Trends
The number of available positions for occupational therapists is expected to grow by 29% by 2022, which is much faster than average for all fields. The anticipated growth in the field is largely attributed to the growing population of elderly individuals at risk for health conditions that affect working and living independently. Many occupational therapists work in hospitals (28%) or therapy offices (22%); others work in schools (12%), skilled nursing facilities (9%), or in home healthcare (9%).

Education & Training
A master’s degree in occupational therapy is the standard credential in the field, although there are a few schools that offer relevant doctoral degrees. All states require occupational therapists to be licensed and most states require at least master’s degree for licensure. A specific bachelor’s degree is not typically required for admissions to a master’s degree program, although undergraduate courses in the sciences are often required.

Many states have continuing education requirements for licensure renewal.

Tips for Breaking In
- Gain experience in the field through volunteering, job shadowing, and research
- Develop strong communication skills and the ability to work with a diverse group of people
- Maintain good grades to qualify for graduate programs
- Join relevant professional associations or student associations
- Research graduate school programs to learn what is expected and needed to get into the field
- Become familiar with state licensing requirements

Licenses & Certifications
All states require that occupational therapists be licensed to practice in the field. Licensure typically requires a master’s degree in the field, a number of hours of practice, and passing scores on an exam. In North Carolina, occupational therapists must have a degree in the field and a passing score on the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy exam.

Earnings
The median salary (2014) for occupational therapists was $78,810. While most occupational therapists work full-time, some (25%) work part-time.

Types of Employers
- Schools
- Public Health Departments
- Private and Group Practice
- Physicians’ Offices
- Military
- Hospitals
- Community Agencies
- Colleges and Universities
- Government
- Rehabilitation Offices

Example Employers
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
- Carolinas Medical Center
- National Institutes of Health
- Genesis Rehabilitation Services
- Forever Living Homes
- Presbyterian Hospital
- Novant Health
- PPR Education Services
- Aegis Therapies

Desirable Qualities, Interests, and Skills
- Strong communication (both verbal and written) skills
- Ability to work with patients and healthcare professionals
- Compassion and sensitivity to patient needs
- Problem-solving, critical thinking, and analytical skills
- High ethical standards
- Must be able to maintain strong records, which are used in diagnosis and a tool to measure progress
- Affinity for the sciences
- Ability to travel and possibly work evenings and/or weekends

Websites
- American Occupational Therapy Association | www.aota.org
- National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy | www.nbcot.org
- North Carolina Board of Occupational Therapy | www.ncbot.org
- Explore Health Careers: Occupational Therapy | www.explorehealthcareers.org

Sample Job Titles
- Occupational Therapist
- Certified Occupational Therapist
- Pediatric Occupational Therapist
- Rehabilitation Therapist
- Clinical Specialist
- Contract Occupational Therapist

Job market, salary, and other information on the How to Get a Job In... series is from O*Net Online and the Bureau of Labor Statistics’s Occupational Outlook Handbook.