

Occupational Therapy (OT)

WHAT DO OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS DO?

Occupational therapy practitioners ask, "What matters to you?" not, "What's the matter with you?" In its simplest terms, occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants help people across the lifespan participate in the things they want and need to do through the therapeutic use of everyday activities (occupations). Common occupational therapy interventions include helping children with disabilities to participate fully in school and social situations, helping people recovering from injury to regain skills, and providing supports for older adults experiencing physical and cognitive changes. Occupational therapy services typically include:

- an individualized evaluation, during which the client/family and occupational therapist determine the person's goals,
- customized intervention to improve the person's ability to perform daily activities and reach the goals, and
- an outcomes evaluation to ensure that the goals are being met and/or make changes to the intervention plan.

Occupational therapy services may include comprehensive evaluations of the client's home and other environments (e.g., workplace, school), recommendations for adaptive equipment and training in its use, and guidance and education for family members and caregivers. Occupational therapy practitioners have a holistic perspective, in which the focus is on adapting the environment to fit the person, and the person is an integral part of the therapy team. ([From the AOTA Website](#))

WHAT ARE THE ACADEMIC PREREQUISITES FOR ADMISSION TO GRADUATE OT PROGRAMS?

In making decisions about admissions, OT schools consider a range of factors *that may vary from one school to another*.

It is recommended, and often required, that you complete the following courses:*

Biology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human A&P I: Cells and Tissues (Bio 143) & Human A&P II: Organs and Organ Systems (BIO 243); (please note that Cell Biology (Bio 227) can be taken in place of Bio 143) • Evolutionary Foundations of Biodiversity (BIO 150) • One additional biology course, such as Bio 121 or 123 • Medical Terminology (BIO 291)
Chemistry*	1 year Gen Chemistry w/lab (CHEM 122 & 126 OR CHEM 125 and 126). See note below regarding calculus-based chemistry. (Not all schools require chemistry - check individual schools. Some only require one semester with a lab).
Math & Stats	Statistics (SDS 172)
Psychology & Sociology	PSYCH 125, 241, 247 and SOAN 121 or 128

Sample Course Timeline

The following timeline is an example of how you *might* wish to schedule your prerequisite courses. Timing of these courses may change due to major requirements, study abroad experiences, and admissions guidelines at graduate schools. In addition to these courses, each student will fit in any classes required by their major. All students must also consult with their advisors regarding course selection.

Year 1: PSYCH 125, BIO 150, STATS 172, SOAN 121 or 128

Year 2: BIO 143 - Fall, BIO 243 - Spring (**Please note:** BIO 143 is only offered in the fall.)

Year 3/4: PSYCH 241, PSYCH 247, BIO 291

*Note: If you choose to take chemistry, we recommend the course above. Chemistry courses can be taken anytime. They can also be taken elsewhere and transferred back in with permission from the registrar **before** taking the class.

Sample Prerequisite Course Requirements for Admission to Graduate OT Programs

- [University of Minnesota](#) (OTD)
- [Creighton University](#) (OTD)
- [University of Wisconsin - Madison](#) (MSOT)
- [St. Catherine University](#) (MAOT)
- [Washington University St. Louis](#) (OTD)
- [College of St. Scholastica](#) (MSOT)
- [Des Moines University](#) (OTD)
- [Indiana University](#) (OTD)
- List of accredited programs: [Doctoral](#) and [Masters](#)

**Please note, it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure they complete all prerequisite coursework in the time required for admission. Please consult each program's website for more information.*

WHAT STANDARDIZED TEST MIGHT I NEED TO TAKE?

[Graduate Record Examinations \(GRE\)](#)

WHAT CENTRALIZED APPLICATION WILL I USE?

[Occupational Therapist Centralized Application Service \(OTCAS\)](#)

WHAT ARE THE EXPERIENTIAL PREREQUISITES FOR ADMISSION TO GRADUATE OT PROGRAMS?*

- **Shadowing:** It is often required to shadow Occupational Therapists, but the number of hours varies from school to school. Shadowing should occur with a number of different providers, in a variety of settings (school, in-patient, outpatient, etc.), and with diverse clientele (geriatric, pediatrics, etc.).
- **Volunteering:** It is highly recommended that you volunteer in your community, starting as early as your first year at St. Olaf. Although your volunteer role can be in healthcare or outside of healthcare, we recommend that you aim to volunteer in both capacities. Occupational therapy schools are looking for applicants with **sustained** and **meaningful** volunteer experiences. They don't want students who are simply checking the "volunteer box."
- **Internship(s):** It is recommended that you gain experience in the field through interning at an OT clinic, department of health, community clinic, etc. Internships outside of occupational therapy are highly beneficial as well.
- **Research:** It is highly recommended that you complete at least one 10-week research experience. You do not have to find a research opportunity that is related to occupational therapy.
- **Leadership:** It is strongly recommended that you serve in a leadership capacity (president of an organization, academic tutor, service on an advisory board, etc.). Leaders can enhance their communication and organizational skills, as well as learn how to interact with individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Study Abroad](#)

[Alpha Epsilon Delta: Preprofessional Health Honor Society](#)

[Pre-PT/OT Club](#)

[Pre-health Professionals Club](#)

[Collaborative Undergraduate Research and Inquiry](#)

[Paper on OT written by St. Olaf alumna](#)

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

[American Occupational Therapy Association \(AOTA\)](#)

WHO IS THE DESIGNATED ACADEMIC ADVISING SPECIALIST?

Professor Cindy Book (Associate Professor of Kinesiology, Chair of the Kinesiology Department)

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****Ultimately, it is the responsibility of applicants to ensure that they complete all prerequisite coursework and experiential opportunities required for successful admission to occupational therapy graduate school.***