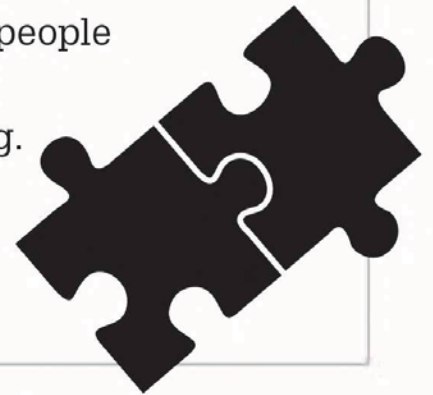


# OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST



## JOB DESCRIPTION

Occupational therapists use individual treatment programs, exercise, and psychological therapies to help people overcome problems caused by disability, illness, injury, or aging. The therapist trains patients to carry out daily tasks so they can lead full, independent lives.



### SALARY

Occupational therapy assistant ★★★★★  
Occupational therapy manager ★★★★★

### INDUSTRY PROFILE

Rising demand for occupational therapists • Majority of work in government-sector areas, such as health and social service • Job opportunities worldwide

## AT A GLANCE



**YOUR INTERESTS** Biology • Health and social service • Psychology • Social sciences • Supporting people with mobility problems



**ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS** A graduate degree in occupational therapy is required. You must also pass the national exam and apply for state licensure.



**LIFESTYLE** Most therapists work regular hours, but some work shift patterns. Part-time and flexible work options are also available.



**LOCATION** Occupational therapists work in hospitals, prisons, at social service offices, and in private practices. They may travel to visit their patients.



**THE REALITIES** Some patients can be challenging. Occupational therapists need physical strength and agility, as well as patience and a sense of humor.

## RELATED CAREERS

- ▶ **PSYCHOLOGIST** *see pp. 254–255*
- ▶ **SOCIAL WORKER** *see pp. 258–259*
- ▶ **SPEECH PATHOLOGIST** *see pp. 290–291*
- ▶ **HEARING THERAPIST** Works with adults and children who are experiencing hearing loss, hearing disturbances, and balance problems. Hearing therapists mainly work in hospitals and health centers where they assess patients and develop treatment plans.
- ▶ **MASSAGE THERAPIST** Provides patients and clients massages to relieve any physical discomforts, enhance general well-being, and treat specific muscular problems, such as spasms and sprains. A massage therapist also uses their skills to provide relief to people with long-term illnesses or sports injuries.
- ▶ **OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH NURSE** Promotes better health and well-being in the workplace, usually as part of a health and safety team.

## CAREER PATHS

A master's degree and professional license is necessary to practice as an occupational therapist. The work is highly varied with opportunities to specialize in different areas or to progress into management, research, or teaching. Some experienced therapists choose to take up roles in industry or to establish themselves in private practice.

**ASSISTANT** After graduating high school, you can support a qualified therapist while studying for a degree.

**GRADUATE** You must earn a bachelor's degree in occupational therapy and pass the national exam before you can practice.



**OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST** Assesses their clients and draws up suitable treatment plans, then works with them to achieve their targets.



**ORTHOPEDIC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST** Works as part of a health care team, helping patients recover after surgery on, or injury to, bones and muscles.



**PEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST** Works with children with developmental issues. May travel to schools to assess children and consult with teachers on appropriate activities.



**PSYCHIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST** Helps people adjust to living with mental health issues and learning disabilities.



**GERIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST** Assists elderly clients with age-related problems and medical conditions, such as dementia, impaired vision or hearing, and poor mobility.

## SKILLS GUIDE



Excellent communication skills in order to interact with patients and other people in medical care.



The willingness to work in a team with other medical and social service staff.



The ability to be sensitive and empathize with people who have physical and emotional problems.



Good decision-making and organizational skills to prioritize and manage case loads.



Patience and perseverance in assisting patients unwilling to accept help.



Physical strength and stamina to lift heavy equipment and help maneuver patients.