

Occupational Therapy General Information:

What is Occupational Therapy? The occupational therapist is a highly specialized health care provider that assists injured people with resuming their normal life. This entails reeducating the individual in terms of execution of routine daily activities such as cooking, cleaning, and dressing. Occupational therapists also assist individuals with reentry into the work environment and with adjustments during the return to their careers. The nature of the injury is not necessarily physical. In addition to assisting stroke, heart attack victims, or accident victims, occupational therapists also help mentally ill, mentally retarded, and recovering drug abusers adjust to daily stresses and teach them how to respond to them. As you may have already figured out, the occupational therapist actively educates not only the patient, but also the family, friends, and coworkers. More information is located at the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) web site. <http://www.aota.org>.

There is no specific undergraduate degree required for admission to Occupational Therapy Programs. Masters programs across the nation provide all required skills and education. As this is clearly a service oriented career, this profession commonly attracts individuals who studied psychology or sociology as an undergraduate, though any undergraduate degree is acceptable. Further information on accredited programs across the nation can be found at <http://www.aota.org/nonmembers/area13/links/LINK28.asp>.

There is only one Occupational Therapy Program in Nevada. This program is associated with Touro University – Nevada, located in Henderson. The pre-requisite coursework required for admission to this program are:

- 6 credit hours of English
- 3 credit hours of Computer Science
- 6 credit hours of Humanities
- 3 credit hours of Mathematics (College Algebra or Higher)
- 12 credit hours of Biological Sciences
- 4 credit hours of Physics
- 3 credit hours of Psychology
- 3 credit hours of Statistics
- Chemistry strongly recommended

This program also requires 20 hours of documented clinical work experience or volunteer work. The student should take the GRE and maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 2.5 with a science GPA of 3.0. The student must submit transcripts from all colleges or universities attended in addition to two letters of recommendation. For more information on this program, call (702) 777-1750. For information on admission to other accredited programs, refer to the AOTA web site link above.

Getting Ready to Apply:

Curricular requirements vary substantially between Occupational Therapy Programs. As such, students interested in pursuing a master's degree in Occupational Therapy must carefully

investigate all programs he or she intends to apply to. Information regarding both curricular and non-curricular requirements is found at the link provided above. As with any professional school, completion of course work is only one requirement for admission. Many Occupational Therapy Programs also require the following:

- Clinical experience with a licensed Occupational Therapist
- A letter of recommendation from a licensed Occupational Therapist
- Certification in CPR
- Standardized test scores (usually the GRE)

Non-curricular requirements are by no means uniform, particularly the amount of clinical experience required. The student must carefully investigate all requirements for all programs he or she intends to pursue and make a composite list.

Freshman Year:

Most programs require some science. Therefore, it is important to begin working towards completion of any required science courses as this is usually the rate limiting step. To facilitate this process, all prospective students should take either the SAT or ACT during the senior year of high school. This is important as the UNLV uses these scores to place students in the appropriate Math and English courses. In addition to the standardized test, prospective students should take the Chemistry placement test to determine if they are eligible to enroll in CHE121 (General Chemistry I). Information concerning when and where to take the Chemistry placement test can be found at <http://www.unlv.edu/Colleges/Sciences/Chemistry/Placement/>. Information concerning taking the Biology placement test is obtained by visiting the Biology Department Office located in WHI 101.

Why take the placement test? Without taking these exams, the student cannot enroll in the General Biology, General Chemistry, or English courses required for admission to any professional school. Instead, the student will spend at least the first semester (if not the entire freshman year) simply satisfying prerequisite course work required to take the prerequisite course work that professional schools require. The end result of failing to take the placement tests is usually the delay of acceptance to professional school by at least a year, unless the student compensates by either taking classes during the summer or having multiple semesters with exceptionally heavy course loads (19 credit hours or more).

While the list of courses provided above is good for a general guide, students must research all programs they intend to apply to. This is due to the fact that there is extensive variability in required courses for different programs. Links to websites for all accredited programs is found at <http://www.aota.org/nonmembers/area13/links/LINK28.asp>.

You should look into acquiring experience with a licensed occupational therapist during the summer months. Although the service requirement is not extremely cumbersome (20-80 hours for most programs), it never hurts to have too much experience. You may wish to pursue a combination of experiences with different occupational therapists. This will not only serve to

diversify your exposure to this profession, it will also allow you to secure more than one letter of recommendation from a licensed therapist.

Sophomore Year:

Continue to work towards completion of curricular requirements and acquire relevant experience. Become involved with your university by participating in extracurricular activities including athletics and preprofessional student organizations. This demonstrates that you are a well rounded individual who interacts with people effectively, a trait essential for functioning as an occupational therapist.

Junior Year:

This is the year that you will apply to all programs of interest. You should take the GRE some time during the Spring semester to allow completion of all applications during the Summer months. The GRE is a fairly straight forward test and most students have little trouble preparing for it without the assistance of a specific course. It is recommended that students purchase a preparation book to study for this standardized test. You can purchase a preparation book by visiting the GRE website listed below. If you feel you require further preparation after completing the book, both Kaplan and the Princeton Review offer preparatory courses. Information on dates and places for these prep courses can be found at the links provided below. These are expensive (ca. \$1000), so you may want to attempt the exam before spending the money on the course.

There is currently no centralized application service for Occupational Therapy Programs, so you will need to request application information from all schools you intend to apply to. Although the appropriate link is provided above, a duplicate link is also provided at the bottom of this header. You should request application materials early, ideally at the beginning of the Spring semester. This will give you plenty of time to complete them and put thought into personal statements that admission committees require.

Registering for the GRE: <http://www.gre.org/ttindex.html>

Obtaining a GRE preparation book: <http://www.gre.org/book.html>

The Princeton Review: <http://www.princetonreview.com>

The Kaplan Review: <http://www.kaptest.com>

Links to Accredited Occupational Therapy Programs:

<http://www.aota.org/nonmembers/area13/links/LINK28.asp>

Senior Year:

Complete any courses required by any program for admission. Also, complete all clinical experience required for admission. Ideally, this will be done no later than the junior year. Plan on scheduling a light course load during the Fall semester as you may need to go on interviews at this time. If you completed all admission requirements, take some courses for personal enrichment and enjoy your senior year.