

# PRE-OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY FACT SHEET

## Becoming a Competitive Applicant to Occupational Therapy (OT) School.

Applicants to occupational therapy (OT) programs must complete a minimum of 60 credit hours (2 years) of college coursework, along with the pre-OT prerequisites. Some pre-OT students complete a Bachelor's degree prior to entering an occupational therapy program. Competitive applicants for admission have a solid academic record, a well-rounded profile of co-curricular experiences, supportive letters of recommendation, and can clearly articulate their reasons for choosing occupational therapy.

## SELECTING A MAJOR

Although a Bachelor's degree is not required for admission to OT school, students should always be on track towards a degree. Applicants with a well-rounded education, a variety of interests and personal experiences are ideal candidates and are encouraged to choose a major where they can demonstrate strong academic performance while pursuing a parallel plan. OT schools look for students who demonstrate a strong ability to handle a rigorous course load.

## GPA

GPA's calculated on OT school applications normally include coursework done at all colleges attended. If a course is repeated, both grades will be included in the GPA's calculated by the OT schools. **Aim for GPA's of 3.3 or higher.**

## GRADES

C is an honorable grade, though most if not all grades should be higher! Multiple grades below B, especially within the two academic years leading up to OT school application, could interfere with admission to occupational therapy programs. Faced with a likely grade below C, some students should withdraw (W) and later try for a higher grade; consult with your advisors as you decide. More than two W's, however, could indicate a lack of judgment or an inability to handle challenges later in OT school.

## PRE-REQUISITE AND RECOMMENDED COURSES

Pre-OT students should complete certain coursework to be prepared for the rigor of an occupational therapy program. In addition, students should research schools carefully to be aware of all prerequisite courses and other admissions policies, as prerequisites vary significantly among OT programs. Students are encouraged to meet with a Pre-Health Advisor in their freshman year to develop their timeline for application to OT school.

## PRE-REQUISITES

The following are common prerequisites for occupational therapy programs. Some of the courses listed below, although not specifically required for an OT program, may be required to take upper-level prerequisites at Creighton, such as Anatomy and Physiology.

- One semester of General Biology with lab – BIO 201/205
- One semester General Chemistry with lab – CHM 203/204
- One semester of Anatomy\* – EXS 331 or PHA 310
- One semester of Physiology\* – EXS 320 or BIO 449
- Statistics – MTH 360, MTH 361, EXS 407, ANT/SOC/HAP 314, PSY 315, BIO 310
- Two semesters of Psychology – PSY 201; PSY 271, PSY 351, or PSY 341 & 342
- English – including composition
- Medical Terminology – OTD 215

\* For Creighton's OT program, students are not required to complete a Physiology class, nor are they required to take a lab with the Anatomy course; however, a number of OT programs do require or recommend the completion of both Anatomy and Physiology courses with labs. In addition to the prerequisites listed above, Creighton's OT program requires that Creighton applicants have six hours of Theology courses. Some schools may not regard credit earned through examinations (AP, CLEP, IB) as being equivalent to completing required courses, but they may accept higher-level college courses as substitutes. Research individual schools for their policies regarding AP/CLEP/IB credits for prerequisite courses.



## PRE-HEALTH GUIDES AND RESOURCES

**EDGE PRE-HEALTH ADVISING:** Pre-Health Advisors in the EDGE are available to meet with students one-on-one about their pre-health goals and path.

**EDGE PRE-HEALTH SEMINARS:** The EDGE seminars assist students in exploring the occupational therapy profession, gaining experience in healthcare, and preparing for the application process. Students should participate in POPT 100 in their freshman year, and then POPT 200 in the sophomore year (depending upon the student's application timeline).

**PRE-OT CLUB:** All pre-OT students should participate in the Pre-OT Club. This student-run organization provides leadership opportunities to further

explore and gain experience in the OT profession - <https://creighton.campuslabs.com/engage/organization/pre-ot>

**CU SCHOOL OF PHARMACY AND HEALTH PROFESSIONS (SPAHP):** Make an appointment with SPAHP admissions office personnel in the spring of the freshman year to personalize the application process.

**PRE-HEALTH LISTSERV:** Subscribe at: <http://lists.creighton.edu/mailman/listinfo>

**HELPFUL LINKS:**  
[creighton.edu/edge](https://spahp.creighton.edu/) - Creighton EDGE  
Creighton School of Pharmacy and Health Professions:  
<https://spahp.creighton.edu/>  
American Occupational Therapy Association:  
[www.aota.org](http://www.aota.org)

## Course Scheduling Considerations:

Freshmen and sophomore pre-OT students usually take only one or two natural science or math subjects each semester.

**Biology:** General Biology I (BIO 201/205) is a typical choice for freshman fall.

**Chemistry:** General Chemistry I (CHM 203/204) may be needed to enroll in the Anatomy and Physiology courses required by many OT programs. Students must have a sufficient chemistry background (completion of high school chemistry) and sufficient math background (an ACT math score of at least 24 or an SAT math score of at least 580) to be eligible take General Chemistry in the freshman year. Students may instead take additional math and/or CHM 105 Introductory Chemistry in freshman year to be better prepared for General Chemistry.

### OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY APPLICATION PROCESS:

**NATIONAL ADMISSION TESTS:** Some OT programs require the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) a national, standardized computer-based test. The GRE is typically taken approximately 12-15 months before starting OT school. To do well on this exam, students need to allow for significant study and preparation before the exam.

**LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION:** Students are required to submit at least three letters of recommendation with their OTCAS application. Many OT schools require at least one or two letters from professors. Some schools may require that one letter be from a practicing occupational therapist. Students are encouraged to research letter requirements by school.

**INTERVIEWS:** Many OT schools will interview promising applicants. The Career Center offers interview preparation assistance, including mock interviews.

**SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS:** Some OT schools might offer special consideration to applicants from socioeconomic groups underrepresented in the profession.

**Physics:** A small number of OT schools may require pre-OT students complete a semester of Physics. Students who have sufficient math and physics (a year of high school physics or a semester of college introductory physics such as our PHY 187; math through pre-calculus) are eligible to take General Physics I (PHY 201/205) and General Physics II (PHY 202/206).

**Math:** MTH 205 is often the best choice for pre-OT students; however, students who are applying to OT programs that require Physics will need pre-calculus algebra and trigonometry knowledge to prepare for Physics 201/205; if those courses were not completed in high school, MTH 139 Precalculus should be taken (Note: MTH 139 does NOT meet the Magis Core math requirement).

**Sample First Semester Schedule:** Course sequencing may vary depending upon a student's readiness.

- General Biology I with lab (4 sem. hours)
- General Psychology (3 sem. Hours)
- Magis Core Class (3 or 4 sem. hours) – ENG or Critical Issues + COM
- Magis Core Class (3 sem. hours) – PHL or THL
- Maybe another Magis Core Class (3 sem. hours) – foreign language
- RSP Class (.5 semester hours each freshman semester)

## CO-CURRICULAR EXPECTATIONS

Good grades and strong GRE scores are not enough to get you into OT school. It is important that you are a well-rounded applicant who participates in meaningful activities on your college campus and in your community. Occupational therapy is a service-focused profession and admissions officers look for students who demonstrate their promise to serve the community throughout their lifetimes. Additionally, OT schools expect students will shadow professionals and also value skills gained from leadership, research, and building relationships that can demonstrate readiness for OT school.



### VOLUNTEER AND SERVICE

Students should seek out service experiences in both healthcare and non-healthcare settings, and it is beneficial to show sustained commitment over time. Check out the Schelgel Center for Service and Justice for opportunities - <http://blogs.creighton.edu/ccsj/>

### BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Occupational Therapists are called on to connect with and help people different from themselves, and make their patients feel comfortable during treatment. Seek out experiences that help you build interpersonal relationships and interact with people from many walks of life.

### SHADOWING

Students must gain knowledge of the profession by shadowing current professionals in their field. It is highly recommended that students shadow occupational therapists in a variety of settings, if possible. Sustained shadowing experience with one occupational therapist is also helpful, as some OT schools may require a letter of recommendation from a practicing occupational therapist. In addition, OT programs often require that applicants have documentation of a minimum number of shadowing hours.

### LEADERSHIP

Leadership comes in many forms. Creighton has a number of resources to help you gain leadership experience through various organizations and student programming. Showing some leadership skills now demonstrates you can be a leader in your community later.

### HEALTHCARE EXPERIENCE

Students should seek opportunities for hands-on, direct patient care experience, whether volunteer, paid, or both. Some specific ways students gain this employment is through becoming a PT/OT tech or aide, Certified Nurse Aide (CNA), an EMT with Basic certification, a phlebotomist, an eeg/ekg tech, patient care tech, home health aide, or medication aide, among others.

### RESEARCH

Research experience is not a requirement for admission to OT school, but may add an extra layer to your application if the institutions you are applying to have a research focus, or if you are particularly interested in research. See the Center for Undergraduate Research and Scholarship for opportunities at <http://www.creighton.edu/curas/>.