



# Pre-Physical Therapy

Physical therapists, or PTs, are health care professionals who evaluate and treat people with health problems resulting from injury, disease, or biomechanical dysfunction. Physical therapists are integral members of the primary care team and are involved in prevention of disability and promotion of positive health. They are also acting consultants in restorative care. Physical Therapists evaluate and treat people of all ages with issues related to normal body movement resulting from injury, disease, disorders, or other conditions. The function of therapy is to relieve pain, restore strength, flexibility, and movement.

Physical Therapy practice today is based on well-developed body of scientific and clinical knowledge. Physical therapists apply knowledge from the basic, behavioral, and social sciences. Physical therapists must also demonstrate effective communication skills. Insight and sensitivity to the unique needs of diverse populations are essential to effectively maximize the individual's functional potential in society. Physical Therapists are employed in a variety of settings, including hospitals, private physical therapy offices, community health centers, industrial health centers, sports facilities, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, home health agencies, schools, research institutions, or teach in colleges or universities. They work with other health care providers such as physicians, occupational therapists, nurses, mental health professionals, and speech pathologists and audiologists.

## Taking the Right Classes

Academic preparation for Physical Therapy school begins with selecting courses that meet the Pre-PT requirements as an undergraduate in college. Although each school independently decides upon its own PT requirements course list, most schools will require the courses listed below. Note: some programs require some additional courses as well. For the most accurate list of courses required by individual schools, check with the school's admissions office or Web site.

### Pre-PT Requirements for Most U.S. Physical Therapy programs

1 year of English	ENGL G100 + 110
1 year of chemistry (with laboratory)	CHEM G180 + G185
1 year of physics (with laboratory)	PHYS G120 + G125
1 semester of Human Biology	BIOL G220
1 semester of Human Physiology	BIOL G225
1 semester of Intro Psychology	PSY G100
1 additional semester of Psychology	PSY G118 or G255 (course required varies by school)
1 semester of statistics	MATH G160
1 year of biology (with laboratory)	BIOL G180 + G182 (requirement varies by school)
1 semester of Neurobiology (Neuroanatomy, Neurophysiology)	Upper Division Course: Taken at University
Exercise Physiology	Upper Division Course: Taken at University
Athletic Training	Highly Recommended
Nutrition	Highly Recommended
Kinesiology/Biomechanics	Highly Recommended
Computer Skills	Highly Recommended
Other Coursework: (Philosophy/Ethics, Communications)	Highly Recommended
Clinical Hours	40-100+ Required hours vary. Check individual schools.

## Choosing the Best Major

What is the best major for Pre-Physical Therapy students? The answer is: *there is no best major*. Choose a major that you find most interesting, challenging and satisfying. You should study subjects that you really enjoy, and avoid choosing a major because it might "look good" on your application. No points are given for the major that you choose, however, you will probably perform better in a major that captures your interests. Many students choose to major in the biological sciences or kinesiology because the requirements for these degrees are very similar to Physical Therapy school admission requirements. If you decide to pursue a non-science major, then your strong performance in the Pre-PT requirements will be crucial.

## Important for Community College Students

If you complete all of your pre-PT requirements at community college, it may be in your best interest to take several upper-division science classes at the four-year institution to which you transfer. Performing well in upper-division science courses further demonstrates your ability to handle the rigorous science-based coursework found in Physical Therapy school. If you are not a science major, it may still be important for you to take additional science courses beyond the minimum requirements to further support application to PT-schools.

## GRE Preparation

The Graduate Record Exam (GRE) is a standardized examination that most U.S. Physical Therapy Schools require for admissions. The GRE is offered several times a year and it can play a very significant role in the application process. Most all colleges will require the GRE with the Analytical Writing portion, as well as the Biology Subject Exam.

## Clinical Experience

Physical Therapy schools will require a minimum number of clinical hours in preparation for the curriculum. Most campuses require a minimum of 40-100 hours of clinical experience, with a preference for in-patient facilities. Many applicants will far exceed the minimum number of hours required.

## Letters of Recommendation

Most campuses will require three (3) letters of recommendation. One must be from a physical therapist, and a second from an academic professor. The third can be from another PT, or other professional of your choices. Check the school's specific requirements for this.

## Physical Therapy School Application Process

1. Meet minimum Requirements: Bachelor's degree for most all applicants, prerequisite coursework, GRE scores
2. Apply to universities with all documentation required (GRE scores, letters of recommendation, documentation of clinical hours included).
3. Be invited to interview with selected university committees
4. Get a letter of "Acceptance", "Denial", or "Waitlist"
5. Matriculate to the university of choice where final acceptance was granted.

**Physical Therapy Schools:** <http://aptaapps.apta.org/accreditedschoolsdirectory/AllPrograms.aspx?UniqueKey=>

There are over 200 PT programs in the United States, and fourteen (15) Physical Therapy schools in California.

<sup>1</sup>Azuza Pacific University: <http://www.apu.edu/bas/physicaltherapy/dpt/>

CSU Fresno: <http://www.fresnostate.edu/chhs/physical-therapy/>

<sup>1</sup>CSU Long Beach: <http://www.csulb.edu/colleges/chhs/departments/physical-therapy/>

*Avg GPA: 3.66 / 3.73 Sci*

CSU Northridge: <http://www.csun.edu/health-human-development/physical-therapy/>

*Avg GPA: 3.65 / 3.63 Sci*

CSU Sacramento: <http://www.csus.edu/hhs/pt/>

Chapman University: <http://chapman.edu/crean/academic-programs/graduate-programs/physical-therapy/index.aspx>

Loma Linda University: <http://www.llu.edu/allied-health/sahp/pt/programs.page>

*Min GPA: 3.4 / 3.7 Avg*

Mount St. Mary's College: <https://www.msmu.edu/graduate-programs/physical-therapy/>

Samuel Merritt College: [http://www.samuelmerritt.edu/physical\\_therapy](http://www.samuelmerritt.edu/physical_therapy)

*GPA range: 3.41 – 3.72 / 3.25 – 3.64 Sci*

University of the Pacific: <http://www.pacific.edu/Academics/Schools-and-Colleges/Thomas-J-Long-School-of-Pharmacy-and-Health-Sciences.html>

University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences: <https://www.usa.edu/p38-42-Doctor-of-Physical-Therapy.aspx> *GPA range: 3.3 – 3.7*

San Diego State University: <https://ens.sdsu.edu/dpt/>

San Francisco State University/ UC San Francisco: <http://ptrehab.ucsf.edu/ucsf/sfu-doctor-physical-therapy-dpt>

USC: <http://pt.usc.edu/>

Western University of Health Sciences: <http://www.westernu.edu/allied-health/allied-health-dpt/>

<sup>1</sup>Cannot use AP for prerequisite coursework at this campus.

**Degrees Offered:** Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT): Most programs require three years of education including didactic work and clinical training in various health care settings

**Minimum GPA:** required for applying is 3.0

**Average GPA** for admission to PT Schools: 3.5

**Residency Status:** US citizen or permanent resident **Median Income:** \$84,020

## Additional Resources:

American Physical Therapy Association (ATPA): <http://www.apta.org>

APTA Accredited Programs: <http://www.apta.org/apta/directories/accreditedschools.aspx?navID=10737423273>

Physical Therapy Common Application Service (PTCAS): <http://www.ptcas.org>

GRE: <http://www.ets.org/gre/>