Occupational Therapy Australia

Occupational therapy in education



Inclusive education is not just about access - it's about meaningful participation.

Occupational therapists play a vital role in helping students engage in the everyday routines and learning experiences that make up school life.

Occupational therapists (OTs) support students to engage in all aspects of school life. From the classroom to the playground, from mealtimes to managing emotions, OTs work to ensure every student can participate meaningfully and successfully in the everyday activities that make up school life.

Occupational therapists can support whole schools approaches, classrooms, small groups, or individual students. This may include building student skills, adapting environments, or modifying tasks to promote inclusion, access, engagement and participation.

What is occupational therapy?

Occupational therapy is a healthcare profession that helps people across the lifespan to do the activities they find meaningful, including the things they want or need to do in their daily life.

Why occupational therapy?

Occupational therapists are university trained clinicians with a minimum of a bachelor's degree. They are regulated by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) and have strict rules and guidelines regarding safe and ethical practice.

Occupational therapy is goal-oriented, practical, evidence-based and student-centered, and success is measured on a student's engagement and participation in real-life tasks like:

- Using the playground safely
- Managing emotions in class
- Participating in group activities
- Recording schoolwork
- Being engaged in school routines

How do occupational therapists work in education?

Occupational therapists can be employed in a range of ways, and this will influence how they may work.

Occupational therapists could be employed:

- Directly by schools and education systems, working collaboratively to support the entire school community through individual, group-level and whole-school strategies.
- Through external funding bodies, such as the NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme), focusing primarily on individual students.

Regardless of employment and funding type, occupational therapists work collaboratively with teachers, families, care partners and students to support participation in learning and school life. Rather than working in isolation, occupational therapists work alongside students, educators, parents/caregivers and other supporting professions to develop solutions together to maximise student access to the curriculum. The focus is on exploring achievable and practical strategies that align with the flow and demands of the classroom and everyday school life.

Occupational therapists also work together with educators, sharing strategies, tools and insights that can be embedded into daily practices. This supports inclusive education for all students, not just those with additional needs.

To find a local occupational therapist working in education, use OTA's 'Find an OT' directory by **scanning the QR code** or visiting **otaus.com.au/find-an-ot.**

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