

Occupational Therapy Timeline

The practice of occupational therapy means the therapeutic use of everyday life activities - or “occupations” - with individuals or groups for the purpose of participation in roles and situations in home, school, work place, community, and other settings. Occupational therapy services are provided for the purpose of promoting health and wellness to those who have or are at risk for developing an illness, injury, disease, disorder, condition, impairment, disability, activity limitation, or participation restriction. There are currently 170 accredited master's entry OT programs (MOT), and 68 accredited doctoral entry level OT programs (OTD) in the U.S. Typically a master's OT program is 2-3 years of coursework after your bachelor's degree.

1st Year

- Register for the Pre-Health Program to receive a weekly newsletter with upcoming events, opportunities, and announcements.
- Attend the informational meetings for the Pre-Health Program at the beginning of Fall Quarter.
- Make an appointment with the pre-health advisor to discuss how to sequence classes, experiences that will help you prepare for occupational therapy programs, and the different resources on campus.
- Investigate career information to identify what it means to be an occupational therapist and the admission requirements for OT school.
- Start taking the core courses that need to be completed before applying to occupational therapy programs. Focus on academic coursework and how to be a successful college student.
- Look for meaningful opportunities to become involved in research, volunteering, clubs, and mentoring.
- Start shadowing an occupational therapist in a field that interests you (hospital, clinic, nursing home, etc.)
- Start to develop relationships with faculty, staff advisors and faculty mentors at DePaul
- **SUMMER: Work, volunteer, research, or intern in the health field.**
- **SUMMER: Take summer courses if desired or necessary.**

2nd Year

- Attend the informational meetings for the Pre-Health Program.
- Meet with the pre-health advisor to make sure you're progressing through your requirements.
- Continue taking the core courses that need to be completed before applying to occupational therapy programs. Check to see if the GRE entrance exam is required for programs of interest. Focus on coursework and achieving a high GPA.
- Continue to investigate the career information to identify the admission requirements for OT school.
- Look for opportunities to be involved in meaningful activities (volunteering, research, etc.) that will strengthen your application.
- Attend local graduate school fairs and open houses.
- Apply for research opportunities that you can participate in over the school year or summer.
- **SUMMER: Work or volunteer in the health field.**
- **SUMMER: Participate in summer enrichment, research, or internship program.**
- **SUMMER: Learn more about the GRE (if needed) and research GRE prep courses opportunities.**
- **SUMMER: Familiarize yourself with the Centralized Application Service for Occupational Therapy (OTCAS).**

3rd Year (or the year prior to applying)

- Meet with pre-health advisor and PAC faculty mentor to make sure all coursework is on track.
- Begin compiling a list of specific OT programs that will meet your professional objectives.
- Complete pre-occupational therapy coursework that is required by OT schools and covered on the GRE.
- Make sure you have established well maintained relationships with your staff advisors, professors, PAC faculty mentor, and healthcare professionals. Start to consider from whom you can receive letters of recommendations.
- Look for opportunities to continue to be involved (volunteering, shadowing, etc.) that will strengthen your application.
- Attend a personal statement writing workshop and begin writing your statement early. Be prepared to make multiple drafts as this statement is critical in the review of your application.
- If needed, register for the Graduate Records Exam (GRE)
- Take the Graduate Records Exam (GRE)
- Prepare a “plan b” if you are not admitted to the schools of your choice.
- **SUMMER: If you are intending to start your chosen program immediately following graduation, you should begin the application process, including requesting letters of recommendation from your professors. The OTCAS will open up early July.**
- **SUMMER: Double check dates and deadlines and review, edit, and submit OTCAS application early**
- **SUMMER: Submit transcripts, complete supplemental applications, and contact those who will be submitting LORs for you to check on progress.**

4th Year

- Prepare for interviews by participating in a mock interview
- Meet with your PAC faculty mentor to discuss status of your application.
- Continue to maintain a strong GPA
- If admitted, make final decisions about your choice of school and notify schools you will not be attending.
- If admitted to an Occupational Therapy program, apply for financial aid (FAFSA) by March 1st
- If admitted, pay seat deposit for the institution of your choice
- Let the pre-health advisor know what schools you were admitted to and which school you will matriculate.

Occupational Therapy Checklist

___1. **RESEARCH** the Occupational Therapy schools you are interested in. The first step in preparing for OT school is finding out what programs you are interested in. A good place to start is the Centralized Application Service for Occupational Therapy (OTCAS). OTCAS provides you with information about several occupational therapy programs and their timelines.
<https://portal.otcas.org/>

___2. **PREREQUISITES:** each school has different timelines and prerequisites. Research each school carefully to make sure you have met all the requirements for the application.

| REQUIRED | | HIGHLY RECOMMENDED |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| General Psychology (4 quarter hours) | Statistics (4 quarter hours) | General Biology |
| Abnormal Psychology (4 quarter hours) | Sociology (4 quarter hours) | General Physics |
| Human Development (4 quarter hours) | Medical Terminology | General Chemistry |
| Human Anatomy (4 quarter hours) | | Art/Media |
| Physiology (4 quarter hours) | | English |

***This is a typical example of what an OT school may require – make sure you check each school for their specific requirements**

___3. **REGISTER** for the Pre-Health Program.

___4. **GPA:** The higher the GPA, the more competitive you will be. Plan on applying to at least 6-8 programs at minimum, the average GPA for students admitted to an OT program is a 3.6.

___5. **KNOW** the application start date and deadlines along with all prerequisites needed for each school you are interested in. The OTCAS opens early July.

___6. **SHADOWING:** Start shadowing, volunteering and working with patients early on. Many Occupational Therapy programs may require anywhere from 0-200 shadowing hours. Double check prerequisites on OTCAS to make sure you are getting the amount of observation hours you need.

___7. **BE INVOLVED:** The more well-rounded your academic career the more competitive you will be. Be involved in meaningful activities such as research, community service, work, and extracurricular that is meaningful and unique.

___8. **RECOMMENDATIONS:** Most Occupational Therapy programs do not require a committee letter. Therefore, line up 3-4 recommendations. The OTCAS will tell you which types of recommendations they require and accept. If unsure contact the schools you are applying to, to determine what types of references they prefer. Recommendations through CASPA are electronic.

___9. **GRE:** Check to see if your programs of interest require the GRE. If so, register for the GRE 2-3 months prior to taking it and take the GRE at least 6-8 weeks prior to the application start date. A score in the 50th percentile is Verbal 151, and Quantitative: 150, and Analytical: 4.0. The average scores of students accepted to Illinois Programs are: Verbal: 153, Quantitative: 155, Analytical: 4.0 and a GPA: 3.56. More information about the GRE can be found at www.ets.org.

___10. **COMPOSE:** Start to write your personal essay prior to the application in a word document. Each specific school may have a supplemental essay as well. Once you have completed your essay make sure you edit it carefully and have others edit it as well.

___11. **REQUEST** official transcripts to be sent to you to aid you in filling out the coursework one month prior to your application date.

___12. **APPLY/DOUBLE CHECK/SUBMIT:** A lot of OT schools are on the OTCAS but not all of them. The earlier you apply the better. Some schools have rolling admissions. Get all your application material ready a month prior to the application open date, fill out the application, double/triple check for errors, and then submit!