

# Your guide to giving a careers talk on occupational therapy



This guide is to help you give a talk to school or college students about choosing occupational therapy as a career. It works alongside the school presentation provided as a PowerPoint file.

The talk will take around 20 to 30 minutes. It could be a little longer or shorter depending on how much you personalise it and how much you interact with the students.

As well as providing an overview about what occupational therapy is, students will be interested to hear your story. There are several opportunities where you can personalise the talk.

These speaker notes provide you with a guide to what to say on each slide as well as suggestions for how you can interact with the students. The students are more likely to be engaged in your talk if you involve them.

## Slide 1



This is your opening slide. The text below provides suggestions for what you can say. Any text in *italics* is an opportunity to ask questions / interact with the students.

- Hi I'm [name] and I'm here to talk with you about occupational therapy and why it's a great career.
- *Has anyone heard of or met with an occupational therapist?*
- We are health professionals and over the next [20 / 30 minutes] I'll tell you a bit about what we do, who we work with and the types of places we work, as well as why I think it's a great career.

## Slide 2



This slide is in three parts so that you first only see the question 'what does occupation mean'. This is so you can ask the students what they think before giving them the answer.

- *What do you think occupation means?*



## Slide 3

What does 'occupation' mean?

Occupation refers to the everyday activities that allow people to live independently and have a sense of identity.

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You then reveal the answer and talk through what it means.

- Occupation doesn't just refer to the jobs people do. It also refers to the everyday activities we do to look after ourselves and that give a sense of purpose to our lives.
- It could refer to anything from getting out of bed in the morning through to getting together with friends.
- As an occupational therapist, you support people who find some areas of life difficult.
- That means talking to them to understand their needs, seeing the challenges through their eyes, and helping them find ways to overcome those challenges.
- It makes this an incredibly rewarding profession. It doesn't get much better than knowing you've helped someone to live their life to its fullest.

## Slide 4

What does 'occupation' mean?

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What activities matter to you?

Next we show them some examples of occupations and ask them to give some others.

- Occupation could be getting together with family for meals, playing games with a friend, working or taking care of someone or simply getting dressed in the morning.
- *What other activities could it cover? What ones matter to you?*

## Slide 5

**What do occupational therapists do?**

We look at the world through the eyes of other people, focus on the areas of life they find difficult or challenging, then help them find a way to overcome those challenges.

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It's all about problem-solving, creativity and working with an individual to:

- Understand what they want to achieve
- Get to grips with the issues they face
- Work with them to find out what kind of support they need

**This is your chance to talk about what the job covers.**

- Occupational therapy is a career centred on people.
- We try to look at the world through the eyes of other people, focus on the areas of life they find difficult or challenging, then help them find a way to overcome those challenges.
- We help people recovering from an illness or accident to get back on their feet, we help children to develop the skills and confidence they need to get on in life and empower older people to be more independent.
- Our job encompasses areas like anatomy and physiology, psychology, sociology, medicine, learning disabilities and mental health.
- We look at how different health conditions, environmental factors, activities and life events can impact upon people's sense of self, their relationships and their careers.
- Then we work together with each individual to find the best way forward.

## Slide 6

**Who do occupational therapists help?**

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Who else could we work with?

**Here you can talk about the variety of the job, specifically the type of people an occupational therapist can work with.**

- As an occupational therapist, you can have a profound and positive impact on the lives of people from all walks of life and of all ages.
- You could be supporting anyone from babies (even before they're born) through to working-age adults and older members of the community.
- If anyone is having difficulties undertaking the activities they need or want to do, occupational therapists find the best ways forward.
  - Photo 1 - Children and young people: Occupational therapists help babies, infants, children and young people to grow, learn, have fun, socialise and play so they can develop, thrive and reach their full potential. This could be supporting them to become more self-sufficient when it comes to things like eating.



- Photo 2 - People with physical disabilities: Occupational therapists help people with physical disabilities to carry out their daily activities and pursue their interests. This could be making changes in their homes or creating prosthetics.
- Photo 3 - Older people: Occupational therapists have a crucial role to play in enabling older people to continue doing the daily activities that maintain their health and wellbeing.
- *Who else could we work with?*
- People with learning disabilities: We support people with all types of learning disabilities to help them live as independently as possible. This could be looking at everyday activities like cooking through to parenting skills.
- People with mental health issues: We enable people to develop a personally satisfying routine of everyday activities that creates a sense of purpose and enhances the person's recovery journey. This can include everything from self-care to helping people to apply for jobs.

## Slide 7

Where do occupational therapists work?

Where else could we work?

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The slide features a purple background with a white speech bubble at the top left containing the text 'Where do occupational therapists work?'. Below this are three small photographs: the first shows a therapist assisting a young man with a prosthetic arm; the second shows a therapist working with an elderly person in a care home; the third shows a therapist in a white coat talking to a man in a suit. At the bottom, the text 'Where else could we work?' is displayed in white. The Royal College of Occupational Therapists logo is in the top right corner.

**A bit more about the variety, but this time about the different environments you can work in.**

- This is a career that could see you working in a range of interesting and rewarding environments, including hospitals, out in the community and in places where people work.
- *Where else do you think occupational therapists could work?*
- Other examples include - GP surgeries, care homes, prisons, schools, universities, employment, local authorities and charities.



## Slides 9 and 10

Could you be an occupational therapist?

Which car would you remove from the traffic jam to get all the vehicles moving forwards again?



This is a fun brain teaser to see if people are problem solvers.

The answer is car 3. It's the only car you can move and all the cars will go forward in sequence.

Could you be an occupational therapist?

Which car would you remove from the traffic jam to get all the vehicles moving forwards again?



- Which car would you remove from the traffic jam below to get all the vehicles moving forward again?

## Slide 11

Could you be an occupational therapist?

If your answer to any of these questions is 'yes', then occupational therapy could be the perfect career for you.

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- Are you a problem solver?
- Are you a people person?
- Do you get a buzz out of helping people?

More interaction here – depending on how you are giving your talk, you could ask the students to raise their hand in answer to each question.

- Are you a problem solver, people person, or good at sizing up situations? Do you get a buzz out of helping people?
- If you answered car three to the previous slide then you are likely to be a problem solver.
- *Is your answer 'yes', to any of these?*
- Then occupational therapy could be the perfect career for you.



## Slide 12

How do you become an occupational therapist?

There are two direct routes:

1. Apprenticeship (degree level)
2. Degree

Now it's time to talk about how you can become an occupational therapist. If you haven't already you can share your story.

- There are two ways you can study to become an occupational therapist.
- You can either go to University and get a degree and do a degree level apprenticeship.
- There are over 35 universities across the country you could study at.
- A full time degree course in England, Wales and Northern Ireland takes three years and four years in Scotland. There are also part time course available.
- Or you might prefer to work while you study, in which case a degree level apprenticeship might suit you.

## Slide 13

What should I study

**Step 1:** GSCEs, or equivalent  
English language and Maths are essential.  
A science subject would also be good.

**Step 2:** A-levels, Welsh Baccalaureate, Scottish Highers or Irish Leaving Certificate  
Not all Universities specify subjects.  
Human biology, health and social care, psychology or social sciences would be good subjects.  
A BTEC Diploma in a health and social care related subject or an access course are other options.

You can give some information here, but the entry criteria for each course varies, so we can't be specific on grades.

- The grades and qualifications you'll need to get a place on a course vary, so we'd recommend visiting the websites of the universities you're interested in.
- To start with you'll need English language and Maths GSCE (or the equivalent), a science subject is also a good idea.
- Then when you are looking at either [A-levels, Welsh Baccalaureate, Scottish Highers or Irish Leaving Certificate] human biology, health and social care, psychology or social sciences would be good subjects.
- Not all Universities specify subjects and the grades you will need will vary depending on where you want to study.
- Other options include a BTEC Diploma in a health and social care related subject or an access course are other options.
- And if you want to go down the apprenticeship option there is more flexibility on the qualifications you need.



## Slide 14



**This is it, the last slide.**

**Before you wrap up, ask if they have any questions and suggest they visit our new career website.**

- If you'd like to find out more you can go to our careers website where there is more information.
- *But first I can answer your questions. Is there anything more you'd like to know about being an Occupational Therapist?*
- Thank you for your time today. I hope I've managed to give you a bit of an insight into why I think being an occupational therapist is a great career.