



# Occupational Therapist

**Course Overview:** Focuses on careers in planning, managing, and providing therapeutic services, diagnostic services, health informatics, support services, and biotechnology research and development.

**Career Goal (O\*NET Code):** (29-1122) - Occupational therapists treat patients with injuries, illnesses, or disabilities through the therapeutic use of everyday activities. They help these patients develop, recover, and improve the skills needed for daily living and working.

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Grade:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School:** \_\_\_\_\_

## SUGGESTED COURSEWORK

## EXTENDED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Middle School	8th	<b>HS Courses:</b>	(Local districts may list high school credit courses here)			<p><b>Curricular Experiences: ***</b> Health Occupations Students of America</p> <p><b>Career Learning Experiences:</b> Career Preparation Internship Job Shadowing Clinical Rotations Certifications Clinical Volunteer Work (local hospitals &amp; medical facilities)</p> <p><b>Extracurricular Experiences:***</b> Language Immersion Programs National Youth Leadership Forum on Medicine School Newspaper Student Council UIL Academic Competitions Yearbook</p> <p><b>Service Learning Experiences:</b> Boy/Girl Scouts Campus Service Organizations Community Service Volunteer Medical Mission Trips Peer Mentoring / Peer Tutoring Special Olympics</p>
	High School	9th	<b>Courses*:</b>	English I Algebra I or Geometry Biology	World Geography Foreign Language I Physical Education or Athletics	
<b>Career-Related Electives:</b>			Principles of Health Science			
10th		<b>Courses:</b>	English II Geometry or Algebra II Chemistry	World History Foreign Language II Elective	Elective	
		<b>Career-Related Electives:</b>	Medical Terminology and Pathophysiology			
11th	<b>Core Courses:</b>	English III Algebra II or Pre-Calculus Physics	United States History Foreign Language III ** Professional Communications or Speech	Elective		
	<b>Career-Related Electives:</b>	Health Science				
12th	<b>Core Courses:</b>	English IV Pre-Calculus or Calculus 4th Science	Government/Economics Elective Elective			
	<b>Career-Related Electives:</b>	Practicum in Health Science				

### COLLEGE CREDIT OPPORTUNITIES -- High School

Students should take Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), dual credit, Advanced Technical Credit (ATC), or locally articulated courses (Tech Prep), if possible. List those courses that count for college credit on your campus.

Postsecondary	<p><b>How to Become an Occupational Therapist</b> Occupational therapists need a master's degree from an accredited occupational therapy program. Occupational therapists must also be licensed. A small number of programs offer doctoral degrees in occupational therapy. Admission to occupational therapy programs generally requires a bachelor's degree and specific coursework, including biology and physiology.</p>			<p><b>Carrer Options</b> (Sample of reported job titles)</p>		<p><b>Professional Associations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>American Occupational Therapy Association</li> </ul>
		Texas Southmost College	South Texas College	Texas State Technical College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Occupational Therapist (OT),</li> <li>Registered Occupational Therapist</li> <li>Staff Therapist</li> <li>Assistive Technology Trainer</li> <li>Industrial Rehabilitation Consultant</li> </ul>	
		The University of Texas at Brownsville	The University of Texas - Pan American	Occupational Therapy (M)		

\* Students must meet local & state high school graduation requirements. \*\* Required course for the Distinguished Graduation Plan (in addition to other measures). \*\*\* Based on campus availability. Students may select other elective courses for personal enrichment purposes.

This plan of study serves as a guide, along with other career planning materials, for pursuing a career path and is based on the most recent information as of 2009. All plans meet high school graduation requirements as well as college entrance requirements.



## Occupational Therapist

TEA Industry Cluster	Health Science
SOC Code	29-1122
Identified by	Tech Prep Occupations
Projected Growth (2018)	31%
BISD Magnet School Available	Yes

Source: Demand Occupations by Cluster, updated June 27, 2012

### Description

#### What Occupational Therapists Do

Occupational therapists treat patients with injuries, illnesses, or disabilities through the therapeutic use of everyday activities. They help these patients develop, recover, and improve the skills needed for daily living and working.

#### Duties

Occupational therapists typically do the following:

- Observe patients doing tasks, ask the patient questions, and review the patient's medical history
- Use the observations, answers, and medical history to evaluate the patient's condition and needs
- Establish a treatment plan for patients, laying out the types of activities and specific goals to be accomplished
- Help people with various disabilities with different tasks, such as helping an older person with poor memory use a computer, or leading an autistic child in play activities
- Demonstrate exercises that can help relieve pain for people with chronic conditions, such as joint stretches for arthritis sufferers
- Evaluate a patient's home or workplace and identify how it can be better suited to the patient's health needs
- Educate a patient's family and employer about how to accommodate and care for the patient
- Recommend special equipment, such as wheelchairs and eating aids, and instruct patients how to use that equipment
- Assess and record patients' activities and progress for evaluating clients, for billing, and for reporting to physicians and other healthcare providers

Patients with permanent disabilities, such as cerebral palsy, often need help performing daily tasks. Therapists show patients how to use appropriate adaptive equipment, such as leg or knee braces, wheelchairs, and eating aids. Patients can function independently and control their living environment by using these devices.

Some occupational therapists work in educational settings with children one on one or in small groups. They evaluate disabled children's abilities, modify classroom equipment to accommodate certain disabilities, and help children participate in school activities.

Some therapists provide early intervention therapy to infants and toddlers who have, or are at risk of having, developmental delays.

Therapists who work with the elderly help their patients lead more independent and active lives. They assess the patient's abilities and environment and make recommendations, such as using adaptive equipment or identifying and removing potential fall hazards in the home.

In some cases, occupational therapists help patients create functional work environments. They evaluate the work space, plan work activities, and meet with the patient's employer to collaborate on changes to the patient's work environment or schedule.

Occupational therapists also may work in mental health settings where they help patients who suffer from developmental disabilities, mental illness, or emotional problems. They help these patients cope with and engage in daily life by teaching skills such as time management, budgeting, using public transportation, and doing household chores. Additionally, therapists may work with individuals who have problems with drug abuse, alcoholism, depression, or suffer from other disorders.

Some occupational therapists—such as those employed in hospitals or physicians' offices—work as part of a healthcare team, along with doctors, registered nurses, and other types of therapists. They also may oversee the work of occupational therapy assistants and aides. For more information, see the profile on [occupational therapy assistants and aides](#).

## Training Opportunities Linked to Those Jobs (Degree Types and Colleges/Universities)

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### How to Become an Occupational Therapist

Occupational therapists need a master's degree from an accredited occupational therapy program. Occupational therapists must also be licensed.

### Education

Most occupational therapists enter the occupation with a master's degree in occupational therapy. A small number of programs offer doctoral degrees in occupational therapy.

Admission to occupational therapy programs generally requires a bachelor's degree and specific coursework, including biology and physiology. Many programs also require applicants to have volunteered or worked in an occupational therapy setting.

Master's programs generally take 2 years to complete; doctoral programs take longer. Some schools offer a dual degree program in which the student earns a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in 5 years. Part-time programs that offer courses on nights and weekends are also available. Both master's and doctoral programs require several months of supervised fieldwork, in which prospective occupational therapists gain real-world experience.

### Important Qualities

**Communication skills.** Occupational therapists have to be able to explain clearly what they want their patients to do.

**Compassion.** Occupational therapists are usually drawn to the profession by a desire to help people and improve the daily lives of others.

**Interpersonal skills.** Because occupational therapists spend their time teaching and explaining therapies to patients, they should inspire trust and respect from their clients.

**Listening skills.** Occupational therapists must be able to listen attentively to what their patients tell them.

**Patience.** Dealing with injuries, illnesses, and disabilities is frustrating for many people. Occupational therapists should be patient in order to provide quality care from the people they serve.

**Writing skills.** Occupational therapists must be able to explain clearly to others on the patient's medical team what they are doing and how it is going.

**Licenses and Certification**

Certification is voluntary, but many occupational therapists choose to become certified. They must pass the [National Board for Certification of Occupational Therapists](#) (NBCOT) exam to become certified. Certification allows therapists to use the title of Occupational Therapist Registered (OTR). They must also take continuing education classes to maintain certification.

All states require occupational therapists to be licensed. Licensure requires a degree from an accredited educational program and passing the NBCOT certification exam. Other requirements, such as continuing education and fees, vary by state.

Texas Southmost College	South Texas College	Texas State Technical College	The University of Texas at Brownsville	The University of Texas - Pan American
				<a href="#">Occupational Therapy (MS)</a>

**Local Employers**

Employer	City		Employer	City
<a href="#">A &amp; M Home Health</a>	<a href="#">Harlingen</a>		<a href="#">Medical Associates-Brwnsvll</a>	<a href="#">Brownsville</a>
<a href="#">A &amp; M Nursing Svc</a>	<a href="#">Harlingen</a>		<a href="#">Medical Shield Academy</a>	<a href="#">Harlingen</a>
<a href="#">A Better Choice Home Health</a>	<a href="#">Brownsville</a>		<a href="#">Mercy Home Health</a>	<a href="#">Brownsville</a>
<a href="#">A N Senior Care</a>	<a href="#">Harlingen</a>		<a href="#">Mercy Home Health</a>	<a href="#">Harlingen</a>
<a href="#">A One Health Svc Agency</a>	<a href="#">Brownsville</a>		<a href="#">Mes</a>	<a href="#">Harlingen</a>

## Career Options (Specific Job Types)

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### Sample of reported job titles:

- Occupational Therapist (OT),
- Registered Occupational Therapist
- Staff Therapist
- Assistive Technology Trainer
- Industrial Rehabilitation Consultant

## Salary Ranges

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### Wages for Occupational Therapists

Location	Pay Period	2011				
		10%	25%	Median	75%	90%
United States	Hourly	\$24.03	\$29.58	\$35.49	\$42.69	\$50.17
	Yearly	\$50,000	\$61,500	\$73,800	\$88,800	\$104,400
Texas	Hourly	\$26.22	\$31.77	\$38.80	\$45.51	\$62.16
	Yearly	\$54,500	\$66,100	\$80,700	\$94,700	\$129,300
Brownsville-Harlingen, TX MSA	Hourly	\$27.69	\$34.49	\$41.19	\$48.82	\$56.69
	Yearly	\$57,600	\$71,700	\$85,700	\$101,500	\$117,900
McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX MSA	Hourly	\$31.34	\$36.36	\$41.71	\$49.76	\$59.67
	Yearly	\$65,200	\$75,600	\$86,800	\$103,500	\$124,100

## Professional Associations Linked to the Careers

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For more information about occupational therapists, visit

[American Occupational Therapy Association](http://www.aota.org/)

For information regarding the requirements to practice as an occupational therapist in schools, contact the appropriate occupational therapy regulatory agency for your state.

## Sources

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The information provided in this document was collected from the following sources:

- Occupational Outlook Handbook (<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>)
- O\*NET OnLine (<http://www.onetonline.org/>)
- Texas CARES (<http://www.texascaresonline.com/>)
- CareerOneStop (<http://www.careeronestop.org/>)