

Pre-Physical Therapy

Physical therapists provide services that help restore function, improve mobility, relieve pain, and prevent or limit permanent physical disabilities of patients suffering from injuries or disease. They restore, maintain, and promote overall fitness and health. Their patients include accident victims, and individuals with disabling conditions such as low back pain, arthritis, heart disease, fractures, head injuries, and cerebral palsy.

Physical therapists practice in hospitals, clinics, and private offices that have specially equipped facilities, or they treat patients in hospital rooms, homes, or schools.

All States require physical therapists to pass a licensure exam before they can practice, after graduating from an accredited physical therapist educational program.

Physical therapist programs start with basic science courses such as biology, chemistry, and physics and then introduce specialized courses, including biomechanics, neuroanatomy, human growth and development, manifestations of disease, examination techniques, and therapeutic procedures. Besides getting classroom and laboratory instruction, students receive supervised clinical experience. Among the courses that are useful when one applies to a physical therapist educational program are anatomy, biology, chemistry, social science, mathematics and physics. Before granting admission, many professional education programs require experience as a volunteer in physical therapy department of a hospital or clinic. For high school students, volunteering with the school athletic trainer is a good way to gain experience.

Job Outlook

Employment of physical therapists is expected to grow by 30 percent from 2008 to 2018, much faster than the average for all occupations.

Earnings

The median annual wage for physical therapists was \$84,020 in May 2015. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$57,060, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$119,790.

The U.S. Department of Labor provided information about careers in physical therapy. More information can be found at their <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/physical-therapists.htm#tab-5>

Additional career information and a list of accredited educational programs in physical therapy can be obtained from the American Physical Therapy Association, 1111 North Fairfax Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-1488 <http://www.apta.org>

Educational Programs

There are two types of PT programs in the United States, a Master's Degree in Physical Therapy and a Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT). As you can see from the table below there is not a great deal of difference in the length of time required to complete both programs.

Physical Therapy Program (selected statistics*)	Masters Program	Doctor of Physical Therapy
Length of Programs (from start to finish)	2 to 2.5 years	3 years

The trend among schools in the United States is moving toward offering only DPT programs. Costs of attending private schools versus public schools are listed below. The average GPA of student enrolled in programs is 3.3. After graduating from an accredited physical therapist educational program, therapists must pass a licensure exam before they can practice.

Physical Therapy Program (selected statistics*)	Public School (in State)	Private School
*Annual Tuition Fees for 2013	\$14,427.00	\$31,716.00

**Data provided by the American Physical Therapy Association*

About 212 schools nationwide offer programs in physical therapy, and six are located in Georgia

- Georgia State University
- Augusta State
- Emory University
- Armstrong State University
- Mercer University
- University of North Georgia

Each requires that students have a bachelor's degree with a complement of biology and physics courses in order to apply for admission to their program. More complete information on these schools can be found at the VSU Department of Biology website www.valdosta.edu/biology. Click on the advising button.

Consortium Requirements for Doctor of Physical Therapy Program at Armstrong Atlantic, MCG, N. Georgia College and State University.

Requirements

- All prerequisite coursework must be completed at a grade of “C” or better.
- Bachelors degree
- Full academic year of the following courses
 - General chemistry
 - General physics with laboratory
 - Human anatomy and physiology with laboratory
 - Principles of biology or zoology with laboratory
 - Statistics (both an introduction to descriptive and inferential statistics)
 - Social sciences (two courses)
- GPA minimum of 2.8 overall
- GPA minimum of 2.75 in the prerequisites
- GRE score of 900 combined verbal and quantitative for provisional admission (minimum of 400 is required in both categories)
- 100 hours minimum observing physical therapists in a variety of PT clinical settings
- Three references that focus on the applicants generic abilities for clinical work rather than just their academic ability. These should be from rehabilitation professionals.

Georgia State University

Requirements

- Bachelors degree from accredited college or university
- Two courses in anatomy and physiology
- Two courses in physics
- Two courses in chemistry
- One course in biology
- One course in psychology
- One course in statistics
- Two courses in English composition and rhetoric
- Recommended minimum combined score of 1000 for GRE
- Minimum science and math GPA of 2.75
- Documentation of 80 hours of volunteer or work experience in two different physical therapy practice settings (divided in any manner)

Emory University Rehabilitation Medicine

Requirements

- Minimum 2.8 GPA
- GRE is required, but no minimum has been established, but average scores of successful applicants in 2004 were 1140 combined
- Preference is given to students with practical experience in physical therapy
- Prerequisite courses include three semester hours of human anatomy (w/lab)
- Three semester hours of human physiology (w/lab)
- Four semester hours of physics and a basic statistics course.