



# Paediatric Occupational Therapy

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# What is an Occupational Therapist?

An occupational therapist (OT) aims to enable people of all ages who may be experiencing an injury, illness or disability to overcome the barriers preventing them from participating in the things they need to, want to or have to do. Specifically, paediatric occupational therapists enable children to participate in their daily routines and life roles, including showering, dressing, playing and social engagement. OT's understand the relationship between each individual person, their unique environments and their valued occupations and how these factors may influence their level of participation in daily activities that are meaningful to them.

## Paediatric OT Roles

- Mental health
- Community health
- Cardiac health
- Environmental modification
- Neurological rehabilitation
- Acute care
- Play therapy
- Behavioural support

## OT Settings

- Public and private hospitals
- Education settings
- Community health centres
- Private practices
- Mental health settings

## When an OT might be useful:

- If your child is having difficulties doing things in their day-to-day life, no longer can do the things they once enjoyed doing or are wanting to increase their independence or participation in meaningful activities.

# An OT can assist within the following domains:

## 1. Reaching developmental milestones including:

- Their ability to sit, crawl, or walk
- Learning at their appropriate developmental rate
- Developing play and social skills

## 2. Fine motor skills

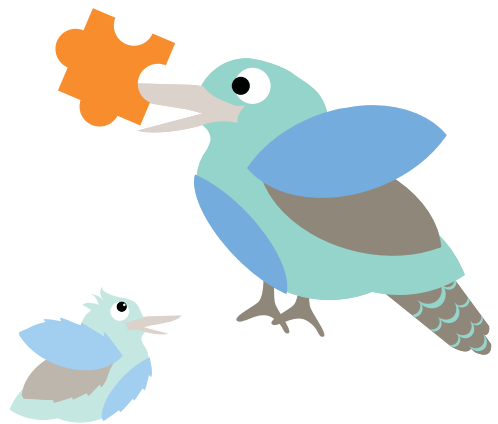
- Manipulating toys and puzzles
- Holding a pencil
- Using cutlery
- Using scissors
- Using zippers, buttons, shoelaces
- Colouring, drawing, tracing, pre-writing shapes
- Handwriting, letter/number formation
- Developing a hand dominance at an developmentally-appropriate time
- Avoiding tasks and games that require fine motor skills

## 3. Movement, strength, balance development (Gross motor skills)

- Going up and down stairs
- Coordinating both sides of the body
- Understanding the concept of right and left
- Ball skills
- Balance

## 4. Visual processing

- Spacing and sizes of letters
- Recognising letters
- Copying shapes or letters
- Visual tracking and crossing midline
- Finding objects among other objects



## 5. Sensory processing

- Reactions to sensory input from the internal or external environments including: touch, taste, sounds, smells or body movements
- Responses to certain sensations E.g. pain tolerances, noticing cuts/bruises
- Regulating particular body movements- moving, jumping, crashing, bumping
- Emotional regulation
- Coping with change

## 6. Social interaction

- Interacting socially and engaging with family, friends and within the community
- Adapting to new environments

## 7. Play skills

- Exploring toys appropriately
- Participating in different types of play individually as well as with others.

## How to access an OT:

- Your general practitioner (GP) can help you decide whether an OT might be beneficial and can provide a referral.
- NDIS referral
- Self-referral for a private occupational therapist



# References

Health University of Utah

<https://healthcare.utah.edu/life-skills-clinic/does-my-child-need-occupational-therapy.php>

Allied Health Professions Australia

<https://ahpa.com.au/allied-health-professions/occupational-therapy/>

Occupational Therapy Australia

<https://www.otaus.com.au/practice-support/areas-of-practice>



