



Introduction to Occupational Therapy

What are occupations?

- Occupations are daily life activities that are meaningful. They are things we need to do, have to do, or want to do as part of our everyday roles.

What are different types of occupations?

- Bathing, grooming, dressing, and eating
- Taking care of loved ones or pets
- Grocery shopping, cooking, cleaning, and other chores/errands
- Exercising, managing medications, and going to the doctor/therapist
- Resting, sleeping, and preparing for sleep
- Learning, working, and volunteering
- Playing and participating in leisure activities
- Socializing with family, friends, and community members

What is occupational therapy (OT)?

- The skilled, evidence-informed use of daily activities (occupations) to promote quality of life for individuals, groups, or populations across the lifespan who face barriers to performing their desired occupations.

Who might benefit from OT?

- A child with autism learning how to more fully participate at school.
- A group of young adults with Down syndrome learning how to explore and register for college classes.
- A survivor of domestic violence learning how to manage a household.
- An adult with depression learning how to better manage their daily routines.
- A group of homeless individuals learning how to access community resources.
- An older adult who had a stroke and needs to re-learn how to dress and feed themselves.
- A teenager with cerebral palsy learning how to drive using adaptive equipment.
- A group of parents with premature infants learning how to best care for their children and themselves.
- A group of adults with carpal tunnel syndrome learning how to perform work tasks with proper body positioning to protect their joints.

Who are OT practitioners?

- Occupational Therapists (have at least a four-year degree)
- Occupational Therapy Assistants (have at least a two-year degree)

Where do OT practitioners work?

- Hospitals
- Schools
- Rehabilitation clinics
- Homes
- Community settings
- Mental health facilities
- Nursing homes/skilled nursing facilities
- Academia
- And more!

Why should you consider OT as a career?

- There are broad opportunities to work in various settings with different types of people; this variability helps prevent burnout.
- It's fun! It's a chance to be creative and be hands-on while helping people.
- You can incorporate your own interests and hobbies into your work.
- You can advance your career by specializing in various techniques, creating your own business, or taking on leadership roles.
- It's rewarding and fulfilling to help improve someone's quality of life.
- There are lucrative job opportunities - OT is one of the most top-rated and fastest-growing careers.
- There are various opportunities to collaborate with other professionals and experts in order to continue learning and growing.

What qualities make a good OT practitioner (OT/OTA)?

- Compassionate
- Patient
- Flexible
- Creative
- Good communicator
- Resourceful
- Innovative
- Critical thinker
- Perceptive
- Multi-tasker
- Responsible
- Respectful
- Reliable
- Organized
- Ethical

What are average salaries for OT practitioners?

- Occupational therapy assistants:
 - In Illinois, the average OTA salary is \$63,076 per year. Entry level OTA positions start around \$58,648 (<https://www.talent.com/salary?job=occupational+therapy+assistant&location=illinois>)
 - Nationwide, the median annual wage for occupational therapy assistants was \$67,010 in May 2023 (<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/occupational-therapy-assistants-and-aides.htm>)
- Occupational therapists:
 - In Illinois, the average OT salary is \$98,955 per year. Entry level positions start around \$83,200 (<https://www.talent.com/salary?job=occupational+therapist&location=illinois>)
 - Nationwide, the median annual wage for occupational therapists was \$96,370 in May 2023 (<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/occupational-therapists.htm>)

Where can I learn more about OT?

- <https://www.aota.org/career/become-an-ot-ota/about-the-profession>
- www.ilota.org

