

# OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

**Entry Level:** Master's Degree

**\*Please Note:** BYU has Occupational Therapy Advisement for students interested in pursuing a Master's degree in Occupational therapy: <https://ppa.byu.edu/occupational-therapy>.

Occupational Therapists assist clients in performing activities of all types, ranging from using a phone or camera to caring for daily needs such as dressing, cooking, eating, and driving.<sup>1</sup>

## **JOB REQUIREMENTS**

**What is the exact job title?**

- Occupational Therapist (OT)

**How do I become one?**

- Complete a bachelor's degree: 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.<sup>2</sup>
- Complete a master's degree (please see the link above).<sup>5</sup>
- Pass the NBCOT examination for licensure. After paying the application fee of \$500 to \$540, you will need to take the exam with your state licensing board and receive a passing score or wait 45 days to retake it. Once you have become licensed as an occupational therapist in your state of residence, you will be required to stay current on therapeutic techniques by completing continuing education credits and renewing the license.<sup>5</sup>

**What qualities do I need?**

- **Adaptability:** OTs must be flexible when treating patients. Because not every type of therapy will work for each patient, therapists may need to be creative when determining the treatment plans and adaptive devices that best suit each patient's needs.<sup>3</sup>
- **Communication skills:** OTs must listen attentively to what patients tell them and must explain what they want their patients to do. When communicating with other members of the patient's medical team, therapists must clearly explain the treatment plan for the patient and any progress made by the patient.<sup>3</sup>
- **Compassion:** OTs are usually drawn to the profession by a desire to help people and improve their daily lives. Therapists must be sensitive to a patient's needs and concerns, especially when assisting the patient with personal activities.<sup>3</sup>
- **Interpersonal skills:** Because OTs spend their time teaching and explaining therapies to patients, they need to earn the trust and respect of those patients and their families.<sup>3</sup>
- **Patience:** dealing with injuries, illnesses, and disabilities is frustrating for many people. Occupational therapists should exhibit patience in order to provide quality care to the people they serve.<sup>3</sup>

1<https://ppa.byu.edu/occupational-therapy>

2<https://ppa.byu.edu/sites/default/files/pdf/OccupationalTherapyInformation.pdf>

3<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/occupational-therapists.htm>

4[https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Occupational\\_Therapist\\_\(OT\)/Hourly\\_Rate](https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Occupational_Therapist_(OT)/Hourly_Rate)

5<https://www.masters-in-special-education.com/faq/occupational-therapist/>

## **TYPICAL WORK DAY**

### **What do they do?**

- Occupational therapists treat patients who have injuries, illnesses, or disabilities through the therapeutic use of everyday activities.<sup>3</sup>

### **Where do they normally work?**

- About half of occupational therapists work in offices of occupational therapy or in hospitals. Others work in schools, nursing homes, and home health services. Therapists may spend a lot of time on their feet while working with patients.<sup>3</sup>

### **What hours do they work?**

- Most occupational therapists work full time. They may work nights or weekends, as needed, to accommodate patients' schedules.<sup>3</sup>

## **BENEFITS**

### **What is a typical salary in this field?**

- BLS: In May 2018, median pay was \$40.51/hour or \$84,270/year.<sup>3</sup>
- Payscale: \$37.07/hour or \$65,773/year.<sup>4</sup>

### **Does this job come with any benefits? (vision, dental, 401k, PTO, etc.)**

- Medical: 73%<sup>4</sup>
- Vision: 50%<sup>4</sup>
- Dental: 61%<sup>4</sup>
- None: 26%<sup>4</sup>

## **GROWTH**

### **What is the projected job growth?**

- Between 2018 - 2028, job growth is projected to be 18%, much faster than the average for all occupations.<sup>3</sup>

**Last Updated:** October 2019

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