
WHAT CAN I DO WITH A MAJOR IN ... OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

OCCUPATIONAL SUMMARY

The [Bureau of Labor Statistics \(2012\)](#) explains: "Occupational therapists treat patients with injuries, illnesses, or disabilities through the therapeutic use of everyday activities. They help these patients develop, recover, and improve the skills needed for daily living and working." Further, the BLS explains, "Patients with permanent disabilities, such as cerebral palsy, often need help performing daily tasks. Therapists show patients how to use appropriate adaptive equipment, such as leg or knee braces, wheelchairs, and eating aids. Patients can function independently and control their living environment by using these devices."

Some occupational therapists work in educational settings with children one on one or in small groups. They evaluate disabled children's abilities, modify classroom equipment to accommodate certain disabilities, and help children participate in school activities.

Some therapists provide early intervention therapy to infants and toddlers who have, or are at risk of having, developmental delays.

Therapists who work with the elderly help their patients lead more independent and active lives. They assess the patient's abilities and environment and make recommendations, such as using adaptive equipment or identifying and removing potential fall hazards in the home."

EMPLOYMENT/EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

"Certification is voluntary, but many occupational therapists choose to become certified. They must pass the [National Board for Certification of Occupational Therapists](#) (NBCOT) exam to become certified. Certification allows therapists to use the title of Occupational Therapist Registered (OTR). They must also take continuing education classes to maintain certification.

All states require occupational therapists to be licensed. Licensure requires a degree from an accredited educational program and passing the NBCOT certification exam. Other requirements, such as continuing education and fees, vary by state." ([BLS 2012](#)).

*Occupational therapists are minimally required to earn a Master's of Science degree in Occupational Therapy, with some choosing to earn a doctoral degree.

*Occupational therapy *assistants* typically have an Associate's Degree from a program that the [Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education](#) (ACOTE) had accredited.

*Occupational therapy *aides* typically have a high school diploma and receive their training on the job. [BLS \(2012\)](#).

Consult [O*Net](#) for more information on the specific KSAs (Knowledge, Skill, Ability) that are required for this career. Check out the [American Occupational Therapy Association](#) (AOTA) website for further details.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

UNM offers a Master of Science in Occupational Therapy (M.S.O.T.). As of 2013 UNM does not currently offer a doctoral program in occupational therapy, but a proposal has been made to form one. Check with the program for future updates on their website. [UNM Occupational Therapy Graduate Program](#), within the School of Medicine.

COTA (Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant) programs can be found in some community colleges.

INDUSTRIES & TARGET EMPLOYERS:

A variety of employers specifically recruit UNM students and alumni. Consult UNM's [Lobo Career Connection](#) for a complete list of employers and current job postings. Speak with a Career Development Facilitator at the [UNM Office of Career Services](#) for help with identifying employers or additional resources for your occupation of choice.

Hospitals, Nursing Care Facilities, Home Health Care Services, Private Practice, Schools

SUGGESTED STRATEGIES

- Throughout your undergraduate degree, gain volunteer/paid hours of hands on experience/observation by volunteering or working in a healthcare setting where licensed Occupational Therapists are employed.
- Shadow occupational therapists of interest to gain a better understanding of their occupation and to build relationships with professional mentors.
- Build your network and get involved on campus through student organizations and campus events. Find organizations and events at the [Student Activities Center website](#).
- Attend career related campus events such as career fairs, company information sessions, and or career workshops.
- Students who are interested in physical therapy should maintain a high undergraduate GPA, high "science" GPA, and perform well on the GRE (graduate entrance exam) as well as develop relationships with faculty and community leaders.
- Speak with mentors and faculty about career opportunities.
- Job leads can be found on your department's website, list-serv, newsletters, and social media sites.

STATE AND NATIONAL WAGES:

Adapted from CareerOneStop (2013)

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

Location	2012				
	10%	25%	Median	75%	90%
United States	\$50,500	\$62,500	\$75,400	\$90,300	\$107,100
New Mexico	\$35,200	\$54,200	\$71,900	\$87,700	\$98,100

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT (COTA)

Location	2012				
	10%	25%	Median	75%	90%
United States	\$33,000	\$42,600	\$53,200	\$64,100	\$73,100
New Mexico	\$25,400	\$27,500	\$32,100	\$53,100	\$63,300

INFORMATIONAL/ORGANIZATIONAL WEBSITES

American Occupational Therapy Association
Occupational Therapy Regulation and Licensing Board of New Mexico

<http://www.aota.org/>

http://www.rld.state.nm.us/boards/Occupational_Therapy.aspx



<http://www.onetonline.org/>



<http://www.bls.gov/oco/>

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