

Pre-Occupational Therapy Guide



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Preface

The information presented in this document provides important resources for UT Austin Graduate and Undergraduate Students planning on applying to Occupational Therapy school. Remember, it is important to research Occupational Therapy programs and evaluate their fit before you apply.

Additional Pre-Health Professions resources including prerequisites, timelines, and application information for the following Health Professions: Medical, Dental, Pharmacy, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Optometry, and Veterinary Medicine can be found on our [HP Pathways Page](#).

What is Occupational Therapy (OT)?

The primary, overarching purpose of occupational therapy is to improve a person's ability to participate in daily occupations. An occupation is any meaningful or purposeful activity that occupies one's time. Through the use of therapeutic interventions, occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants help people of all ages participate in all of the activities (occupations) they want and/or need to be able to do on a daily basis.

Common occupational therapy interventions include helping children with disabilities participate fully in school and social situations, helping people recovering from injury to regain skills, and providing support for older adults experiencing physical and cognitive changes. Occupational Therapists work very closely with patients to develop a customized, individualized intervention plan in order to help the patient reach their goals. Services may include comprehensive evaluations of the patient's home and other environments (i.e. workplace, school), recommendations for adaptive equipment in its use, and guidance and education for family members and caregivers.

Occupational Therapists (OTs) can work in a wide variety of practice settings with a wide variety of populations. OTs can work in hospitals, rehab facilities, skilled nursing facilities, outpatient clinics, schools, home, and community settings. The different practice areas of OT include children and youth, mental health, disability and rehabilitation, healthy living, aging, and work-related.

Find out more at:

- [The Most Important Things You Need to Know about Becoming an Occupational Therapy Practitioner](#)
- <http://www.aota.org/about-occupational-therapy.aspx>

Difference between Master's in Occupational Therapy (MOT, MA, MS) and Doctorate in Occupational Therapy (OTD)

Both degrees are routes of entry into the profession. Currently a master's degree is the entry-level degree needed to enter the profession, however in the future, that may change.

The professional content will be similar for both programs, but the entry-level doctorate program will place a greater emphasis on management, theory, research and critical thinking. Doctoral students must also complete an experiential component (16 weeks) and a culminating project. A master's program will usually take 2- 3 years to complete, depending on the program, and a doctoral program (OTD) will take 2-4 years. Both master's and OTD programs have a clinical or practice focus and will prepare you to work with individuals as an occupational therapist.

The Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®) has mandated that the entry-level degree requirement for the occupational therapist will move to the doctoral level by July 1, 2027. This means that some programs are currently changing their requirements or even moving from MOT to OTD over the next few years. Check out our list of Texas OT schools for the most up-to-date information:

<https://cns.utexas.edu/health-professions/current-student-resources/health-profession-pathways/pre-occupational-therapy#research-ot-schools-before-you-apply>

Selecting a Major

So what should you major in at UT? Most Pre-Occupational Therapy students choose to major in a science discipline within the College of Natural Sciences or Kinesiology in the College of Education. Other popular undergraduate majors for those interested in occupational therapy are psychology, sociology, anthropology, human development and family sciences, and education. We recommend ultimately that you choose a major that matches your interests that you can be passionate about. Keep in mind that certain degrees may cover the Pre-Occupational Therapy prerequisites; however, Pre-Occupational Therapy programs also accept students who show broad interests in their academic coursework through a non-science major.

Explore an Occupational Therapist Career further:

- AOTA's "Considering an OT Career" is a great resource for those on the path to a career as an Occupational Therapist: [OT Careers](#)
The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) - <http://www.aota.org/>
- AOTA's "[Resources for Students](#)" section.
- [Occupational Therapy Practice: Framework: Domain & Process, 3rd edition](#)

Explore Majors/Health Professions further at one or more of the following resources:

- Way finder <https://wayfinder.utexas.edu/career-fields/healthcare>
- My Next Move <http://www.mynextmove.org/>
- Occupational Outlook Handbook <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/home.htm>
- Explore Health Careers: <http://explorehealthcareers.org/en/home>

Pre-Occupational Therapy Self-Assessment

Use this section to assess your Occupational Therapy School application strengths. If you are a new Pre-Occupational Therapy student, use this as a planning guide for your Pre-OT Pathway. (Check out the New-Pre Health Students page at the Health Professions website: <https://cns.utexas.edu/health-professions/current-students/new-pre-health-students>.)

Am I working towards submitting a well-rounded application?

Start by Developing Your Personal Qualities

Individuals who are successful in their pursuit of a career as an occupational therapist possess a set of qualities that they develop as young adults. These include good judgment, self-discipline, maturity, compassion/empathy, integrity, intellectual curiosity, strong work ethic, leadership, accountability, reliability, motivation/persistence, honesty, and cultural competency. Develop these qualities through the experiences and activities you choose to get involved in.

I want to develop the following qualities:

How will I develop these qualities? (Be specific!)

Get Involved & Gain Experience

There are several ways you can get involved. Get involved in what you are interested in - this is key! There are many things you can do to boost your application, including but not limited to: volunteering, shadowing, studying abroad, and/or participating in a summer program. Get involved on campus, tutor, mentor, teach, participate in Rec Sports - the list goes on and on! If you are considering studying abroad, check out the study abroad section in this guide. Always remember to be yourself and do what you enjoy.

Volunteering

Professional school admissions committees will look favorably upon any experience in which you are giving back to the community. A community service activity where you are directly helping people face-to-face is of the most value, and making an ongoing commitment to that service gives you time to grow and gain real value from the experience.

Track your Volunteer Hours and Observation

Track your volunteer hours, as most professional school applications will ask for details of the time you spent volunteering. UT Austin's ["Give Pulse"](#) is a great way to find volunteer opportunities, track hours, and become a part of a great community service community. If you are tracking your volunteer and health care experience personally, it's important to keep a record of your volunteer supervisor(s), including name(s) and title(s). ****Using programs like Microsoft Word or Excel to make and keep track of tables can be helpful.****

Community Service

Volunteer work done outside of the health care field; for example, working for Habitat for Humanity, tutoring children, participating in or working for a fundraiser walk or blood drive, etc.

Community Service	Dates (can list time period or individual dates)	Hours	Responsibilities

What have I learned about myself through these volunteer experiences?

Have I involved myself in a diverse set of experiences? What skills have I enhanced/gained through these experiences? (For example: "I have become a better communicator through my volunteering experiences at the local hospital" – then, explain how you have done this.)

I want to explore the following volunteer activities:

Shadowing and Observation

Time spent officially following and observing Occupational Therapy professionals at work.

OT Name or Name of Experience	Specialty	Hours	Type of Experience: Shadow/Volunteer/Paid

What have I learned from these experiences?

I want to reach out to the following Occupational Therapists to ask about shadowing:

Quick Tips - Shadowing:

Finding an occupational therapist who is willing to allow you to shadow/observe can be a challenge, but it is worth the effort. Many students start with Occupational Therapy clinics in their area. You may also network with other pre-occupational therapy students to see where they have shadowed.

More information can be found on OTCAS:

<https://portal.otcas.org/otcasHelpPages/instructions/supporting-information/observation-hours/index.html>

Quick Tips - Tracking Observation Hours:

When deciding where/how to volunteer and get observation hours, you should investigate how each school you are interested in defines volunteer and observation experience. Also take note of what each individual school's hour requirements are, and if your experience will fulfill these requirements.

Example:

[University of Texas Medical Branch](#) requires at least 20 hours of observation, volunteer, or paid experience in one or more occupational settings prior to time of application.

Get Hands-On Experience!

It is important to gain some hands-on experience in occupational therapy settings to add to your application. You can do so in many different ways. You can get certified as an Occupational Therapy Assistant or work as an Occupational Therapy Aid. You can also get a work as an Assistant Activity Director of a nursing home, nanny or babysit a child with disabilities, or work as an instructional aide at school, among other things.

Find one that you are interested in by doing informational interviews. Speak to a Pre-Health Professions coach about these different ways to gain experience.

Name of Experience	Hours	Type of Experience: Shadow/Volunteer/Paid

What have I learned from these experiences?

What skills have I enhanced/gained through these experiences? What do I like and dislike about my experiences in this setting?

Awards, Honors, Professional Membership & Leadership

Relevant awards or honors earned as a college student or post-college. **High school honors should not be included.** Professional Memberships and Leadership refers to your membership in a student organization or leadership roles. You may also include any professional and academic scholarships or awards you received, or professional presentations given as a college student.

Name of Organization	Position/Title (ex: Communication Director, President, Member, etc.)	Total participation time (ex. 2 years, 3 semesters, etc.)	Duties/Activities participated in with this organization/group

What relevant awards and honors have I earned as a college student or post-college?

What is the most important thing I have learned about myself from these experiences?

Brainstorm some specific ways you can develop your leadership skills:

Other Health care or Work Experience

You are working in the health or a health-related field but are not directly responsible for a patient's care; for example, filling prescriptions, performing clerical work, delivering patient food, cleaning patient rooms, working as a "Candy Striper" or hospital volunteer, etc. Any paid work done outside of the health care field; for example: a retail or restaurant job.

I have the following non-direct health care experience:

I have the following paid experience outside of the health care field:

Academics

Academics include your GPA and GRE Scores. How well are you doing? Are you taking 14-17 credit hours per semester? Are you keeping your grades up? Use the GPA calculator in your UT Direct account to figure out your GPA.

Quick Tip:

When entering coursework and grades into the OTCAS application, it is important to review the Academic History section and follow the instructions for entering coursework to properly calculate your course's numerical value.

Overall GPA _____

*This includes all course taken at UT and other institutions

Prerequisite GPA _____

Quick Tip:

To be competitive for professional school, you will need a GPA in the range of 3.4 to 3.8 and above. This means you need to be making A's and B's with more A's than B's. If you feel that you are behind in your classes, please don't wait until you get your first poor test score to ask for help. There are numerous resources on campus to help you with tutoring! Start with visiting your faculty members & teaching assistants during office hours.

Get in the Habit of Personal Reflection

Your insights about who you are as a person and how your experiences have shaped you will be of tremendous benefit when it is time to write your personal statement (a required part of your professional school application). Keep a journal handy so you can jot down your thoughts and observations!

Track Your Progress

What does an Occupational Therapist do?

What characteristics do you have that you feel will help me be an excellent Occupational Therapist?

Have I had experience working with people from backgrounds different from my own? What impact has it had on me?

Self-Evaluation

Mark Yes or No for each question. This will allow you to identify areas in which you feel strongest and areas in which you wish to grow.

Can I explain to someone why I want to be an Occupational Therapist?	Y	N
Is my GPA above a 3.5?	Y	N
Have my grades improved over time?	Y	N
Have I shadowed more than one OT?	Y	N
Does my application reflect a diverse and consistent set of extracurricular activities?	Y	N

Why do I want to be an Occupational Therapist?

Can you go beyond loving science and wanting to help? Remember, there are many helping professions out there. Why this one?

Get to Know Your Faculty

This can be challenging at UT Austin—the campus is huge, and most of the classes in your first year have large numbers of students. Even though the professors can sometimes seem tough or intimidating, most of them are very approachable one-on-one. Visit your professors during office hours, even if you are doing well in their class. It will make your request for a future letter of evaluation much easier! Get to know your faculty, check out the video on the HPO YouTube page for some tips!

Who are your letter writers?

I would like to ask the following faculty for letters of evaluation:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____

I would like to ask the following third letter writer for a letter of evaluation; this letter will add a different dimension to my application:

- 1) _____

Quick Tip:

It is essential to determine what requirements, if any, your OT programs have regarding letter writers' roles and relationship to you BEFORE listing ANY references on your OTCAS application. Many programs have strict guidelines for this. You should also investigate the types of letters each school you are interested in requires. Some programs require letters from professors, health care providers, employers, or supervisors, while others only recommend or prefer specific types.

****Keep in mind that some OT programs require one letter be written by an OT.***

Once you have completed this self-assessment, if you have not made an appointment with a Health Professions Coach, we recommend that you do so in order to discuss these topics as well as your application strengths as a whole. Make sure to track your progress!

Notes:

Occupational Therapy Prerequisites Time Line

A Note from Your HP Coaches:

This is an **example** of how to complete prerequisite courses for the **Texas Occupational Therapy programs**.

Six semesters, regardless of the student's age or year in college, are generally required to complete the pre-occupational therapy courses and extra-curricular activities. Many students **finish prerequisites in Year 4 or later** and have a **bridge year or years** during which they continue to prepare for and apply to professional schools.

See the [prerequisite courses](#) page for details on these courses.

Use this as a guide. Your personal time line may differ.

Consult your academic advisor for help incorporating these courses into your degree plan. Some schools require completion of prerequisites by the time of application or application deadline.

SEMESTER 1

Chemistry I
Biology I

SEMESTER 2

Biology II
Medical Terminology
Psychology

Summer

Technical Writing

SEMESTER 3

Genetics
Statistics
Sociology

SEMESTER 4

Anatomy
Developmental Psych

Summer

Physics I
Physics Lab

SEMESTER 5

Physiology
Physiology Lab
Abnormal Psych

SEMESTER 6

Biomechanics
GRE: Graduate Record Exam

Summer

[Apply]

SENIOR YEAR OR BRIDGE YEAR

Continue in course work and experiential activities to prepare for professional school and to become more competitive in case it is necessary to reapply.

INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS MAY REQUIRE OR RECOMMEND ADDITIONAL COURSES NOT INCLUDED HERE.

Review individual school websites and the HPO's online prerequisite courses list to ensure **proper courses** are being taken.

Can I Take Courses Away From UT?

Completing your coursework at UT (your home institution) is considered best preparation for health professions schools. For students who find it necessary to take courses away from UT, we offer the following recommendations.

KEY: UT: Take classes at UT Austin
 4YR: If necessary, okay to take class at other 4 year institution
 CC: If necessary, okay to take class at community college

	Pre-Medical	Pre-Dental	Pre-Veterinary	Pre-Optometry	Pre-Pharmacy	Pre-Physician Asst	Pre-Physical Therapy	Pre-Occupational Therapy
Biology & Chemistry	UT	UT	UT	UT	UT	UT	UT	UT
Physics	4YR	4YR	4YR	4YR	4YR or CC	Not Required	4YR or CC	4YR or CC
Statistics, Calculus	4YR	4YR	4YR	4YR	4YR or CC	4YR or CC	4YR or CC	4YR or CC
English & Rhetoric	4YR	4YR	4YR	4YR	4YR	4YR or CC	4YR or CC	4YR or CC
Other Pre-requisites	Generally, it seems to be okay to take other prereqs away from UT Austin, if needed; however, students should contact individual professional schools' admission offices for questions about specific courses.							

General Recommendations:

1. Taking courses away from UT can give the impression that the student is avoiding UT Austin's rigorous courses; therefore, it is important to earn excellent grades at both community colleges and other four-year institutions.
2. It generally appears to be okay with professional schools to take government and history requirements at other four-year institutions or community colleges.
3. For other general requirements students can check with professional schools' admission offices.

Studying Abroad?

Most health professions schools require that prerequisites be taken at U.S. accredited schools, and some will accept credits from Canadian accredited schools.

Although exchange program courses and some affiliated program courses are counted as in-residence credit by UT Austin, according to Texas state law, foreign course work cannot be counted in the GPAs for application to graduate and post-baccalaureate professional schools. The rules and policies can vary among the professional schools. Students who plan to study abroad should research this carefully for the schools and application services they plan to apply to. Look in the education requirements, transcripts, and FAQ sections of their web sites for information about foreign course work and study abroad.

UT Austin faculty-led courses are "in-residence" courses as well as U.S. credits, and so courses like Organic Chemistry II (CH 320N) taught in Spain by UT Austin faculty can be used to satisfy a prerequisite; however, for many students taking these rigorous courses in only 5 weeks may not be recommended. It is important that pre-health professions students master these courses and retain this knowledge for success in entrance exams and in advanced studies

The UT Austin Health Professions Office very strongly recommends that our students satisfy their health professions prerequisites at UT Austin. Use the study abroad opportunity to study the culture and language of

that country and to satisfy general education requirements if approved by your academic advisor. Science courses that are not considered direct preparation for the health professions can be considered as well. (Examples: research, ecology, environmental science; but NOT cell, molecular, microbiology, anatomy, physiology which figure heavily into your preparation and readiness for professional school and the admissions committee's assessment of your application.

FAQ - Foreign Applicants, Coursework from Foreign Schools and Study Abroad

Depending on the individual schools you apply to, you may be required to submit a Foreign Transcript Evaluation. OTCAS only accepts coursework from US and Canadian institutions and will not factor in coursework from other countries into your OTCAS GPA. However, OTCAS does require you to list any foreign institutions that you attended in the "Colleges and Universities Attended" section of the application.

Students are responsible to check with the individual schools they are applying to if they have questions about foreign coursework, as well as contacting OTCAS. More information about foreign coursework and schooling can be found at the [OTCAS FAQ page](#).

What about Claiming AP/IB Credit for Prerequisites?

While we generally recommend that as a Pre-Health Professions student you not "claim" AP/IB credit for prerequisite courses such as Biology, Chemistry, English, Physics, and Mathematics, these are important decisions that you must make and that require your careful consideration.

It may seem like a convenient way to eliminate hours from your degree plan and accelerate your path to professional school, but claiming credit can actually be detrimental to your preparation for success on entrance exams and in professional studies. Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses vary in rigor, and they are generally not equivalent to the rigor of UT Austin courses. However, your AP/IB courses can be very good preparation for taking these courses at UT Austin, providing the opportunity to master that material, become better prepared, enhance your GPA, and demonstrate your academic ability and readiness for advanced study in health professions schools.

Unless you are academically very well prepared, it is best to start with the introductory courses. Please consult with your academic advisor for help in determining your readiness for higher level science courses. Most schools that accept AP/IB credit will expect you to take additional upper-division course work in that area of study.

Here are some specific recommendations:

Science Courses

Biology and Chemistry: If you claim credit in courses like BIO 311D and BIO 311C you may not be adequately prepared for the rigorous next course here at UT Austin, BIO 325 (Genetics). If you claim credit for CH 301 and CH 302, your first college level chemistry course at UT Austin will be CH 310M (Organic Chemistry I).

Honors students in Biology and Chemistry may claim test credit, register in the honors sequence for Biology or Chemistry, and will take additional upper-division credits in those areas, making up for the lack of first-year hours in those disciplines.

Your UT Austin faculty will expect you to be prepared to learn and understand the material conceptually and theoretically in order to understand test questions well enough to earn A's on your exams. They will teach material beyond the textbook that was not presented in your high school courses. You will be in second year courses with many students who took General Biology and General Chemistry here and are well prepared to

handle the exams in the more advanced courses. They will set the standard for the grade scale or curve in your classes.

Physics: Physics is required to prepare for some health professions schools. In some cases, you will be tested on Physics in your professional school entrance exam. We strongly recommend taking physics at the college level if you are preparing for a professional school that requires physics.

Calculus and Statistics: For the Texas medical schools, if you take statistics in the classroom here at UT Austin, you can use statistics to satisfy the math prerequisite. Then if your degree plan or any of your science courses require calculus, you can decide with your academic advisor whether to use credit-by-exam or take the course(s) in the classroom.

For all health professions schools, both in Texas and out-of-state, it is important to check their admissions web sites for any restrictions and preferences on credit-by-exam.

Non-Science Courses

It is usually acceptable to claim credit-by-exam for general education or core curriculum requirements such as history and government. Claiming this type of credit may give you time to take the courses that will prepare you for professional school and school entrance exams. On the other hand, critical thinking skills and an understanding of ethics, society, community, cultures, history, and human behavior are important for your success now and throughout your professional and personal life. Taking college level courses is a good way to develop these areas of knowledge.

English Literature, Rhetoric, and Writing: If you claim credit for freshman writing and literature courses, we recommend taking additional courses in the classroom at the college level. Even if your high school verbal skills were strong, this type of academic skill weakens over time if you do not use it.

Verbal skills are extremely important to your success in your undergraduate course work, your entrance exams, in professional school, and as a health care professional. You must be able to read efficiently, at a good rate, with high comprehension and critical thinking skills. You must develop and maintain a good vocabulary, not just for the sciences but also for social and behavioral sciences, ethics, policies and regulations, and procedural information. Many admissions deans recommend reading well-written novels in addition to your textbook material.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

OT Schools vary in their policies and perspectives on credit-by-exam. Review the information on our prerequisite courses lists, located on page 12. Also check individual school admissions web sites or contact their admissions offices to be sure about each school's expectations. Taking courses in the college classroom will help you to compete for admission and to succeed in professional school. We strongly recommend that you use these courses as building blocks that will be the foundation for your future career.

Quick Tips:

Check with each school you plan to apply to and see if they accept AP/IB for the classes you would like to claim credit for. Some Schools will not accept AP/IB credit for biological science prerequisites, but will accept them for English and social/behavioral science classes.

To Q or Not to Q (or to switch to pass/fail)

No admissions committee for any health professional school likes to see “Q drops” on a transcript. This is an indication that something became too much for you to handle and that you chose to drop the course rather than see it through. There are times when the Q-drop is the best course of action, however, keep reading to see how your choice may affect your competitiveness for professional school.

More of a problem if:

1. **Q-dropping is a pattern on your transcript.** Two Q-drops can signal a possible pattern; three Q-drops create a definite pattern.
2. **It occurs in a context of inconsistent grades.** To be competitive for professional school, you should be making A’s and B’s with more A’s than B’s. If you have semesters which include B’s and C’s – even one or two C’s, your grades are inconsistent by a professional school’s standard.
3. **It’s one of your prerequisite courses for professional school.** In this case, you might consider sticking with the class on a pass/fail basis. Then you only need to earn a D to earn credit. **Check with your academic advisor** about whether you can use the pass/fail option.
4. **It’s any science-based course,** since the bulk of professional school curriculum will be science based.

Less of a problem if:

1. **It’s the only Q-drop on your transcript at time of application to professional school.** You will want to choose wisely however, depending on the course. If you are taking a lower division or introductory course, keep in mind that upper division courses will be more challenging. You may want to hold on to that “one and only Q-drop” for later.
2. **It’s a non-science course.** While professional schools want you to do well in all classes, they are likely to be less concerned if you dropped a sociology or business class.

What if there are non-academic reasons for needing to Q-drop?

Sometimes personal or family emergencies and other special circumstances make it difficult to find time for and focus on your studies. Sometimes for new students it is difficult to make the transition to UT. If you are dealing with something that is getting in the way of your school work, it is very important that you get help.

1. Talk to your academic advisor and/or an advisor in your college student division office
2. Check out the support services at the Counseling and Mental Health Center

When is switching to pass/fail a better option?

This should really only be undertaken when you are reasonably certain that you can pass the class, in other words, earn at least a D. An F from a pass/fail course is just the same as an F from a letter grade course. If you are taking a pre-requisite course that you must repeat (and you meet the above criteria of being reasonably sure you can pass), you should consider the pass/fail option. This will allow you to continue your exposure to the material for the entire semester. This will create a much stronger foundation when you repeat the course.

What if I keep the class and then I make a C or lower?

No one wants to explain a poor grade in a class, but there is actually much to be learned about being responsible for your grades (see exercise below) Talking about how you might change your strategy going forward can be not only a sign of maturity and integrity, it can also demonstrate your resilience. All of these qualities are important to future health professionals.

What did you learn from this experience?

While it can be tempting to blame others for the need to Q drop a class, you must understand that the responsibility is 100% yours. To help you identify your responsibility, ask yourself these questions.

1. Could I have met with the professor to see what I could do to improve my understanding?
2. (If my professor was difficult to understand or hard for me to follow) Did I look for other sections of the courses to sit in on so that I could learn the material in a different way?
3. Could I have identified that I needed assistance earlier in the semester? (In time to have possibly salvaged my grade)
4. Could I have managed my time better so that I had appropriate time to devote to the class?
5. Could I have checked out resources for tutoring through the Sanger Learning Center?
6. Could I have adjusted my priorities (lowering especially those which are non-academic) to allow focus on my studies?

Preparing for the possible professional school interview question

You will want to spend some time reflecting on what you could have done differently so that you did not have to drop the class (see above). If you are asked about the Q-drop, you should be able to explain where things went wrong, what you learned from the experience, and how you might choose differently in the future. Remember the Health Professions Office does Interview Prep appointments to help you prepare for your interviews

Academic Assistance

[Sanger Learning Center](#) is great place to go if you need assistance succeeding academically. They have tips and appointments centered on the following:

Academic Support

Utilizing Faculty Office Hours

Visiting with Your Teaching Assistants (TAs)

Improving Your Study Skills

Course-specific Study Groups

GRE Information

Some OT schools require that applicants take the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE). The GRE is offered as a computer-delivered test year round at most locations around the world, and as a paper-delivered test up to three times a year in areas where computer-delivered testing is not available. The test is usually taken by spring semester of junior year, if the school requires it. The test consists of 3 areas: 1) Verbal Reasoning; 2) Quantitative Reasoning; 3) Analytical Reasoning. Students can prepare for the GRE in a variety of ways, including taking a test preparatory course or by purchasing study materials individually. Students can be successful using either strategy, so you should weigh your personal needs when deciding on an approach.

Scheduling Your Exam & Preparation

To learn how to register for the GRE along with prep tips, fees, score reporting and more, please be sure to check out the GRE page on the ETS website: http://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/register Most OT schools accept GRE scores that are no more than 5 years old.

Your GRE Score

GRE Section	My Score	Avg. Score
Verbal Reasoning		
Quantitative Reasoning		
Analytical Writing		

Quick Tip

On the current GRE Revised General Test the score ranges from 130-170 with 1 point increments on the verbal and quantitative reasoning sections, and 0-6 with half point increments on the analytical writing section.

Need a GPA Booster?

A post-baccalaureate program is for students who have already completed an undergraduate degree, and are interested in a health professions career. They need either to finish prerequisite courses and/or need to improve their academic standing for a more competitive professional school application. A few options of the types of Post-Bacc programs for occupational therapy students are given below.

What Different Post-Bacc Programs are Available?

There are a few different types of Post-Bacc programs for students hoping to attend OT school, these programs usually come in the form of Pre-Med Post-Bacc programs that accept OT students, science-focused certificate programs, and graduate programs:

Basic Sciences: This type of program is for students who have not completed the basic requirements for OT school. Generally this is for “career changers” who have decided to pursue a career in healthcare as an occupational therapist. The coursework can be done in a formal Post-Bacc program or individually at a local university.

Advanced Sciences/GPA Boosters: This type of program is designed for students who were science majors or have completed the basic science requirements. These are for students who:

- Want to stay academically engaged during a gap year while applying to OT schools.
- Need to raise their GPA to become a more competitive OT school applicant.

How Do I Get In?

Selection criteria vary around the country. Most programs require at least a 3.0 GPA. Applications for the fall semester are usually due by March of that year. Check with individual programs so as not to miss deadlines. Also google Post-Bacc OT Programs as some out-of-state schools do have programs that are not part of a centralized list.

Research Schools Before You Apply!

Thinking about what type of Occupational Therapy school you are looking for? Not sure what you want in a school? Check out the following possible criteria for evaluating a OT school's fit for you!

What type of OT school am I looking for?

1. Size of your cohort
2. Prestige of the institution
3. Training facilities
4. Opportunity to do research
5. Support programs –tutoring, counseling, student health services, childcare
6. Community building – student organizations
7. Options for financial aid/scholarship
8. Outreach/Service to Community
9. Family/Friends (Support in close proximity)
10. Lifestyle - outdoorsy, athletic, cultural arts, etc.
11. Centers/ Institutes /Programs that align with your PA School Goals

Texas Occupational Therapy Schools (MOT, Public)

- [Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, Master of Occupational Therapy](#) (Lubbock)
- [Texas Woman's University, School of Occupational Therapy](#) (Denton, Dallas, and Houston)
- [The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, Department of Occupational Therapy](#)
- [University of Texas at El Paso, Master of Occupational Therapy Program](#)
- [University of Texas Medical Branch, Masters of Occupational Therapy Program](#) (Galveston)
- [University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Department of Occupational](#) (Edinburg)

Texas Occupational Therapy Programs (MOT, Private)

- [Abilene Christian University, Master of Science in Occupational Therapy](#) (Abilene)
 - [University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, Masters of Occupational Therapy Program](#) (Austin)
- This program has a “blended” educational model, with online and live classrooms.

Texas Entry-Level Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD, Public & Private)

- [University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, Occupational Therapy Program](#) (Austin)
 - [The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, Doctor of Occupational Therapy](#)
- These programs are in development and has Candidacy Status for accreditation with ACOTE. Contact these schools for more information.

Rank the schools you want to apply to in order of interest:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____
- 10) _____

REMEMBER

It is important to make sure to do your research on the OT Schools you plan to apply to. Check out [OTCAS's participating OT programs](#), and visit the websites and (FAQ) sections of the schools you plan to apply to, including those that are not participating in the OTCAS application service.

Time Line for Applying to OT School

Fall Semester before Application Cycle

- Begin compiling list of experiences; include details such as dates, hours, tasks and responsibilities
- Begin drafting personal statement and optional essays
- Ask evaluators for letters of reference
- Research schools to determine where to apply

July/August

- [OTCAS Application Link](#): **Most applications open in July. Open OTCAS application link, and begin application process**
- Print and read application service instructions; Make a plan or “to do” checklist
- Be sure to read instructions about score reporting; these vary year-to-year and by schools
- Notice not all schools use the OTCAS application system. Use the application provided on the website of any school that doesn't use OTCAS.

January

- We recommend students take the GRE by the spring semester of their junior year, no later than April, if the school requires it.
- Continue to work on personal statement/gather letters of reference

September/October

- Submit when application is complete (this includes spring grades) and you're confident you've done your best! (**Earlier is better – Ideally by early fall**)
- Complete and submit secondary applications; **applications are not complete until secondary applications are submitted.**

Spring Semester before Application Cycle (May)

- Attend Health Professions Fair, usually held in February or March to visit with professional schools.
- Obtain official transcripts from all institutions attended. Review for accuracy of information and use as reference for completing application
- Request transcripts from all institutions attended to be sent to application services
- Schedule a personal statement review
- Finish personal statement

Fall/Spring Semester during Application Cycle

- Follow up to make sure application is verified
- If applying to out of state school, speak with health professions coach
- Schedule interview prep appointment with Health Professions Office
- Interviews are done throughout the fall semester, and have the possibility of going into the spring semester.
- If you have multiple admissions offers, talk with a Health Professions Coach

Quick Tips:

-READ and understand all application instructions for OTCAS and individual programs you are applying to.

-Try to send any time sensitive application materials based on the earliest deadline for each school you are applying to. Example: If the deadline to submit any application materials is October 15th, try to finish all materials by that time, to prevent missing any deadlines.

-Pay attention to the interview cycle of every school you are applying to, times will vary based on when the application deadlines are.

-Ideally, complete application by two months after date the application opens in order to have the best opportunities for interviews

Overview of Occupational Therapy School Application Services and Resources

Most Occupational Therapy programs in the United States use the OTCAS system. As of January 2018, all Texas OT schools, except Abilene Christian University, use OTCAS.

OT Schools Requiring Secondary Applications

Some health professions schools require secondary applications to be completed in addition to the primary application. **Applications are not considered complete until the secondary application is submitted.** Most secondary applications require an additional fee and the majority of secondary application fees are non-refundable.

Letters of Reference

Letters are key pieces to your professional school application. The number and type of letters vary from school to school. For additional details and guidelines check the application instructions and websites of individual schools. Check out [HPO's YouTube Channel](#) for tips in a video on "Getting to Know Your Faculty Members."

- OTCAS [instructions](#) to help applicants
- Review resources on [HPO's Application Resources Page](#)

Getting to know professors can be challenging at UT Austin—the campus is large, and most of the classes in your first year have large numbers of students. Even though the professors can sometimes seem tough or intimidating, most of them are very approachable one-on-one. Visit your professors during office hours, even if you are doing well in their class. It will make your request for a future letter of evaluation much easier!

Writing Your Personal Statement

You are welcome to come speak to a Pre-Health Professions Coach to discuss your ideas before starting your personal statement. We will help you brainstorm ideas and help you stay on track.

Use your own words to create a personal essay that responds to the [OTCAS prompt](#).

Visit our [Application Resources Page](#) for a personal statement brainstorming worksheet, a list of action verbs, a list of words describing strengths and skills, and more!

Interview Tips and Preparation

Dress Professionally:

- View our Dressing Guide <http://tinyurl.com/InterviewDressGuide>

Practice Improving Your Interview Skills:

- Schedule a OT School Interview Prep Appointment with a Pre-Health Professions Coach by visiting our office or calling our front desk (512-471-3172)
- View HPO's [Application Resources](#) page for a post-interview self-evaluation form as well as other resources

Prepare & Practice

Be prepared to discuss your strengths and weaknesses, obstacles and inspirations, current events, and personal attributes. The following sample questions are meant to provide you with a better understanding of why the interviewer might be asking the questions that they do. By asking you certain questions, interviewers are attempting to gain a better understanding of your personality.

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why do you want to be an Occupational Therapist?
- When did you first decide that you wanted to pursue a career as an Occupational Therapist? Was there a specific cause for your decision? Has anything happened since that time to strengthen or weaken your decision?
- Do you have any particular populations you would like to work with? Have you worked with this type of population in the past?
- What characteristics does a good Occupational Therapist possess?
- What will you do if you are not accepted to OT school?
- What kind of community/volunteer work have you done?
- What is the most rewarding experience of your life?
- Who is your favorite author?
- Have you worked while you have been in school?
- Have you had the opportunity to travel abroad?
- What accomplishment are you most proud of?
- Tell me about the most difficult period of your life. How did you deal with this?
- What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?
- What is the most difficult decision that you've had to make?
- How do you plan to finance your education?
- How are you going to decide which occupational therapy school to attend?
- How do you handle adversity?
- Why should we pick you instead of someone else?
- Can you see other careers in which you could achieve the same goals or meet the same needs?
- What steps have you taken to find out more about a career as an Occupational Therapist?
- Where would you like to start practicing?
- How do you study? How do you manage your time?
- What courses do you find most enjoyable, most difficult? Why?
- Describe your hobbies and interests.
- Describe your best/least favorite course at UT and why it falls into that category.
- Why did you choose _____ as your major?
- Are there any questions you would like to ask me?
- Describe a situation where you've worked with people from different backgrounds.
- What type of person do you enjoy being with? What type of person irritates you most and how have you dealt with these types of people?
- What about yourself would you most like the interviewer to know?
- How do you handle stress?
- How would you keep health care costs down?
- What is an HMO? / What do you know about managed care?
- What current Occupational Therapy news/events have you heard about or been following?
- What are the advantages and limitations that you see going into a career as a OT? (Be specific)
- What problems do you predict Occupational Therapists will face in the next decade?

Research Current Events

Occupational Therapy Occupational Outlook

The occupational outlook handbook
<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/occupational-therapists.htm>

Advocacy

Learn about policy and legislation affecting Occupational Therapists
<http://capwiz.com/aota/home/>

AJOT Online

The American Journal of Occupational Therapy
<http://ajot.aota.org/>

The Texas Occupational Therapy Association
<https://www.tota.org/>

Today in OT

https://info.continuingeducation.com/today-in-ot?utm_medium=cpc&campaignid=2066374708&adgroupid=75409294799&gclid=EAlaIqobChMlzMbajfa46gIVwxatBh3rhQwcEAAAYASAAEgle3PD_BwE

Financing Your Occupational Therapy Education

The cost of your OT education varies based on which OT program you choose to attend. You should start your financial aid research at the same time as you apply to an OT program. To evaluate the total cost of completing a program, you should request information on expenses from all schools you are thinking of attending, including tuition, books, supplies, travel and lodging for rotations, and exams. Once you have that information you will want to consider how you will afford your education.

Looking for more information?

Scholarships, Awards, and Grants

If you are a student, you are confronting the rising costs of higher education. Browse the following scholarships and awards to see if you are eligible for these financial rewards.

AOTA Awards

- [American Occupational Therapy Foundation \(AOTF\) Scholarships](#)
- [AOTA E. K. Wise Scholarship](#)
- [AMBUCS Scholars](#)

Scholarships for Minority Students

- [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau of Health Professions- Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students](#)
- [The Hispanic College Fund](#)

*Information about these and more scholarships can be found at AOTA's [website](#)

Pre-Health Professions Services

Applying to Professional School? We are here to guide you!

See an HP Peer Coach if you have questions in one or more of the following topic areas:

- Going over pre-requisites ("What do I have to take to get into X school?")
- Shadowing opportunities ("how to find, importance of, what is")
- Leadership opportunities ("how to find, importance of, what are")
- Patient care experience ("how to find, importance of, what is")
- Clubs/organizations
- How to ask for letters of recommendation/evaluation
- Course load ("Is this reasonable to take in one semester?")
- Study habits/tutoring resources
- Test-taking strategies
- How to use HPO services

Pre-Health Professions Coaching Appointments

Schedule a Pre-Health Professions Coaching session to meet with a Pre-Health Professions Coach. These appointments cover:

- Progress checks ("How am I doing?" "What else do I need to do?")
- Application Strategies/resources
- Choosing letter writers ("Who should I ask?")
- Academic turnaround ("I am worried about my GPA")
- Potential gap year planning/Post Bacc discussions
- Academic dishonesty/legal issues
- Reapplication strategies
- Study abroad timeline
- Alumni or Post-Bacc Student questions

To Q or Not to Q Discussions

Not sure what to do? Thinking of dropping a course? Then you can schedule an appointment with a Pre-Health Professions Coach about deciding on Q dropping or the pass/fail option. Check out our To Q or Not to Q guide in this guide before your appointment.

Personal Statement Brainstorming

Add It Up! – Don't forget to include all Living Costs - Cost of Attendance is more than tuition alone	
Tuition:	
Rent:	
Food:	
Entertainment:	
Health Insurance:	
Laboratory Fees:	
Car Insurance:	
Gas:	
Other Travel:	
Other Expenses:	

Come speak to a Pre-Health Professions Coach to discuss your ideas before starting your personal statement. We will help you brainstorm ideas for the content of your essays. We have additional personal statement resources [here](#).

We no longer review personal statements in the Health Professions Office. However, we have developed a partnership with the University Writing Center for personal statements. The [University Writing Center](#) is an excellent resource to utilize when writing application essays. Their Writing Consultants can help you at any stage of writing, from getting started to making recommendations for a polished finished product. Some UWC Consultants are identified as knowledgeable about health professions personal statements.

Interview Prep Appointments

Discuss interview strategies with us! You can go over questions you have and perhaps practice a couple questions of your choice with a Pre-Health Professions Coach. You will receive tips and feedback to help you in your professional school interview. Dressing up for your HP Interview Prep appointment is optional, if you would like feedback on your clothing choice and you want to test whether it will be comfortable, or they can just discuss appropriate attire with you.