Introduction to Physical Therapy
Physical therapy is treatment provided by a physical therapist or physical therapist assistant that helps people improve their movement and physical function, manage pain and other chronic conditions, and recover from and prevent injury and chronic disease.
Physical Therapists Are Movement Experts

• Licensed doctors who **examine**, **diagnose**, and **treat** movement dysfunction.

• Help people impacted by disease, injury, and disability.

• Prevent movement loss and promote wellness.

• Use therapeutic exercise, modalities, assistive devices, patient education, and evidence-based research to treat patients.
Physical Therapist Assistants Collaborate With PTs

- Educated and **licensed or certified clinicians**.

- Provide physical therapy services **under the direction and supervision of a licensed physical therapist**.

- Implement components of patient care, obtain data related to the treatments provided, and collaborate with physical therapists to modify care, as necessary.

- Physical therapist assistants are not the same as physical therapy aides.
Physical Therapy Education
There Are Two Physical Therapy Career Pathways

Pathway to DPT
- High school diploma or GED
- Bachelor’s degree
- Three-year DPT degree*
- DPT licensure exam

* Some DPT programs offer freshman entry

Pathway to PTA
- High school diploma or GED
- Two-year associate degree
- PTA licensure exam
Pathway to DPT

High school diploma or GED

Bachelor’s degree

Three-year DPT degree*

DPT licensure exam

* Some DPT programs offer freshman entry
## DPT Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Commitment</th>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Applying</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Degree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree (~4 years)</td>
<td>Strong science background</td>
<td>PTCAS</td>
<td>Didactic/Lab</td>
<td>Doctor of physical therapy degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-year DPT program</td>
<td>Understanding of the profession (<a href="http://www.apta.org">www.apta.org</a>)</td>
<td>Application opens in July</td>
<td>Clinical</td>
<td>NPTE licensure exam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Primary Content Areas in DPT Curriculum

- Biology
- Anatomy/physiology
- Cellular histology
- Exercise physiology
- Biomechanics/kinesiology
- Neuroscience
- Pharmacology/pathology
- Ethics/values
- Management sciences
- Communication
- Sociology/behavioral sciences
- Clinical reasoning
- Evidence-based practice
- Cardiovascular and pulmonary
- Endocrine and metabolic
- Musculoskeletal
Common DPT Application Requirements

- Prerequisite Courses
- GRE
- Observation Hours
- Letters of Recommendation
- Supplemental Application
- www.PTCAS.org
Pathway to PTA

High school diploma or GED

Two-year associate degree

PTA licensure exam
PTA Education

**Time Commitment**
- High School
- 2-year PTA program

**Preparation**
- Science background
- Understanding of profession

**Applying**
- PTACAS
- Individual program applications

**Curriculum**
- Didactic/lab
- Clinical

**Degree**
- Associate degree
- Licensure exam / certification
Some Primary Content Areas in PTA Curriculum

- Anatomy/physiology
- Exercise physiology
- Biomechanics
- Kinesiology
- Neuroscience
- Clinical pathology
- Ethics/values
- Behavioral sciences
Common PTA Application Requirements

- Prerequisite Course(s)
- Observation Hours
- Letters of Recommendation
- Official Transcripts
- Application Fees/Fee Waiver

www.APTA.org or www.CAPTEonline.org
General Application Tips

**Do not ...**
- Wait until the deadline to apply.
- Submit incorrect information.
- Take a passive approach to the application process.

**Do ...**
- Apply early.
- Stay organized.
- Pay attention to detail.
- Be proactive and specific.
Professional Opportunities
DPT Professional Opportunities

- Residency
- Fellowship
- Leadership development
- Board Certified Specialist
- Clinical instructor credential
- Postprofessional degree
As a Physical Therapist You Can Be a ….

• Clinical practitioner.
• Board-certified specialist.
• PT resident.
• PT fellow.
• Professor/program director.
• Researcher.
• Professional advocate.
• APTA staff/CEO/Board member.
• Travel PT.
• Entrepreneur.
• Influencer.
• More …
PTA Career Development - Advanced Proficiency Pathway Program

Acute Care
Cardio/Pulmonary
Geriatrics
Orthopedics

Oncology
Pediatrics
Wound Management
Why Choose Physical Therapy?
Movement Is Essential to Life

PTs and PTAs optimize quality of life by focusing on movement loss prevention and optimal movement performance.
Boston Marathon bombing survivor Adrianne Haslet thought her quality of life would be a zero. Her physical therapist and the rest of her health care team helped Adrianne to move and to believe again.
PT is a Personally, Professionally, and Financially Rewarding Career!

• Top-ranked health care profession
• Growing profession
• Median salaries: $89,499 (PT) and $58,520 (PTA)
• Fosters relationships with patients
• Allows you to see the direct impact and benefit of your work
What You Can Do Now
Start
Preparing
Now!

Do your research
Observe a PT or PTA
Diversify your experience
Find a mentor
Review anatomy and physiology
Build a strong science foundation
Resources
APTA Helpful Resources

American Physical Therapy Association (APTA)
apta.org

Physical Therapist Centralized Application Service (PTCAS)
ptcas.org

Physical Therapist Assistant Centralized Application Service (PTACAS)
ptacas.liaisoncas.com

Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE)
capteonline.org

APTA Financial Solutions Center
enrich.apta.org/

Questions about PT Careers or Pathway to PT/PTA
studentrecruitment@apta.org
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@American Physical Therapy Association
Questions & Answers
Thank You
Building a community that advances the profession of physical therapy to improve the health of society.