

Occupational Therapy Information

Career Description

Occupational therapists assess clients with physical and mental challenges in order to develop activities of daily living (ADL) that work best for those clients. For a client with a physical disability, the first focus is on performing critical daily routines (e.g. grooming, eating, etc.). Once these skills are mastered, a program is then built around the skills needed to perform tasks such as participating in education, caring for a home and family, or seeking and maintaining employment. Services typically include customized treatment programs to improve ability to perform daily activities; comprehensive home and job site evaluations with adaptation recommendations; adaptive equipment recommendations and usage training; and guidance to family members and caregivers.

Occupational therapists need patience, understanding, and compassion in order to succeed in their field. They make an average salary of \$80,150 per year (www.bls.gov). OTs work in hospitals and other health care and community settings and usually work a 40-hour week. More than one-third of occupational therapists work part time.

Academic Factors for Occupational Therapy School Admission

- **Major:** A bachelor's degree is required for all OT programs, although many schools offer transfer and accelerated BS/MS programs in occupational therapy. Students interested in attending an occupational therapy program may choose any major while at BYU. We recommend that you choose a major you like, and then incorporate the prerequisite courses into your schedule. Also, choose a major that can be your contingency plan if you don't get into OT school or later choose not to go.
- **GPA:** Both your cumulative GPA and science GPA are important factors in your OT school application. In 2015, the mean overall GPA of BYU students matriculating to OT schools was 3.53 and the mean science GPA was 3.29.
- **GRE Scores:** The average GRE scores of BYU students matriculating to OT school in 2015 were 157 (Verbal Reasoning), 154 (Quantitative Reasoning), and 4 (Analytical Writing).

Sample Prerequisite Classes

*Remember, this list is a **sample** and may not be adequate for every school. Consult with your selected schools for actual requirements and better accuracy. Pay close attention to lab requirements and specific credit hours required.

Developmental Psychology & Abnormal Psychology

PSYCH 220	Human Development: Life Span	3 credits
PSYCH 342	Abnormal Psychology	3 credits

Statistics

STAT 121	Principles of Statistics	3 credits
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Anthropology

ANTHR 101	Social/Cultural Anthropology	3 credits
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Studio Arts (examples—check with OT schools for recommended options)

ART 104	Introduction to Sculpture	3 credits
ART 105	Introduction to Ceramics	3 credits

Anatomy & Physiology

PDBIO 220	Human Anatomy with Lab	3 credits
<i>(**may not fulfill all requirements as it is only 3 credits instead of 4)</i>		
PDBIO 305	Human Physiology	4 credits
PDBIO 363	Advanced Physiology lab	1 credit

Medical Terminology

NURS 102	Nursing and Medical Terminology	2 credits
LATIN 123	Premedical Latin and Greek	2 credits

Physics

PHSCS 105	General Physics I	3 credits
PHSCS 107	General Physics Lab I	1 credit
<i>or Phscs 121 (calculus-based)</i>		

Non-Academic Factors for Occupational Therapy School Admission

Occupational therapy schools are looking for well-rounded candidates who have achieved excellence not only in the classroom, but also in other areas. Leadership ability, a disposition to serve others, patience and compassion are a few of the qualities that impress most admissions committees.

- ***Rolling Admissions:*** Occupational Therapist Centralized Application Service, OTCAS, the centralized application service for OT schools, opens in July. Due to rolling admissions, it is very important to submit your OT school application as close to the opening date as possible. Often students who are otherwise qualified are not accepted solely due to the fact that there were no more available seats because the student applied too late.
- ***Clinical Experience:*** Clinical experience with a practicing OT is vital when applying to an OT program. You should become acquainted with a few OTs and shadow to gain some firsthand insight into what OTs do on a daily basis. Most schools require this type of experience for interviews and for admission. To be competitive, try to obtain at least 100 total shadowing hours in at least two different settings.
- ***Community Service:*** Emphasis on service varies, but it is recommended to have a history of service, approximately 50+ hours per year. Service activities should demonstrate consistent and long term commitment to helping others, but do not need to be occupational therapy related. Community service (teaching English classes, humanitarian service projects, etc.) completed on a mission counts as a starting point, but engagement in your own community is seen as more valuable and should demonstrate a current pattern of service.
- ***Leadership:*** Experiences that exhibit leadership qualities can be accrued in conjunction with work experience, service, shadowing, and other extracurricular activities.

Other Resources

- The American Occupational Therapy Association – www.aota.org
- Occupational Therapist Centralized Application Service (OTCAS) – <https://portal.otcas.org>