

Physical Therapy (PT)

WHAT DO PHYSICAL THERAPISTS DO?

Physical therapists (PTs) are health care professionals who diagnose and treat individuals of all ages, from newborns to the very oldest, who have medical problems or other health-related conditions that limit their abilities to move and perform functional activities in their daily lives.

PTs examine each individual and develop a plan using treatment techniques to promote the ability to move, reduce pain, restore function, and prevent disability. In addition, PTs work with individuals to prevent the loss of mobility before it occurs by developing fitness- and wellness-oriented programs for healthier and more active lifestyles.

Physical therapists provide care for people in a variety of settings, including hospitals, private practices, outpatient clinics, home health agencies, schools, sports and fitness facilities, work settings, and nursing homes. State licensure is required in each state in which a physical therapist practices. ([From APTA Website](#))

WHAT ARE THE ACADEMIC PREREQUISITES?

In making decisions about admissions, PT 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:*

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 1/2: PSYCH 125, BIO 150, STATS 172

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 227, BIO 291, KINES 373, KINES 374, KINES 375, KINES 376

*Note: Chemistry and Physics courses can be taken anytime before your application to PT school. They can also be taken elsewhere and transferred back in with permission from the registrar **before** taking the class. All courses should have labs. Please note that Chem 126 and Physics 124 require calculus; the majority of grad schools do not require calculus-based chemistry or physics.

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. (check individual schools, some only require one semester with a lab).
Physics	1 year Gen Physics with lab (PHYS 124 & 125). See note below regarding calculus-based physics. (check individual grad schools, some only require one semester with a lab)
Math & Stats	Statistics - (STAT 172)
Psychology	PSYCH 125, PSYCH 241, PSYCH 247
Recommended	KINES 373, 374, 375, 376 Some schools require a sociology course.

Sample Prerequisite Course Requirements for Admission to PT Programs

- [University of Minnesota](#)
- [Mayo Clinic](#)
- [St. Catherine University](#)
- [Creighton University](#)
- [Concordia University St. Paul](#)
- [University of Iowa](#)
- [List of accredited DPT programs](#)
- [Prerequisite Courses](#) for all PTCAS Programs

**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?**[Physical Therapy Centralized Application Service \(PTCAS\)](#)**WHAT ARE THE EXPERIENTIAL PREREQUISITES?***

- **Shadowing:** We recommend completion of a minimum of 100 hours shadowing in a physical therapy setting. Shadowing should occur with a number of different providers, in a variety of settings (inpatient, outpatient, etc.), and with diverse clientele (geriatrics, athletes, pediatrics, etc.). Applicants may be required to have a licensed physical therapist [verify the hours](#).
- **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. PT 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 considered an important prerequisite that you gain exposure to multiple and varied areas of practice in physical therapy (and additional health care exposure).
- **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 PT, although that would be desirable.
- **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](#)[Pre-PT/OT Club](#)[Alpha Epsilon Delta: Preprofessional Health Honor Society](#)[Pre-health Professionals Club](#)[Collaborative Undergraduate Research and Inquiry](#)[American College Sports Medicine Certifications](#)**PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**[American Physical Therapy Association](#)**WHO IS THE DESIGNATED 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 physical therapy graduate school.**