

Pre-OT Quick Facts



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA
Pre-Health Advising Office

You should prepare for a career as an Occupational Therapist by building credentials in scholarship, leadership, humanitarian/community service, and shadowing in the various settings of the profession. OT schools greatly value **shadowing experience**, and prefer for you to have a significant amount of shadowing experiences in a variety of OT settings. This helps to ensure that you have an appreciation for vast scope of the profession. There is **no "best" major** for pre-OT students. Instead, you are encouraged to pursue a major you are genuinely interested in as that will help you excel. Remember to consult a pre-health advisor about your individual plan!

❖ What is OT? How does it differ from PT?

The fields of occupational therapy and physical therapy are often confused. While both roles provide essential hands-on rehabilitative work to help clients perform everyday tasks as independently as possible, each field takes a distinct approach in helping people get back to their day to day lives. The main difference is that OT focuses on improving a client's ability to perform activities of daily living (ADL), and PT focuses on improving a client's ability to perform movement of the human body. OTs tend to have a more holistic perspective and focus on adapting the environment to fit the person.

OTCAS (Occupational Therapy Centralized Application Service)

To apply to most OT programs, you will utilize the OTCAS application service. Official transcripts, GRE scores, a personal statement, and letters of recommendation are all submitted to OTCAS. Two out of the three OT programs in Georgia use this application service; only Augusta University requires students apply directly through their institution.

OTCAS opens each year in July, but programs differ in terms of their application deadlines. Most deadlines are in the fall for a summer start; however, students are generally encouraged to apply well before the deadline since many institutions participate in rolling admissions

Required Courses & GPA Expectations

DISCLAIMER: This is not a definitive list of the classes you will need for every school. Always check with the individual schools to see what their specific requirements may be.

❖ Do grade trends matter?

If you wish to enter an OT program (MSOT or OTD), you will need strong science and overall GPAs as admission is competitive. Admissions committees look not only at raw numbers, but also at grade trends on your transcript—so all is not lost if you stumble in your first semester or two, but then show substantial improvement each subsequent year. However, they will also notice negative trends such as if you are consistently withdrawing from or performing poorly in hard sciences or are completing courses away from your home institution. While an instance or two is not a deal-breaker, a pattern of behavior should be avoided. You must demonstrate the ability to handle difficult scientific content as this will translate directly to your ability to perform in an OT program.

Average Matriculant Numbers

- **Overall GPA:** 3.50
- **Science GPA:** 3.40
- **GRE:** ~300 combined score & ~4.0 writing (scores above the 50th percentile)

General Information

- Master's (OTM) or Doctoral Degree (OTD)
- Usually 2-3 years long
- Three institutions in Georgia:
 - Augusta University
 - OTM
 - Brenau University
 - OTM
 - Georgia State University
 - OTD

Typical OT Pre-Requisites

Anatomy and Physiology (CBIO2200/L & CBIO2210/L)
Statistics (STAT2000)
Psychology (PSYC1101 and PSYC3230)
Lifespan Development (HDFS2200 or PSYC4220)
Medical Terminology (CLAS1030)
Anthropology or Sociology (ANTH1102 or SOCI1101)

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GRE

Most OT schools require that applicants take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). The GRE consists of three sections: Quantitative, Verbal, and Essay section. There are no specific courses that you need to take prior to the GRE, but you should plan to dedicate roughly six to eight weeks to exam preparation. While you can opt for a commercial prep course for the GRE, self-study is often sufficient. Students usually sit for the exam in their junior or senior year depending on their application timeline. Generally, it is recommended for you to take the GRE January-May as you head into the application cycle. The GRE is offered via University Testing Services on a regular basis.

Shadowing, Volunteering, & Research

Most OT programs require that you have experience observing or **shadowing** occupational therapists in action. Shadowing requirements for admissions can vary in a few aspects between schools including hours required, number of environments, and types of environments. While most programs require 50-60 hours minimum, more is certainly recommended. It is common for programs to suggest that you shadow in at least two different environments – inpatient and outpatient. However, it is possible for an individual program to require you to shadow in more or different types of environments. Variety in shadowing is always helpful, but is also important to try to get a well-rounded experience in each environment since shadowing is regularly discussed during admissions interviews.

Extracurricular activities, such as clubs and **volunteering**, are a large portion of the application that should not be neglected. OT schools are looking for students who not only demonstrate that they can manage rigorous courses while staying busy, but also those who are compassionate, enjoy working with people, and are dedicated to serving the community. You should keep in mind that depth of commitment and leadership experience are also considered. As a result, it is best to focus on strong engagement in few activities rather than to spread yourself too thin or compromise academic perform.

In addition, OTs regularly work with individuals who are living with disabilities, so it is important that you demonstrate an active interest in working with this population either through sustained volunteering or life experiences. Extra Special People (ESP), Special Olympics, Butterfly Dreams Farm, Athens Inclusive Recreation and Sports (AIRS), and Camp Twin Lakes are a few local organizations at which you can consider volunteering.

Research, although it is not required by most OT schools, is the hallmark of a curious mind and may benefit you in many ways. For example, a research mentor may be a good person to ask for a letter of recommendation, and research experience may help distinguish you from other candidates.

Letters of Evaluation

Most OT schools require three letters of evaluation. Requirements can vary between schools, and it is the student's responsibility to ensure that they have collected the correct letters for their program of interest. Generally, programs expect students to provide one letter from a licensed OT, one from a faculty member, and one other of the student's choosing. This can come from another OT, a research mentor, volunteer coordinator, employer, etc. Students should select what they believe will be the most compelling letter.

Georgia OT Program Application Dates

Institution	Application Period	Matriculation Date
Augusta University	July - October	May
GA State University	July - January	August
Brenau University	July - October	August
Brenau Hybrid Day*	July - October	May
Brenau Hybrid Weekend*	July - May	January

* Brenau University has three different cohorts for their OTM program with different class schedules.