

So, you're interested in learning more about Occupational Therapy!

Tips on Shadowing an Occupational Therapist

We're delighted that you're interested in learning more about the profession of occupational therapy. Practice in Ontario is diverse – addressing needs of individuals across the lifespan, with diverse challenges that create barriers to managing their everyday living and in a range of health system environments. One of the best ways to get to know the profession is by talking with and learning from occupational therapists! An ideal situation may enable you to observe an occupational therapist in practice and to be able to interact and talk about the services that they provide. These observational opportunities are sometimes referred to as shadowing opportunities.

Although OSOT encourages our members to accept requests for shadowing opportunities, current policies and procedures in some work settings may preclude this type of activity, especially if it includes observation of clients. Be prepared for this reaction. Are there other ways you could learn about the profession from an occupational therapist? Perhaps interviewing them over the telephone, touring their organization without client interactions, etc.

Finding and preparing for a shadowing experience:

- A little pre-work can help you prepare to ask great questions that will further your understanding of the profession. Learn basics about occupational therapy at:
 - OT Ontario: www.OTOntario.ca
 - Ontario Society of Occupational Therapists of Ontario: www.osot.on.ca
 - Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists: www.caot.ca
- Think about what population are you most interested in:
 - Children, adults, etc.
 - Hospitals, schools, clinics, etc.
- In terms of geographical areas, and personal situations, where would it be most practical for you to shadow?
- Does time allow you to shadow or talk to more than one occupational therapist? Try talking to occupational therapists working with different populations, if you can.
- Finding an occupational therapist to shadow:
 - Try the Ontario of Occupational Therapists (OSOT)'s Shadowing matching service!
Please contact the office: osot@osot.on.ca

- Contact local hospitals, clinics, community health centres.
- Use your personal connections.
- Show enthusiasm and passion! Share the reasons for your interest in OT in your first contact.
- Once you found an occupational therapist to shadow:
 - Does the workplace require any paperwork?
 - Ask if they need proof of vaccinations, police checks, proof of work insurance.
 - Ask the occupational therapist about the dress code before your shadow experience.
 - Professional clothing, and closed shoes may be required.

During your shadowing experience:

- Expect the occupational therapist to ask the client permission before you are introduced. This is a typical consent procedure.
- Ask the occupational therapist how much interaction you can have with the client before your introductions.
- Respect client privacy. You may also be asked to not share any identifying information outside of the setting.
- After observation, ask the occupational therapist thoughtful questions about:
 - The profession: job trends, continued education.
 - Personal questions: their journey, what they like most/least about their job, what they wished they had known.
 - Any interaction you observed with a client.

After your shadowing experience:

- Send a Thank-you letter to the occupational therapist. Let them know how you have appreciated their time and point out what aspects of your time spent with him/her you liked best.
- You may ask them to be a future reference.
- Jot down your learnings and personal reactions. This will help build your knowledge and resources for making decisions about applying to study occupational therapy and may be used to support your preparation of application materials.