

PRE-OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY (OTR or OTD)

Competency Development: The Guiding Principle

Occupational therapy (OT) schools are looking for well-rounded individuals who can demonstrate professional competencies!

Many of the experiences listed below will give you opportunities for growth in the areas discussed on the AAMC website:

<https://www.aamc.org/services/admissions-lifecycle/competencies-entering-medical-students>

Note that although this list is specific to pre-med, growing in these competencies will serve you well in your pre-OT journey.

High-Value Experiences

Your pre-health advisor will be happy to discuss service & leadership opportunities that would connect well with your particular passions and values!

1. **Get involved**

- a. Involvement in on-campus Recognized Student Organizations (RSOs) or work as a teaching assistant, a lab / learning assistant, or a supplemental instructor can provide you with **leadership and communication** experience that OT schools are looking for.
- b. Developing quality relationships with off-campus, non-profit organizations and the people they serve will give you invaluable **community service** experience. OT schools are looking for people with a service orientation, so it is much better to establish longer, qualitative service relationships with a few non-profits than to focus merely on one-off service events or fundraisers with multiple organizations.

2. **Understand what this career entails**

- a. **Shadowing** is a crucial component in your discernment process regarding whether you should pursue this career. OT schools want to see that you have demonstrated sustained interest in this career and that you know what you are getting into. Shadow several OTs (and some physical therapists) in multiple settings. Talk to your pre-health advisor for more info!
- b. **Experience in health care** can take a variety of forms. Occupational therapy schools expect that their applicants have exposure to the field. You may find it useful to gain experience as a volunteer, an intern, or an employee at a clinical facility, a rehabilitation facility, or a school.
- c. Occupational therapists need to stay up-to-date about issues related to health care in the US and the world, including the way the media is discussing their profession. They also need to know what is going on in the world in general. Although pre-OT students are not expected to have all the answers, you can begin to **read and stay informed in the field** in order to maintain essential knowledge as you move forward in your journey.

3. **Establish a strong academic record.** Most individuals who are accepted to OT school (for either the master's degree leading to an OTR or the doctoral degree leading to an OTD) have a GPA in the 3.2 to 3.5 range. Some OT schools also place high value on applicants' math and science grades, so pay attention to this during your time here at UW. Talk to a pre-health advisor about how to keep track of your various GPAs. Typical prerequisite courses for OT school and GRE prep are listed on the next page.

4. **Grow in the area of the expressive arts.** Occupational therapy uses multiple modalities in order to help their patients engage in meaningful occupations, but one of the most common is the use of expressive arts, such as visual arts, music, movement-based creative expression, or creative writing. Gaining experience in one or more of these fields may be useful for your own personal and professional development.

5. **Develop relationships with professionals.** Occupational therapists, faculty, and work/volunteer supervisors can help you open doors to exciting new experiences, but they will also hopefully get to know you well enough to speak to your competencies in letters of evaluation for your OT school application.

Meet Early and Often with a Pre-Health Advisor!

Pre-Health Advising Office

hsadvise@uwyo.edu

307-766-3878

Health Sciences Room 110

To schedule an appointment: <http://www.uwyo.edu/preprof/schedule-an-appointment/index.html>

Stay Informed! Sign up to join our Pre-Professional Health ListServ, so you can stay informed about various opportunities, workshops, and information that our office sends out! <https://lists.uwyo.edu/mailman/listinfo/pre-prof>

USEFUL TIP: Create an e-mail inbox rule to send our ListServ messages into a "pre-health" folder to read at regular intervals.

Revised 06/03/2024

Academic Preparation

WHICH MAJOR SHOULD I CHOOSE?

You can major in ANYTHING! Occupational therapy schools do not care what you major in as long as you take their prerequisite courses. Most schools require completion of a bachelor's degree before matriculation into their school, and even if they do not require a bachelor's degree, it would be wise for you to complete your undergraduate education.

WHAT COURSES ARE TYPICALLY REQUIRED or RECOMMENDED?

Note: Specific OT schools may or may not require all of these courses before application or matriculation. Schools may also require additional courses as entry requirements. **You are responsible for making sure that you are on track to fulfill any specific school's requirements prior to application.** Talk to a pre-health advisor about things to keep in mind for school selection.

MATH

MATH 1400 (College Algebra)

STAT 2050 OR STAT 2070 (Statistics)

SCIENCE

Biological Science courses

LIFE 1010 (General Biology)

KIN 2040 & 2041 (Human Anatomy)

ZOO 3115 (Human Systems Physiology)

Chemical and Physical Science courses

CHEM 1000 (Introductory Chemistry) or **CHEM 1020** (General Chemistry I)*

* CHEM 1020 is the only option for OT schools that require a lab-based general chemistry course, and it is better preparation for ZOO 3115.

PHYS 1050 (Concepts in Physics)

SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES

PSYC 1000 (General Psychology)

PSYC 2300 (Psychology of Child Development)

PSYC 2340 (Psychopathology)

Human Life Span Course (covering human development birth to death)**

**Talk with a pre-health advisor about options for completing this requirement.

SOC 1000 (Sociological Principles) or **ANTH 1200** (Cultural Anthropology) ***

*** Some schools are specific about which of these courses they require!

COMM 2010 (Public Speaking)

Any course(s) in the **creative arts/fine arts******

**** Some schools specify anywhere from 2 to 5 courses in fine arts and humanities. Check with schools for specific requirements.

UW Course Prerequisites: To understand the prerequisites for any UW courses listed on this page, consult [the University Catalog](#). You can find prerequisites either by clicking on a specific course on your "Degree Programs" page or using the search box on the "Course Offerings" page.

LAB REQUIREMENT (Biological science courses (and sometimes chemistry))

Most OT schools require on-campus, lab-based courses for **the biological** science courses listed here, and some require a lab-based chemistry course. OT schools DO NOT usually accept AP credit for these sciences!

How do I prepare for the GRE?

High-level reading: Regularly read a variety of challenging material (beyond the material required in your courses).

Take any additional courses that require problem solving or math.

Talk to a pre-health advisor for other ideas!

ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK TO PREPARE WELL FOR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SCHOOL

Some schools require the following:

- Introduction to Occupational Therapy (OCTH 2000 online through Casper College)
- Medical Terminology (available through community colleges, not at UW)
- At least two courses specified as composition or literature
 - UND requires 2 composition courses for those who come in through their early-entry program, but we recommend completing your bachelor's degree before beginning the OT program, at which point this requirement is waived.

Growth Mindset: Taking additional challenging courses that interest you will reinforce your knowledge. Selecting a course based on how "easy" it is will not result in the intellectual growth needed to become an occupational therapist.

American Occupational Therapy Association

About the profession:

<https://explorehealthcareers.org/career/occupational-therapy/occupational-therapist/>

Application service: <https://help.liaisonedu.com/OTCAS> Applicant Help Center

School information: <https://www.aota.org/Education-Careers/Find-School.aspx>

Questions about funding OT school?

Find more information at our website:

<http://www.uwyo.edu/preprof/funding-your-education/>

Wyoming Resident? Check out WICHE PSEP at this site! <http://www.uwyo.edu/certwy>