

# Pre-Occupational Therapy Quick Facts

Occupational therapy (OT) is the use of assessment and intervention to develop, recover, or maintain meaningful activities (occupations) for people with disabilities, injuries or impairments. Occupational Therapists earn either a master's (M.O.T.) or doctorate (O.T.D) degree in Occupational Therapy through an Occupational Therapy School. There is no "best" major for pre-OT students. Instead, students are encouraged to pursue majors in which they are most interested and in which they believe they will excel. Majors like *Health, Nutrition Science*, and *Exercise Science* are the most common for applicants because many of the prerequisite courses are included in your degree plan. However, a non-science major does not put you at a disadvantage.

## ❖ How is OT different from PT?

The fields of occupational therapy and physical therapy are often confused. While both roles provide essential hands-on rehabilitative work to help clients perform everyday tasks as independently as possible, each field takes a distinct approach in helping people get back to their day to day lives. The main difference is that OT focuses on improving a client's ability to perform activities of daily living (ADL), and PT focuses on improving a client's ability to perform movement of the human body. OTs tend to have a more holistic perspective and focus on adapting the environment to fit the person.

## Required Courses

### Common Occupational Therapy Pre-Requisites\*

**Anatomy & Physiology:** BIOL 2301/2101 & BIOL 2302/2102

**Kinesiology:** KIN 1352

**Physics:** PHYS 1301/1101

**Abnormal Psychology:** PSYC 2320

**Lifespan/Human Development:** HDFS 2317

**Medical Terminology:** HLT 3325

**Statistics:** MATH 1342 or MATH 3339 or PSYC 2317

**Social Sciences:** PSYC 2301 or SOCI 1301 or other courses

**\*DISCLAIMER:** This list includes pre-requisites for most OT programs but is not meant to be exhaustive. Please refer to OT program websites for specific requirements regarding coursework and AP/IB credit before applying. You may also meet with an advisor in the Pre-Health Advising Center to discuss other options.

## Average Matriculate Numbers

- Overall GPA: 3.50
- Science GPA: 3.40

## General Information

- Master's (MOT) or Doctoral (OTD)
- Most programs are 2-3 years
- 8 OT programs in Texas

## OTCAS

To apply to OT programs, you will utilize the OTCAS application service. All OT programs in Texas currently use the OTCAS application service.

Official transcripts, GRE scores, an essay, and letters of recommendation are all submitted to OTCAS. OTCAS opens each year in July, but programs differ in terms of their application deadlines. Most deadlines are in the fall for a summer start; however, you are responsible for checking the specific deadlines for the programs to which you hope to apply. Generally, you are encouraged to apply well before the deadline since many institutions participate in rolling admissions.

## Letters of Evaluation

Most OT programs require three letters of evaluation. Requirements can vary between schools, and it is your responsibility to ensure that you have collected the correct letters for your programs of interest.

### Generally, OT admissions committees expect you to provide:

- a letter from a licensed occupational therapist practicing in the US,
- a letter from a faculty member, and
- an additional letter from another occupational therapist, professor, or from a research mentor, or supervisor.

## GRE

Most OT schools require that applicants take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). The GRE consists of three sections: Quantitative, Verbal, and Essay section. There are no specific courses that students need to take prior to the GRE, but students should plan to dedicate roughly six to eight weeks to exam preparation. While students can opt for a commercial prep course for the GRE, self-study is often enough.

Applicants usually sit for the exam in their junior or senior year depending on their application timeline. Generally, it is recommended for an applicant to take the GRE within January-May as they head into the July application cycle.

## Occupational Therapy Shadowing Experience

OT programs require that applicants **have experience observing or shadowing occupational therapists in action**. Shadowing requirements for admissions can vary in a few aspects between schools including hours required, number of environments, and types of environments. While most programs require 40-60 hours minimum, more is recommended. It is common for programs to suggest that students complete their shadowing in **at least two different environments** – inpatient and outpatient. Variety in shadowing is always helpful but is also important to try to get a well-rounded experience in each environment since shadowing is regularly discussed during admissions interviews. Documentation of experience is required.

## Volunteering & Research Experience

Extracurricular activities, such as club affiliations and volunteering, are an important part of the OT application. OT programs are looking for students who not only demonstrate that they can manage rigorous courses while staying busy, but also those who are compassionate, enjoy working with people and are dedicated to serving the community. Students should keep in mind that depth of commitment and leadership experience are also considered. As a result, it is best to focus on strong engagement in few activities rather than to spread oneself too thin.

While there are many benefits to getting involved in undergraduate research, it is not required for admission into most OT programs. Therefore, if a student were not interested in research, they would be better served dedicating that time to other activities such as volunteering or shadowing. Students interested in research should plan to dedicate at least a year to a specific project or research lab.

## Texas OT Program Application Dates

Institution	Degree	Start Date	OT Shadowing Required?
Abilene Christian University	Both	August	Yes, 40 hours minimum in two areas
Texas Tech University HSC	Doctoral	May	Yes, 40 hours minimum
Texas Woman's University	Doctoral	May	Yes, 20 hours minimum
University of St. Augustine	Both	Flexible	Yes, 40 hours minimum in two areas
University of Texas El Paso	Doctoral	May	Yes, 40 hours minimum in two areas
University of Texas HSC San Antonio	Doctoral	May	Yes, 40 hours minimum
University of Texas Medical Branch	Doctoral	August	Yes, 20 hours minimum
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley	Doctoral	August	Recommended but no minimum