

Where do they work?

Occupational therapists work for:

- District health boards (public hospitals)
- Primary and secondary schools
- Private occupational therapy practices
- Rest homes

Training

To become an occupational therapist you must complete a three year degree in Occupational Therapy. The course can be taken in Auckland (AUT), Dunedin (Otago Polytechnic) and Hamilton (at Wintec, but run by Otago Polytechnic).

The courses consist of both theory on campus (for about half the course), with the remainder of the time in hospitals or the community doing practical training, throughout New Zealand.

The subjects that will help you most with these degrees are English, mathematics and biology. You must have University Entrance to apply for these courses.

Personal Qualities

Occupational therapists work with people from a all ages, cultures, backgrounds and lifestyles.

To be an occupational therapist you need to:

- Listen, build trust and inspire confidence in people.
- Be understanding, patient and supportive.
- Be creative and practical.
- Have a strong interest in team work and collaborating with other professionals is important.

Occupational therapists need to be creative and are always thinking up new ideas to make therapy interesting and to help their clients want to keep working.

Information collated by NZIRH
Where to go for more information:

www.otnz.co.nz

www.otboard.org.nz

www.careers.govt.nz

www.kiaorahauora.co.nz

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Occupational Therapist



Occupational Therapist

Occupational therapists help people who have limited ability to participate in the daily activities of everyday life due to illness, injury or circumstance.

They help people to become independent and improve their health and well-being. They also help to develop their abilities and social skills.

Here is an example of entry criteria for Wintec. Please check their website for further and updated details:

- NCEA Level 3
- 14 credits at Level 3 in each of three NZQA approved university entrance subjects, and
- 10 Literacy credits at Level 2 or above, made up of: 5 credits in reading and 5 credits in writing, and
- 10 Numeracy credits at Level 1 or above, made up of: specified achievement standards available through a range of subjects OR
- package of three numeracy unit standards (26623, 26626, 26627- all three required)

What do they do?

Occupational therapists work with people who have a disability that interferes with their everyday living, or their job. They help people to restore or gain skills such as:

- dressing
- feeding
- grooming
- hygiene
- toileting
- home skills
- school skills
- play skills
- fine motor skills
- sensory processing
- oral motor skills
- visual perceptual skills



Working in a hospital

In a hospital setting, an occupational therapist may work on a medical ward with people with acute conditions. The patient is assessed to make sure that they can get home safely and manage after their visit to hospital. If they need extra help they are referred to other teams involved in rehabilitation, e.g. wheelchair mobility, meal preparation, upper limb therapy. Rehabilitation programmes are designed to help people prepare for going home.

Working in a school

Occupational therapists work with teachers and parents to support children with special needs to learn and develop. For example, a school will work with an occupational therapist to ensure a child in a wheelchair has access to all the facilities he/she needs at school.

Working in the community

A community occupational therapist will assist a person discharged from hospital to make sure that their home environment is safe and manageable. Interventions and equipment that result in improved quality of life and decrease hospitalization are used. Occupational therapists provide goal-oriented activities that teach skills in:

- independent living such as use of community resources, managing at home safely, time and medication management
- recreational activities
- problem solving