Occupational Therapy FAQ

What do Occupational Therapists do?
OT’s work with a wide range of people to help improve their ability to perform activities of daily living (ADLs). This might include things such as dressing, washing, cooking, and eating as well as workplace tasks. Often, focus is on fine motor or basic gross motor function, developing skills like dexterity, coordination, and visual acuity as well as cognitive skills.

How do I become an Occupational Therapist?
Accredited programs at both the Master’s and Doctorate level are available. A Bachelor’s degree is required for admission. Masters programs usually require two-three years and DOT’s ~ three. At least 6 months of supervised fieldwork is required as part of the degree. Once the degree is awarded, students sit for a national board exam.

What are the pre-requisites for entering a Masters or Doctorate in OT degree program?
Schools will have a large number of pre-reqs in common, but each school may vary slightly in the number of terms they require, or have some program specific courses. Pacific University is the only institution offering an OT degree, and it is at the DOT level. In general, students should plan on competing anatomy & physiology, a term of physics, general, developmental and abnormal psychology, statistics, medical terminology and some humanities courses. Many OT’s have Bachelor’s degrees in Liberal Arts, Psychology or Human movement.

Do I need experience in the field?
It is imperative that for any professional field you want to enter, you understand the work and the day to day flow of the professional. OT programs will expect candidates have been exposed to OT in a variety of settings across a range of ages. Hour minimums will vary.

How competitive is it to get into OT programs?
Nationally, there are currently 158 OT Master's and 15 Doctoral programs. In 2017 at the Master's level, there were a total of 7,236 slots available and 44,934 applications. At the Doctoral level, there were 549 slots and 3,092 applications. For Pacific University’s entering class of 2017, there were 1145 applications for 50 slots, with an average cumulative GPA of 3.69 and science/math GPA of 3.58.Last 45 credit GPA 3.85 and average observation hour were between 400-600. As of March 3, 2017, the number of program locations in the accreditation process totaled 520.

Do I need the GRE (Graduate Records Examination)?
Some schools will require, others not. Pacific University does not require the GRE, but it is preferred.

What is an average salary of a licensed OT?
Salary varies between settings of employment, but in 2017 the mean annual income was $83,200.

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What is the projected job outlook for OT’s?
The Bureau of labor Statistics indicates that the rate of growth for OTs is expected to grow ~ 24% through 2026 - much faster that the average occupation.

Where can I get more information?
American Occupational Therapy Association website (www.aota.org) and The Bureau of Labor Statistics (bls.gov/ooh) are great resources for learning more about the field.

Occupational Therapy Assistant

What does an Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) do?
OTA’s support and aide the OT, often preparing equipment, providing therapy, and conducting intake evaluations.

What is the difference between an Occupational Therapy Assistant and an Occupational Therapy Aide?
An Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) is a graduate of an accredited occupational therapy assistant educational program and is eligible to sit for the national certification examination. Most states regulate occupational therapy assistants. Occupational therapy aides provide supportive services to the occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant.

Occupational therapy aides usually receive their training on the job and are not eligible for certification or licensure. Occupational therapy aide programs are not accredited by AOTA’s Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) and certification of aides is not required. You may want to contact your state regulatory board to determine what services and regulations apply to occupational therapy aides in your state.

How do I become an OT Assistant?
A two-year Associate’s Degree from an accredited ACOTE program is required and candidates must pass a national licensure exam. OTA students will complete at least 16 weeks of field experience in addition to course work.

Where do OTA’s find jobs?
In a variety of health care settings, including health clinics, hospitals, nursing care facilities, schools, and home health programs.

What is the job outlook for OTA’s?
As with OT’s, it is predicted that OTAs employment will increase upwards of 28%. Part of this growth will be due to the aging Baby Boomer population, as well as the need to continue to reduce health care costs.

What is the average salary of an OTA?
According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median wage for OTA’s in 2017 was $56,690.00. OTA’s in schools earn significantly less than OTA's in home health care services.

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