services. The baby-boom generation's movement into middle age, a period when the incidence of heart attack and stroke increases, will increase the demand for therapeutic services. The rapidly growing population 75 years of age and above (an age that suffers from a high incidence of disabling conditions), also will demand additional services. Medical advances now enable more patients with critical problems to survive. These patients may need extensive therapy.

**Wages:** Median annual earnings of occupational therapists were \$49,450 in 2000. The middle 50 percent earned between \$40,460 and \$57,890. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$32,040, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$70,810. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of occupational therapists in 2000 were as follows:

Nursing and personal care facilities	\$51,220
Hospitals	50,430
Offices of other health practitioners	49,520
Elementary and secondary schools	45,340

**Special Requirement:** Therapists must have the ability to understand and use words effectively and to move hands skillfully and easily in placing and turning motions.

**Licensing/Certification Requirements:** Occupational Therapists must pass a written examination administered by the American Occupational Therapy Certification Board.