

PRE-PHYSICAL THERAPY ADVISING GUIDE

Is the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) profession right for you?

If you value active lifestyles, enjoy studying and investigating the human body and movement, and want to help others optimize their quality of life by maintaining, restoring, and improving their ability to move and function through direct patient examination, diagnoses, treatment, and education, then a Doctor of Physical Therapy may be for you.

Physical Therapist is one of the fastest growing occupations in the United States at a 15% projected growth for the next 10 years according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

What does a Physical Therapist typically do?

Physical therapists examine, diagnose, and treat individuals of all ages with injuries, disabilities, or other conditions around movement.

Where does a Physical Therapist work?

The demand and location of employment varies by geographical region and preference, but in general, physical therapists practice in a wide range of settings, including but not limited to:

- Outpatient clinics
- Hospitals
- People's homes
- Schools
- Sports and fitness facilities
- Workplaces
- Nursing Homes

What is the difference between a Physical Therapist, Occupational Therapist, and Physical Therapy Assistant?

Each profession helps people of all ages impacted by disease, injury, and movement dysfunction to maximize their quality of life through hands-on care and in a variety of settings. But there are significant differences in their training and at the practice level:

- **Physical Therapists** require state licensure to practice and have a Doctorate in Physical Therapy with education consisting of advanced degrees and upper-level field-related sciences. They are responsible for the examination and diagnosis of movement dysfunction along with providing prescribed exercise, hands-on care, and patient education.
- **Occupational Therapists** require state licensure to practice and have a Doctorate in Occupational Therapy. OT programs do require a completed bachelor's degree along with upper-level [sciences](#) courses like those of [CSU OT](#); the only [ACOTE-accredited](#) program in Colorado. OTs assess, plan, and organize rehabilitation programs and use therapeutic techniques to help build or restore vocational, home, and daily living skills, as well as general independence to persons with aging, illness, disabilities, or developmental delays.
- **Physical Therapy Assistants** are licensed allied health assistants with an associate degree. They carry out the prescribed care plans under the direction and supervision of a licensed physical therapist.

BECOMING A DOCTOR OF PHYSICAL THERAPY

Job Outlook

Median wages	\$46.98 hourly, \$97,720 annually
Employment (2022)	246,800 employees
Projected growth	Much faster than average (15% or higher)
Projected job openings (2022-2023)	13,900
Occupational Outlook Handbook	Physical Therapist

Colorado Programs

Physical Therapists (PT) need a Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) from an accredited program along with a state PT license to practice. PTs first complete specific preprofessional courses along with their bachelor's degree before they can then earn their DPT from an [CAPTE](#)-accredited PT education program. PT programs are an average 3 years in length, and as of 2024, there are three accredited programs in Colorado.

Links to Programs:

[UCCS DPT Hybrid Pathway to CU Anschutz Regis University](#)

[CU Anschutz School of Medicine: Physical Therapy Colorado Mesa University](#)

Program Requirements

DPT programs require a Bachelor of Science with coursework consisting of field-related content, with the math and sciences completed within a certain time of the application (usually within the last five years, students need to check with program of interest). Common majors include exercise science, kinesiology, or biology. While the programs in Colorado do not require applicants to have Physical Therapy Assistant licensure, most require 40+ observation hours (observing a licensed PT in a variety of settings). Other requirements include: a minimum 3.0 GPA with above a C in the prerequisites, science courses to be in-person, usually the [GRE](#), a [report](#) of observation hours, an interview, vaccination, an [essay](#), and [relevant experiences](#). Getting into PT school requires a 4-to-6-week verification process through [PTCAS](#) who transmits the centralized application to requested programs of interest. All application items across all schools of interest must be completed at the time of verification. Upon completing the DPT program and the [NPTE](#) licensure exam, licensed physical therapists can then pursue a residency or fellowship specialty program.

Degree Sequence:

Associate of Science (not required) > Bachelor of Science in related field > DPT > Residency or Fellowship

Degree Planning: Course selection needs to include field-related electives and all prerequisites with a lab must be in person. APTA does not accept CLEP or online sciences and DPT programs accept AP courses on a case-by-case basis. DPT programs encourage students to join the APTA and use the PTCAS website for degree planning.

Common DPT Program Prerequisites: *with Lab

Abnormal Psychology	Human or Mammalian Anatomy*	Organic/Inorganic Chemistry I & II*
Biochemistry*	Human or Mammalian Physiology*	General Physics I & II*
College Algebra	General Biology I & II*	Statistics
Developmental Psychology	General Chemistry I & II*	

Common Electives:

Business Finance	Health Promotion and Wellness	Molecular Biology
Cell Biology	Histology	Neuroanatomy
Ethics	Interpersonal Communication	Neurophysiology
Exercise Science	Kinesiology / Movement	Neuroscience
Genetics	Microbiology	

Additional Resources

[American Physical Therapy Association](#) (APTA) | [PTCAS Program Directory](#) | [Becoming a Physical Therapist](#)

[American Board of Physical Therapy Residency & Fellowship Education](#) (ABPTRFE)

[Occupational Therapist](#) | [American Occupational Therapy Association](#)

O*NET Online Summary: [Physical Therapy](#)