



*Define Yourself*

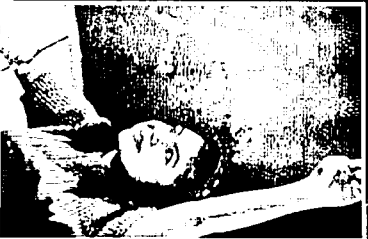
# Living Life To Its Fullest™ With a Career in Occupational Therapy



## Occupational Therapy the

...are searching for a career that is meaningful, health-related, and gives you a range of study and career fields to choose from, occupational therapy might be your perfect fit. It is an exciting and growing profession that will give you the chance to help people living with disabilities retain their independence and thrive lives to the fullest.

- Occupational therapy is set apart from other professional health care because of its holistic nature. It addresses the whole person and addresses the importance of the psychological and emotional well-being as well as their physical needs. It enables people of all ages and abilities to engage in the activities—*the occupations*—that are meaningful to their lives.
- Occupational therapy is an excellent career choice for those who want to contribute to society and find fulfillment in what they do.
- Occupational therapy is an excellent way to explore your interests.





## Find your niche

You know who you are.  
Compassionate. Resourceful.  
Creative. Motivated. You want  
meaning in life, you enjoy science

and the arts, and you have an interest in health care.

You are a good communicator and listener. You do well in school and have a knack for problem solving. You have a lot to offer.

Consider a career in occupational therapy! It will allow you to put your interests, skills, and talents to the best use while making a profound difference in the lives of others. You can choose to prepare for clinical practice, or choose a career as an occupational scientist, educator, entrepreneur, or leader in policy development.

As an occupational therapy practitioner, you will help children and adults gain skills needed to participate in life and engage in daily tasks such as dressing and feeding themselves. You will help them improve their strength and coordination and enable them to pursue work, school, leisure, and community activities. You will confront problems and help solve them by suggesting innovative tools and techniques to help your clients gain more independence in their lives. You will be part of a team that helps make a person's home, school, work, or other community setting safer and more productive.



## Explore our possibilities

One great advantage of a career as an occupational therapist (OT) or occupational therapy assistant (OTA) is the wide variety of opportunities available. You can look forward to a dynamic and satisfying career working in your choice of practice areas, work settings, and with people of all ages. You can specialize in a particular clinical area or be a generalist—the options are unlimited.

Some of the most popular and emerging practice areas are below:

- *School practitioners* work with children with learning disabilities or behavioral problems to help them thrive in preschool, school, and the transition to adulthood.
- *Pediatric practitioners* work with premature newborns or children who have autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, and other disabilities.
- *Gerontology practitioners* help an aging population in many areas such as low-vision rehabilitation, treatment of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, older driver safety and rehabilitation, assisted living, and home safety and home modification to enable "aging in place."
- *Physical rehabilitation practitioners* work in homes, skilled nursing facilities, rehabilitation hospitals, and community centers with individuals who have experienced traumatic injuries, stroke, Alzheimer's disease, mental health problems, and other disabilities.
- *Faculty* teach in occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant programs located in colleges and universities.
- *Researchers* conduct studies, analyze data, and report their findings to support evidence-based practice in occupational therapy.





# Pursue a degree

Now that you've decided on occupational therapy as your career path, it's time to get the education you need. You can choose to

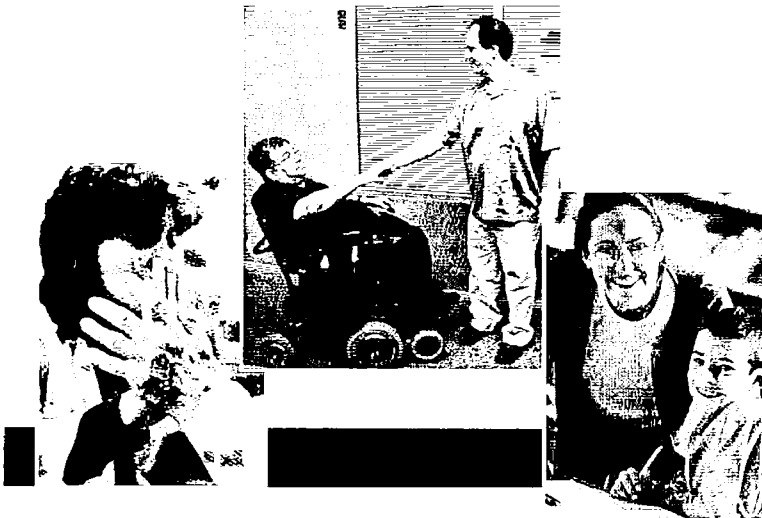
become an OT or an OTA by completing a professional or associate's degree.

Occupational therapists earn an entry-level master's or entry-level doctoral degree from a university or college program. Many OTs work as members of rehabilitation teams, while others choose careers in private practice, consulting, management, teaching, or research.

Occupational therapy assistants earn a 2-year associate's degree from an OTA program. Under the supervision of OTs, OTAs provide hands-on services to children and adults who are learning new ways to succeed in the occupations of life.

In addition to earning a degree, OTs and OTAs must complete supervised fieldwork, pass a national certification exam, and become licensed (if applicable) in the state(s) where they plan to work.

To learn which colleges and universities offer occupational therapy education programs, go to [www.aota.org/Students](http://www.aota.org/Students) and click "Schools" to find more than 300 OT and OTA education programs.



## Additional Resources\*

### AOTA Press Books, Brochures, and Videos

- *AOTA Occupational Therapy Workforce and Compensation Report*
- *It Takes Occupational Therapy (brochure)*
- *Occupational Therapy: Making It Possible (video)*

For more information on career options and useful contacts, visit the AOTA Prospective Student site at [www.aota.org/students/Prospective.aspx](http://www.aota.org/students/Prospective.aspx).

To read more about occupational therapy, go to [store.aota.org](http://store.aota.org).





# Significant

## Postsecondary

- The following information is taken from the U.S. Department of Statistics 2008-2009 Occupational Outlook Handbook regarding occupational therapy.
- Occupational therapy assistant (OTA) careers.
- Employment in occupational therapy is expected to grow faster than average in the next few years.
- Job prospects should be good for licensed occupational therapy practitioners in all settings, particularly for those treating the older population.
- OTs work in a variety of job settings such as public schools, hospitals, mental health centers, nursing homes, physician practices, and home health agencies. With career advancement, OTs may move into management, specialization, teaching, research, or private practice positions.
- The active occupational therapy workforce in 2006 was estimated at 119,790 practitioners, which included 91,920 OTs and 27,870 OTAs.
- The median annual income as of May 2007 was \$65,540 for OTs and \$45,180 for OTAs. Average entry-level salaries were \$42,330 for OTs and \$27,870 for OTAs.
- Occupational therapy practitioners must be licensed, which requires an entry-level degree at the post-baccalaureate level in occupational therapy, 6 months of supervised fieldwork, and passing scores on national and state examinations.
- Occupational therapy practitioners are increasingly taking on supervisory roles and can choose to advance their careers by taking on administrative duties.

For more information, go to <http://www.bls.gov/oco/occupations/2008-2009-Occupational-Outlook-Handbook>. Note that job growth rate may change since the publication of the 2008-2009 Occupational Outlook Handbook.



# Take the next step

No matter our age, gender, ethnicity, or profession, we all have one common occupation—living. Participating in all the activities of daily life—growing, learning, playing, working, managing our homes, caring for our families, and having fun—is life lived to its fullest.

Unfortunately, many people cannot fully participate in life because of physical, emotional, and psychological challenges. The full spectrum of health care contributes to a person's well-being by healing illness, easing pain, restoring strength and flexibility, and treating mental illness and anxiety. Occupational therapy goes one important step further by uniquely bringing functionality and fulfillment back into the lives of people with disabilities.

AOTA is the national association of occupational therapy professionals and students. We educate the public and advance the profession by providing resources, setting standards, and advocating for the improvement of health care. Students are an important part of our membership, and we offer many benefits dedicated to them. To learn more about occupational therapy and AOTA, go to [www.aota.org](http://www.aota.org).

## Occupational Therapy: Living Life To Its Fullest™

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