

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT

Entry Level: Associate's Degree

***Please Note:** While BYU has academic advisement for students interested in becoming occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants typically need an associate's degree from an accredited program. BYU does not have a specific program for occupational therapy assistants.

Occupational therapy assistants help patients develop, recover, improve, as well as maintain the skills needed for daily living and working.¹

JOB REQUIREMENTS

What is the exact job title?

- Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA)

How do I become one?

- Obtain an associate's degree from an accredited program. Occupational therapy assistant programs are commonly found in community colleges and technical schools.¹
- Obtain certifications in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and basic life support (BLS).¹
- Complete at least 16 weeks of fieldwork to gain hands-on work experience.¹
- Become licensed within your state. Licensure typically requires the completion of an accredited occupational therapy assistant education program, completion of all fieldwork requirements, and passing the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) exam. Some states have additional requirements.¹

What qualities do I need?

- **Adaptability:** Assistants must be flexible when treating patients. Because not every type of therapy will work for each patient, assistants may need to be creative when working with occupational therapists to determine the best therapy to achieve a patient's goals.¹
- **Compassion:** OTAs frequently work with patients who struggle with many of life's basic activities. As a result, they should be compassionate and have the ability to encourage others.¹
- **Detail oriented:** OTAs must quickly and accurately follow the instructions, both written and spoken, of an occupational therapist. In addition, aides must pay attention to detail when performing clerical tasks, such as helping a patient fill out an insurance form.¹
- **Interpersonal skills:** OTAs spend much of their time interacting with patients and therefore should be friendly and courteous. They also should communicate clearly with patients and with patients' families to the extent of their training.¹
- **Physical strength:** Assistants need to have a moderate degree of strength because of the physical exertion required to assist patients. Constant kneeling, stooping, and standing for long periods also are part of the job.¹

TYPICAL WORK DAY

What do they do?

- Help patients do therapeutic activities, such as stretches and other exercises.¹
- Lead children who have developmental disabilities in play activities that promote coordination and socialization.¹

¹<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/occupational-therapy-assistants-and-aides.htm#tab-1>

²[https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Occupational_Therapy_Assistant_\(OTA\)/Hourly_Rate](https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Occupational_Therapy_Assistant_(OTA)/Hourly_Rate)

- Encourage patients to complete activities and tasks.¹
- Teach patients how to use special equipment—for example, showing a patient with Parkinson’s disease how to use devices that make eating easier.¹
- Record patients’ progress, report to occupational therapists, and do other administrative tasks.¹

Where do they normally work?

- Occupational therapy assistants and aides work primarily in occupational therapists’ offices, in hospitals, and in nursing care facilities. Occupational therapy assistants and aides spend much of their time on their feet while setting up equipment and, in the case of assistants, providing therapy to patients.¹

What hours do they work?

- Most occupational therapy assistants work full time. Occupational therapy assistants and aides may work during evenings or on weekends to accommodate patients’ schedules.¹

BENEFITS

What is a typical salary in this field?

- BLS: In May 2018, median pay was \$27.70/hour or \$57,630/year.¹
- Payscale: \$26.29/hour or \$45,012/year.²

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

- Medical: 63%²
- Vison: 45%²
- Dental: 53%²
- None: 34%²

GROWTH

What is the projected job growth?

- Between 2018 - 2028, job growth is projected to be 31%, much faster than average.¹

Last Updated: October 2019

¹<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/occupational-therapy-assistants-and-aides.htm#tab-1>

²[https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Occupational_Therapy_Assistant_\(OTA\)/Hourly_Rate](https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Occupational_Therapy_Assistant_(OTA)/Hourly_Rate)