

## What does an occupational therapist do?

Occupational therapists assess and treat people who are limited in their ability to undertake the activities of everyday life due to illness, mental health needs, injury or circumstance. They help these patients develop, recover, and improve the skills needed for daily living and working. Occupational therapists plan and direct therapy treatment, including physical and social activities, recommend adaption to equipment in patients' homes, workplace, or vehicles, and advise clients on changes to their lifestyle to help them with daily activities.

## Salary

Occupational therapists with up to six years' experience usually earn \$47,000 to \$68,000 per year. Those with more than six years' experience usually earn \$68,000 to \$99,000 per year.

## What subjects do I need to take at school?

- ❖ Biology
- ❖ Chemistry
- ❖ Health
- ❖ Physical Education
- ❖ Te Reo Māori

## How do I get into it?

To become an occupation therapist you need to complete one of the following:

- ✓ Bachelor of Health Science in Occupational Therapy (AUT)
  - ✓ Bachelor of Occupational Therapy (Otago Polytechnic/Wintec)
- And**
- ✓ Register with the Occupational Therapy Board

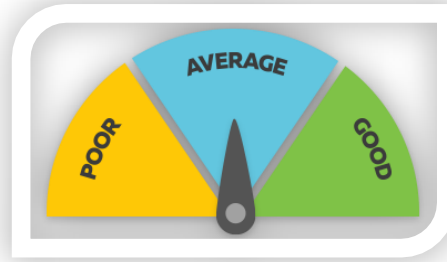
Training takes three years to complete. Degrees can be completed at either Auckland University of Technology or Otago Polytechnic.

### ***Interpersonal skills***

Occupational therapists should be:

- ❖ positive and encouraging
- ❖ approachable
- ❖ have good communication skills
- ❖ skilled at report writing
- ❖ analytical and observant
- ❖ good problem solvers
- ❖ patient and good at time management skills

Useful experience for those keen on this job includes working with children, elderly, or the disabled, coaching and working with groups of people, and first aid experience. Occupational therapists need to be reasonably fit and healthy as they may have to help lift patients.



## Will I get a job after training?

Chances of getting a job as an occupational therapist are poor for those wanting to enter the role, but good for those with experience. New graduates may have better chances of finding work outside the main cities, and with smaller health providers such as private clinics.

Occupational therapists work in public and private practices, such as district health boards, private occupational therapy practices, primary health care providers, rest homes, hospitals, rehabilitation services, schools, and hospices. Therapists may progress to work in management, teaching or research roles, or move into contract work as a workplace occupational health and safety adviser

## Where do I find out more?

- **Occupational Therapy New Zealand**  
(04) 473 6510 - [otnz@otnz.co.nz](mailto:otnz@otnz.co.nz) - [www.otnz.co.nz](http://www.otnz.co.nz)
- **Te Rau Matatini - Māori Mental Health Workforce Development**  
0800 6282 8464 - [communications@teraumatatini.com](mailto:communications@teraumatatini.com) - [www.matatini.com](http://www.matatini.com)