



Professional School Prep: Occupational Therapy (OT) School

What is Occupational Therapy School?

Occupational Therapy (OT) school is either a master's level or doctorate level program, which can take anywhere from two to four years. Both degrees would prepare a student for entry-level positions as an OT, with the biggest difference that the doctoral program will have more research, leadership, and policy work included as well as a 16 week experiential component.

What should I know about Occupational Therapy?

Occupational therapists (OTs) help people of all ages to 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, socially or emotionally disabling. They also help them to develop, recover, or maintain daily living and work skills. Occupational therapists help clients not only to improve their basic motor functions and reasoning abilities, but also to compensate for permanent loss of function.

Related Fields

Chiropractic Medicine	Occupational Therapy Assistant
Physical Therapy	Social Work
Nursing	Clinical Psychology
Guidance Counselor	

Where can I study Occupational Therapy?

Currently in the US there are approximately 161 accredited Masters in OT programs, in Washington State we house three of those schools: Eastern Washington University The University of Puget Sound, and The University of Washington. In regards to available doctoral programs, there are currently 7 accredited doctoral programs with 14 additional schools working toward accreditation.

How do I get started?

When considering OT school, ask: Is this the only profession I could ever see myself doing? Am I willing to go into substantial debt in order to pursue this dream? Am I willing to give up a significant portion of my social life (eg. birthdays, holidays, parties, weddings) potentially for the rest of my life? While answering these questions students pursuing a graduate program in OT should remember the acronym "S-T-A-R-T":

Shadow

Shadowing is the act of working with and observing a current occupational therapist practicing in a clinical setting. Often this can occur in a private practice. Shadowing is a huge part of becoming an well-rounded and competitive applicant for OT programs. One of the main purposes of shadowing is to help you, the student, become more aware of what it means to be an occupational therapist. Students will often work within a variety of settings and specialties in order to gain a better sense of the day to day life of an OT. Shadowing opportunities are out there but they can be hard to find, often students may find the most success with contacting their own OT, or by simply cold calling local practitioners.

Talk

Talk to someone! Being a student interested in going into a graduate program means that a large part of your time should be spent learning as much about the opportunities available to help develop you as a student as possible. Working with your adviser, instructors, and classmates can all be incredibly helpful in helping connect you with the resources you will need. A large part of being an occupational therapist, is communicating with your patients. Remember, listening, retaining information, and asking questions are all intricate parts of helping restore people to a satisfied state in life after severe/recurring injury. Therefore, get started utilizing these skills early!

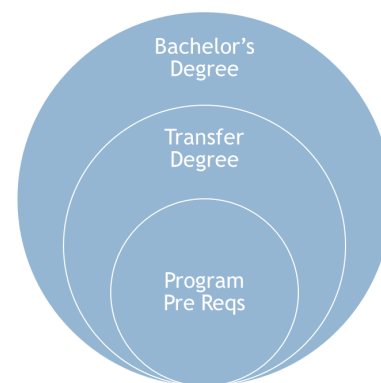
Academics

Applying to OT programs requires that you have a bachelor's degree and all of the necessary **prerequisites** completed. Every school will have slightly different prerequisite requirements, but for our three in state programs you may consider:

Eastern Washington University	University of Puget	University of Washington
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• BIOL 241, 242• PSYCH 100, 200, 220• ANTH 100 or SOC 101• Statistics BC: BA 240 or MATH 130• AHE 110• CHEM 121 or 131• ENGLISH 201 or 235• EWU course Intro to OT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• BIOL 241, 242• PSYCH 200, 220• 1 additional course of behavioral science (ANTH 206, SOC 240 256 270)• Statistics BC: BA 240 or Math 130• AHE 110* <p>* AHE 110, Medical Terminology, is not a prereq but highly recommended.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• BIOL 241, 242• CHEM 121 or 131• Statistics BC: BA 240 or Math 130• PSYCH 200 and 220• SOC 101 or ANTH 206

In addition to the above prerequisite courses, there are two major things to note if you are a student pursuing your bachelor's degree:

1. Most universities do not offer a degree in "Pre-OT", but some (such as EWU) offer a 3+2 program in which a student earns a BA/BS and a master's degree.
2. There is no particular major that "looks good" to an OT school, however, students generally try to fit all of their prereqs within their initial bachelor's degree.



Research

This does not mean academic research (although undergraduate research is and always can be a great experience for any student), this is referring to research regarding the OT program(s) to which you wish to apply. Remember, there are well over 100 accredited programs in the US, so having a clear idea of which programs are the best fit for you and your goals is important. Generally speaking, students may apply to between 8-12 schools per application cycle. With each school most likely having a slightly different set of prerequisite courses they require, it is important that you have researched the coursework necessary for the schools you are considering. Find this information, by visiting the American Occupational Therapy Association's website <http://www.aota.org/>

Test

All students wishing to apply to an OT program may first need to complete a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution and then take the Graduate Records Examination (GRE). This test is taken approximately one year prior to when the student is looking to apply for their first application cycle.

What should I do now?

Students interested in getting started with the road toward graduate school can use a variety of resources here on campus. The Center for Career Connections here on campus is an excellent resource, as well as becoming involved here on campus with some of our pre health community. Lastly you may consider meeting with an adviser, you can do so by calling 425 564 2212 or by stopping by the advising front desk located on the second floor of the B building.

This is an unofficial guide only. It is the student's responsibility to research and communicate with all community college and university programs to which he/she intends to apply to establish prerequisites and admission requirements, as they vary and are subject to change without notice.

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