



Ontario Society of  
Occupational Therapists

# NEW GRADUATE RESOURCE

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## Purpose of this resource

Welcome, new graduates! The Ontario Society of Occupational Therapists (OSOT) is pleased to have you as a member of Ontario's passionate and supportive association for OTs.

As you move towards the career you've spent two years preparing for, we want to help make your transition from *student occupational therapist* to *practicing occupational therapist* a little bit easier.

That's why we've created this New Graduate Resource: to help you, as new graduates ready to work in Ontario, be successful as you navigate your way to your first job as a licensed OT!



## I've just graduated. What are my next steps?



Your next steps will vary depending on your personal goals after graduation, but they may include:

- ◆ Writing the Certification Exam
- ◆ Obtaining Liability Insurance
- ◆ Registering with the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario (COTO)

### The Certification Exam

- ◆ The OT certification exam is administered by CAOT (Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists).
- ◆ It is formally called the [NOTCE](#) (National Occupational Therapy Certification Examination).
- ◆ Passing the NOTCE is required if you want to practice with a general license in Ontario.
- ◆ **More Info:** [NOTCE general information and resources for the exam](#)

### When is the exam, and when do I register?

- ◆ The NOTCE is offered twice a year.
- ◆ For Canadian graduates, exam and registration dates are generally as follows:

Exam Date	Registration Opens	Registration Closes
First Saturday in July (after July 1)	Mid-March	Mid-May
First Saturday in November	Mid-July	Mid-September

- ◆ **More Info:** [Exam locations and exact registration start dates and deadlines](#)

### How much does the exam cost?

- ◆ **More Info:** [Exam Fees](#)

### How do I prepare for the certification exam?

- ◆ Believe it or not, you **are** prepared! Trust yourself: you **do** know more than you *may* think!
- ◆ However, to understand the exam's format, blueprint, and procedures, CAOT recommends you read the following documents:
  - [The NOTCE Resource Manual](#) (includes some samples cases and questions)
  - [Profile of Occupational Therapy Practice in Canada \(2012\)](#)
- ◆ For those looking for more, CAOT sells [exam preparation materials](#) (the TOTEM, TOTE, and OTEM)
- ◆ **More Info:** [FAQ's about the NOTCE](#)



### Liability insurance

#### What is liability insurance and why do I need it?

- ◆ As per COTO, you need Professional Liability Insurance (PLI) to practice as an OT in Ontario.
- ◆ In fact, COTO requires proof that you have PLI before you can become registered.

◆ Essentially, Professional Liability Insurance covers your expenses in case:



- a client/colleague files a complaint about you to COTO.
  - a client sues you, claiming you are guilty of malpractice.
  - the police issue you a criminal charge (*i.e.*, resulting from fraud, theft, or sexual abuse claims).
- ◆ It might help to see what PLI covers. For example, OSOT offers a Professional Liability Insurance package that includes:
- **Professional Liability Protection for Errors and/or Omissions**
    - *e.g.*, to cover expenses and/or damages (payout) from malpractice claims or suits against you, whether or not you're guilty.
  - **Legal Expense Reimbursement**
    - *e.g.*, to cover lawyer fees for disciplinary hearings with COTO or are taken to court.
  - **Sexual Abuse Therapy and Counseling Fund Endorsement**
    - *e.g.*, for therapy/counseling for sexual abuse survivors.
    - **Criminal Defense Reimbursement**
      - *e.g.*, to cover costs for criminal suits where you're found not guilty.
  - **Plus:**
    - Protection for support personnel (*e.g.*, OTAs) working under your supervision.
    - Free continued coverage for those on parental leave.

- Coverage for professional activities outside of work (*e.g.*, free advice, volunteering).

◆ **More Info:** [OSOT's PLI Program](#)

### What is the "Sexual Abuse Therapy and Counseling Fund Endorsement", and why do I need it?

- ◆ If a client is believed to have been sexually abused by a therapist, the "sexual abuse therapy and counseling fund endorsement" provides the funds needed by that client for therapy/counseling to help recover.
- ◆ This fund is available to eligible clients, **regardless** of whether or not the therapist is guilty of intentional abuse.
- ◆ Although you can get PLI from a variety of sources, COTO states that your PLI **must** specifically include a "sexual abuse therapy and counseling fund endorsement".
- ◆ This fund endorsement is **included** in OSOT's PLI package.

### Where do I get liability insurance?

- ◆ [OSOT's Professional Liability Insurance](#) plan (through PROLINK) is approved by COTO.
- ◆ **NEW:** As a gift to new graduates, OSOT now offers a **New Graduate Package**, which offers **complimentary membership PLUS complimentary PLI** for your first year!
- ◆ **More:** [OSOT's New Graduate Package](#)
- ◆ **Note:** COTO has also approved of the PLI offered by [CAOT](#) and [AON](#).

### When do I need to get liability insurance?

- ◆ You need PLI before you can register with COTO and start working as an OT.
- ◆ In other words, if you plan on working right after graduating, you should get PLI ASAP.

- **Note:** The deadline for membership/PLI registration is **October 1**, so we recommend you renew early to ensure you are continually covered by PLI. You never know when that employer will call back!

### How much does liability insurance cost?

- ◆ To alleviate the financial burdens of being a new OT graduate, OSOT offers **complimentary PLI** with the **New Graduate Membership (\$0)**.
- ◆ PLI covers you for one year (October 1 to October 1 of the following year) and must be renewed annually. Generally, people renew their PLI with their membership.

### How much liability insurance is enough?

- ◆ As per COTO, the PLI offered through OSOT is all you need to practice in Ontario.
- ◆ However, if you are planning to be self-employed, consider also getting Commercial General Liability Insurance, Business Property Insurance, and/or Corporation coverage.
- ◆ **More Info:** PROLINK, [Coverage options](#).

### Registration with the College

In order to practice as an OT in Ontario, you need to first [register with the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario \(COTO\)](#).

### Can I work as an OT before I pass the certification exam?

- ◆ **Yes.** COTO will grant you a **Provisional Practising Certificate of Registration** if you:
  - register with COTO and meet all their [eligibility requirements](#) (minus the exam).
  - are registered to write the next available NOTCE.

- Use the [Statement of Candidacy Request Form](#) from CAOT to prove this. This form requires your school to confirm that you have completed your MScOT degree.
- have an offer of employment where you will be supervised by an OT.
  - Use the [Provisional Registration Supervision Agreement Form](#) from COTO to prove this. It must be signed by both the potential employer and supervising OT.
- ◆ **More Info:** COTO: [Provisional Practising Certificates of Registration](#).
- ◆ After you pass the NOTCE, you will be eligible for the General Practising Certificate of Registration.



### What happens if I fail the NOTCE certification exam?

- ◆ You can re-write the NOTCE during any subsequent exam sitting (*i.e.*, in July or November).
- ◆ CAOT will allow you to write the NOTCE a total of **3 times** (*i.e.*, you can retry the exam twice).
- ◆ Provisional practicing certificates can be extended once, until the next available exam date.
- ◆ **More Info:** [Re-writing the NOTCE](#) (CAOT)
- ◆ **More Info:** [Extension of a Provisional Certificate](#) (COTO)

## What title can I use for myself right after I graduate?

- ◆ If you have not registered with COTO, or you are waiting for your registration status to be confirmed by COTO, you **cannot** call yourself an occupational therapist/d'ergothérapeute or use the designation OT Reg. (Ont.)/Erg. Aut. (Ont.).
- ◆ If you have either Provisional **or** General registration status, you can call yourself an occupational therapist and use the designation OT Reg. (Ont.) or the French equivalent.
- ◆ Regardless of your registration status, you can state you have a Master of Science Degree in Occupational Therapy (MSc(OT)/MScOT).
  - **Note:** You can do this as long as you do not intend to mislead your audience into believing you are a registered, practicing OT, when you are not.
- ◆ See [Appendix A](#) for a descriptive chart.
- ◆ **More Info:** [COTO's Standards for Use of Title, 2017](#) or [Quick Reference to Use of Title, 2017](#).

## Finding a Job

### How can I ensure I'm successful in the job finding process?

- ◆ One of our tips is to be patient! The vast majority of graduates *do* find a job within their first year.
- ◆ Visit [Appendix B: Finding a Job: FAQ](#), for more in-depth information, tips, and hints on:
  - finding a job,
  - writing your resume,
  - succeeding in the interview, and
  - selecting a job.

## How can I continue my professional development after I graduate?

COTO requires OTs in Ontario to be life-long learners, and participating in on-going professional

development (PD) and networking opportunities are some of the best ways to keep yourself evidence-informed.

## Ensuring evidence-based practice

### How can I stay evidence-informed without access to my university's databases?

There are lots of ways to ensure you stay evidence-informed after you leave school:

- ◆ **OSOT**
  - [Annual OSOT Conference](#)
    - This multiday workshop-based conference focuses on skill development, knowledge sharing, and networking.
  - As an OSOT member, you also have access to many PD resources, such as:
    - [OSOT Webinars and Workshops](#)
    - [Archived Webinars and Workshops](#) – participate in PD when it's convenient.
    - [Practice Resources](#) (resources to support various practice settings/areas, such as community, hospitals, primary care, auto-insurance, and mental health).
    - [Workshop and Course Listings](#) (includes listings of webinars, workshops, and related PD opportunities around Ontario).
    - [Find Evidence for Your Practice](#) through Open-Access Journals and Other Free Research - A surprising number of scientific articles are now available for free to the public, through open-access journals or other free avenues, providing a wealth of knowledge from related, interdisciplinary research.

## CAOT

- If you're also a member of [CAOT](#), you have access to their practice magazine ([OT Now](#)), their scientific journal ([CJOT](#)), scientific OT



journals from several other countries, and PD opportunities such as their annual conference, workshops, and webinars.

◆ **Environmental scanning**

- So much of our work is influenced by our contexts.
- You'd be surprised at how much you can learn, just by keeping current with local, regional, and national news around health policy, social issues, new research, and other areas related to OT. Some of the easiest ways to do this is to:
  - Follow relevant organizations on social media
  - Subscribe to relevant mailing lists
  - Sign up for alerts
  - Set up RSS feeds
- **NOTE:** See [Appendix C: Environmental Scanning](#): for specific suggestions about what to follow and receive alerts.



- Follow **OSOT** on social media for news, events, and policy updates directly related to OTs in Ontario:
  - [Facebook](#) (follow Ontario Society of Occupational Therapists)
  - [Twitter](#) (@OSOTvoice)
  - [LinkedIn](#) (follow Ontario Society of Occupational Therapists)

**Participating in conferences, webinars, and advanced training can get expensive... How can a new graduate afford to participate in these?**



**a new graduate afford to participate in these?**

- ◆ **Look for free PD opportunities.** For example:
  - Monitor relevant organizations/websites for free webinars, workshops, and symposia (See [OSOT's Workshop and Course Listings](#)).
  - For those who are working, watch for in-services at your workplace.
  - Respond to requests for proposals:
    - Look for PD opportunities, such as the chance to lead workshops, apply for grants, submit abstracts, develop resources or join a project funded by an outside organization. So much can be learned from presenting with colleagues!



- ◆ **OSOT**
  - OSOT offers discounted PD opportunities to members.

## How important is it to keep PD related materials for COTO?

- ◆ Keeping track of your PD activities is key for:
  - Transitioning between jobs.
  - Proving your commitment to ongoing competency development (particularly when you are selected by COTO to participate in the Competency Assessment).
  - Determining personal needs for PD.
- ◆ See COTO's resources around [Quality Assurance Program](#) to help you maintain your professional portfolio.

## Networking

### What are the best ways to connect and engage with practicing OTs?

- ◆ **OSOT**
  - We're not just saying that. Connecting Ontario OTs for practice support is one of OSOT's main reasons for existing.
  - There are so many ways you could potentially network with **thousands** of Ontario OTs, just by participating as an OSOT member.
  - For example, OSOT offers:
    - [OSOT Interest groups](#) - members networking and supporting each other to share knowledge and solve practice problems.
    - [OSOT conference](#)
      - a unique opportunity to network with hundreds of practicing OTs and potential employers in Ontario.
      - occurs every fall, at an ideal time for new grads to broaden their networks.
    - [OSOT Teams](#) - Join an OSOT Team to work closely with other OTs in a specific sector.
    - [OSOT Mentorship program](#) - links mentees with mentors to develop professional competencies.

- ◆ **CAOT**: Getting involved with your national professional associations is a great way to network across the country.



## Podcasts

- ◆ OSOT hosts 2 podcast series:
  - [New OT on the Block](#) – a series for new OTs on topics such as: registering with COTO, landing a job, and the difference between OT and PT.
  - [Leadership in Motion](#) – OT stories about taking risks, blazing new paths, and demonstrating leadership qualities.

## Should I have a separate, “professional” social media accounts (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter)?

- While it's ultimately up to you, COTO has released guidelines around [Use of Social Media](#) that may help inform how you use social media.

## COTO Resources

- ◆ Don't forget to keep yourself up-to-date on [COTO's practice resources](#), including regulations, standards, position statements, and practice guidelines.
  - ◆ Understanding the rules, guidelines, and suggestions from the College is essential to

practicing as an informed, regulated professional.



**We wish you all the best as you embark upon this very rewarding career of contributing to the health and well-being of Ontarians.**

**We are just a phone call, or email, away to help support you - don't hesitate to contact us:**

**Telephone: 416-322-3011**

**Toll Free: 1-877-676-6768**

**Email: [osot@osot.on.ca](mailto:osot@osot.on.ca)**

## Appendix A: Use of Title after Graduation

Type of Registration	Can use title Occupational Therapist	Can use designation OT Reg. (Ont.)	Can state you have a MScOT degree
I have not registered with COTO	✗	✗	✓
I am waiting for Provisional registration status	✗	✗	✓
I am waiting for General registration status	✗	✗	✓
I have General registration status	✓	✓	✓
I have Provisional registration status	✓	✓	✓

## Appendix B

### Finding a Job: FAQ

#### *Searching for a job*

#### What are the job prospects like in Ontario for OTs?

- ◆ The profession of occupational therapy has steadily grown since 2001.
- ◆ It is projected that moving forward, there will be a higher share of new jobs for OTs than other health care professionals.
- ◆ **More:** [OSOT's Member Compensation Survey](#) (membership data on wages based on geographical region).

#### Where should I go to find OT job postings?

- ◆ One of your best options is to look inside your network, and see how you might already be connected to a new job opening!
- ◆ [OSOT Career Postings](#)
- ◆ Other job posting sites. Consider:
  - your own university's Career centre
  - [ca.indeed.com](http://ca.indeed.com)
  - [www.talentegg.com](http://www.talentegg.com)
  - [CAOT: Careers in Occupational Therapy](#)
- ◆ **More:** AOTA: [How to Find the Best OT Job](#)

#### What wage can I expect for my first job?

- ◆ The wage you can anticipate making will vary, partly depending on where you are in Ontario, and which sector you work in.
- ◆ Check out [OSOT's Member Compensation Survey](#) for membership data on compensation. This could help inform you about what you can expect to make.
- ◆ **More:** [Government of Ontario Labour Market Information](#)

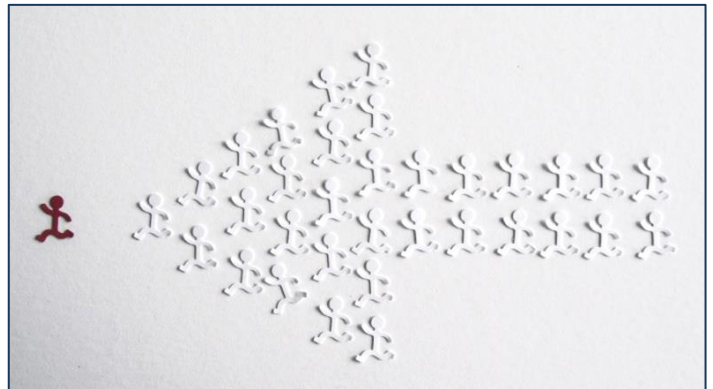
#### *Preparing your Résumé*

#### What are employers looking for in an OT applicant's résumé, and how can I make my résumé stand out?

- ◆ Highlight your experiences that show you are a strong communicator and team player.
- ◆ Focus on your skills and achievements, not the events that allowed you to gain them.
- ◆ Always include a cover letter with your résumé; customize it to suite the job and the audience as much as possible.
- ◆ Format and proof-read your résumé.

#### **More:**

- Purdue University, [Résumés and Vitas](#)



#### Do I need a CV?

- ◆ A CV (curriculum vitae) is generally for those pursuing a role in academia.
- ◆ They tend to be longer than résumés and focus on research and academic achievements.

## Preparing for Interviews

### What are some OT interview tips for new graduates?

- ◆ Take a look at this great presentation, [Preparing for a Job Interview as an Occupational Therapist](#).
  - It includes presentation tips, questions you might (and cannot) be asked, and questions you should ask the interviewer.
- ◆ Sell your value as a new graduate and therapist and potential team member.
- ◆ Employers want to see you've done your research; come with an understanding of:
  - the organization (their purpose, mission, vision, and values),
  - the key players, and
  - what the job entails in this particular setting.
- ◆ Bring your résumé to the interview. Keep it in front of you to glance at, in case you draw a blank.

### What types of questions will be asked during an interview, and what answers do employers want to hear?

- ◆ Ultimately, employers want to know why they need to hire **you** above all other candidates. Why can't the employer continue without you?



- ◆ Their questions will try to determine if:
  - You have the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience.
  - If you will fit in well with the team/organization.
  - If you are enthusiastic about the job and about joining the organization.



- ◆ Below is a list of common questions you could be asked during your interview.
- ◆ **About you:**
  - Tell me about yourself (See [How to Answer the Most Common Interview Question](#)).
  - What are your greatest strengths /challenges? (See [How to Answer the Dreaded "Weakness" Question](#))
  - What motivates you?
  - If you were an animal, which animal would you be?
  - How would you describe your work style?
  - How would your colleagues describe you?
  - Why should we hire you?
  - What can you offer that other candidates can't?
- ◆ **About the company:**
  - What do you know about our company?
  - What do you think our company is aiming to achieve?
  - What do you know about our products and services?
  - Why do you want to work for this company?
- ◆ **About the job/team:**
  - What makes you a good fit for our company?
  - What makes you a good team member?
  - Why do you think you are right for this job?
  - Why do you think this job is right for you?
  - What do you think the main challenges will be?
- ◆ **More:** [14 Interview Questions You Should Never Answer](#)

## Responding to a Call Back

### How selective can I be with my first job?

- ◆ Be as selective as you want to be, but we encourage you to also be flexible!
- ◆ Bear in mind the following points:
  - Your first job offer *may* not be your “dream job”, so seriously consider what you are willing to compromise (*e.g.*, hours, location, client population, wage).
  - Generally, the ‘expectation’ seems to be that you will stay in your first job for at least 2 years, so choose a job you think you can commit to.
  - During the course of your OT career, you will likely change practice contexts at some point, so where you start isn’t necessarily where you will end up.
- ◆ Your first job offer, though it may not be your ideal, might still be a great learning opportunity, and your chance to “enter the system” and add some OT experience to your résumé.

### How do I turn down a job offer?

- ◆ While this may be an enviable position for some, it is also really unpleasant to have to reject a job offer. The most important thing you can do is express your appreciation for the opportunity, and certainly try to keep the door open to future opportunities with the employer.

## Specific Areas of Practice

### Is it risky for me to start my own private practice or enter a private sector in my first year?

- ◆ COTO recommends that it is “an OT’s responsibility to carefully consider their level of experience and competence in their area of practice prior to entering private practice.”
- ◆ You may need to work with 3<sup>rd</sup> party payers, such as insurance companies, which may make your work more complex.
- ◆ Consider that private practice may involve working in isolation. See [OSOT’s Professional Networking](#) options to ensure you’re communicating with other OTs.
- ◆ Stay abreast of your work context:
  - Where is funding going?
  - Which sectors are seeing job creation?
  - Which areas are seeing policy re-development?
  - See [Appendix C: Environmental Scanning](#) for tips on how and where to monitor.
- ◆ If you do plan to be self-employed:
  - Critically assess your natural suitability. Take the [BDC Entrepreneurial Potential Self-Assessment](#)
  - Enhance your business skills; speak with lawyers, accountants, small-business agencies, and others who can help with non-clinical aspects of your work.
  - Know your market. Who is your competition, given where you plan to work?
  - Ensure you have sufficient insurance (*e.g.*, visit PROLINK, [Coverage options](#)).
  - Ensure you check out [OSOT’s Private Practice Resources](#) to help you get started on the right foot.

## Appendix C: Environmental Scanning

Environmental scanning can really keep you informed about what's new and changing in both the research world and your practice context.

### Alerts/RSS Feeds

- ◆ [Google Alerts](#) - These alerts pull **news stories** from all over the web, and can be sent to any email account.
  - Limit your alert pulls using key terms relevant to your practice. Consider:
    - Location information:
      - Canada, Ontario, City, your organization
    - Practice information:
      - Occupational therapy, Health, Rehabilitation
      - Client population (e.g., veterans, pediatrics),
      - Setting (e.g., hospitals, community)
    - Policy information:
      - Health Canada
      - Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
    - Sample alert terms:
      - Ontario + stroke + rehabilitation
      - Canada + senior's health
- ◆ [Google Scholar](#)
  - Pulls **research updates** according to your key terms.
- ◆ Scientific Journals
  - e.g., [SAGE Journals](#), [Springer Link](#)

### Follow organizations on social media or subscribe to their mailing lists

Follow organizations that align with your interests. Note: Some of these organizations may also offer their own opportunities for PD.

Note: This list offers a very small sample of organizations/websites that can inform your practice. Be on the lookout for others!

- [Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care](#)
- [Ontario Newsroom](#)
- [HealthForceOntario](#)
- [CBC Health](#)
- [TheHealthline.ca](#)
- [Mental Health Commission of Canada \(MHCC\)](#)
- [Canadian Mental Health Association](#)
- [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health \(CAMH\)](#)



- [CanChild](#)
- [National Institute on Aging](#)
- [Rehabilitative Care Alliance](#)
- [Ontario Public Health Association](#)
- [Ontario Hospital Association](#)
- [Alliance for Healthier Communities](#)
- [Autism Ontario](#)
- [Alzheimer Society of Canada](#)
- [Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada](#)
- [ALS Canada](#)
- [World Federation of Occupational Therapists](#)
- [Royal College of Occupational Therapists](#)

We hope you've found this resource useful and please [let us know](#) if we're missing anything!



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