



## Quick Facts: Physical Therapy (DPT)

<p><b>Is this career right for you?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you interested in how the human body works and moves?</li> <li>• Do you want to interact directly with patients and their families or caregivers?</li> <li>• Are you interested in a hands-on career?</li> <li>• Are you an effective communicator?</li> <li>• Do you have good interpersonal skills?</li> <li>• Can you motivate people?</li> <li>• Do you excel in science?</li> </ul>
<p><b>What do PTs do?</b></p>	<p>Physical therapists are evidence-based healthcare professionals who diagnose and treat individuals of all ages who have medical problems or other health-related conditions that limit their abilities to move and perform functional activities in their daily lives.</p> <p>They offer cost-effective treatment that improves mobility and relieves pain, reduces the need for surgery and prescription drugs, and allows patients to participate in a recovery plan designed for their specific needs. In addition, physical therapists work with individuals to prevent the loss of mobility before it occurs by developing fitness and wellness-oriented programs for healthier and more active lifestyles.</p>
<p><b>Degree</b></p>	<p>Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT)</p> <p><i>Master of Physical Therapy/Master of Science in Physical Therapy degrees are no longer offered to new students in the United States.</i></p>
<p><b>Length of Professional Training</b></p>	<p>The length of professional DPT programs is typically 3 years. After graduating from your DPT program and becoming a licensed physical therapist, you may choose to pursue a residency or fellowship program to enhance your knowledge and practice in a defined area of clinical practice.</p>
<p><b>Pre-PT Clinical Experience</b></p>	<p>Many DPT programs require applicants to have a certain number of volunteer or paid PT experiences working with patients under the supervision of a licensed physical therapist. The program may specify the settings and types of experiences required; refer to each school's website to learn more about their specific expectations regarding amount and type of clinical experience.</p> <p>As a general guideline, you should seek out depth of experience in at least one clinical setting, but also engage in shadowing in other settings, including the following (at least the top three, below):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acute care hospital setting</li> <li>• free-standing physical therapy clinic or hospital outpatient clinic</li> <li>• extended care facility/skilled nursing facility/nursing home</li> <li>• rehabilitation facility</li> <li>• home health care</li> </ul> <p>Most successful applicants have spent <i>at least one year</i> volunteering as a PT aide (typically ~4 h/wk) in a single setting by the time they submit their PTCAS application and have spent at least a couple of days each with at least two other PTs who work in different settings.</p>

<p><b>Other Desired Traits and Experiences</b></p>	<p>Refer to the <b>List of Core Competencies for Pre-Health Students</b>, taking note that PT programs especially emphasize the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Service Orientation:</b> Physical therapists typically have strong altruistic motivations. Most successful applicants have consistently engaged in paid and volunteer positions involving non-clinical service to others since high school. Examples include retail/restaurant jobs, working as a tutor, and volunteering in roles that allows you to directly help others who are in need. Greater consideration is given to long-term efforts that exemplify the applicant's dedication and depth of commitment to the service chosen.</li> <li>• <b>Cultural Sensitivity:</b> Every physical therapist cares for patients from a wide variety of racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Thus, a history of experiences with people of diverse backgrounds is valued. Such experiences may include living abroad for a period of time, involvement with multicultural organizations, or other volunteer or paid positions that have allowed you to understand and appreciate people whose backgrounds and belief systems are quite different from your own.</li> <li>• <b>Effective Teamwork and Leadership:</b> Physical therapists must tactfully influence the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of their patients. For this reason, PT programs value a history of serving as a leader of a team of people in an organized environment (such as serving as a teaching assistant, a resident assistant in a dormitory, a wilderness guide, a manager at work, the captain of an athletic team, or an officer in the military). Likewise, physical therapists often are required to collaborate closely with others on their medical team, so PT programs look for a past history of collaborating successfully with others on a team in a professional setting (such as in research, business, etc.).</li> </ul>
<p><b>GPA</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mean <i>cumulative</i> GPA of accepted students nationwide: 3.6</li> <li>• Mean <i>science*</i> GPA of accepted students nationwide: 3.4</li> </ul> <p>Although it is ideal to apply with mean cumulative and science GPAs at or above the nationwide means for accepted students, you can become a strong candidate with lower GPAs <i>if your recent academic history demonstrates a long-term trend of academic success.</i></p> <p>If your cumulative and/or science GPAs are currently below the means for accepted students, you can still become a competitive applicant if <i>each</i> of your term GPAs <i>for the four consecutive terms leading up to the time of application</i> are at or above the values listed above. If you have already completed the prerequisites, consider taking completing additional semesters with upper-division science elective courses or completing a one-year pre-health master's program before applying to PT programs.</p> <p><i>*Science GPA is defined as your average GPA in all biology, chemistry, and physics courses. (CU Boulder prefixes of EBIO, IPHY, MCDB, NRSC, CHEM, and PHYS.) Writing and Statistics courses taken in these departments do not count toward your science GPA.</i></p>
<p><b>Admissions Test</b></p>	<p>GRE (Graduate Record Exam) General Test</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal Reasoning</li> <li>• Quantitative Reasoning</li> <li>• Writing Sample</li> </ul> <p>Aim to earn a GRE score that is near the mean for admitted students for your schools of interest (typically at or above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile on each section, though some schools have much higher mean scores).</p> <p>On average, successful GRE test-takers devote a total of about 150 hours to GRE prep.</p>

<b>Common Application</b>	The Physical Therapist Centralized Application Service: PTCAS.org
<b>Timing of Application</b>	<p>Applications are due in the fall of the year before your intended matriculation, but specific deadlines vary from school to school. Some schools may participate in an early decision option; see each school's website for information.</p> <p>Many physical therapy programs conduct admissions on a rolling basis, which gives preference to candidates who apply early in the application season. PTCAS opens around July 1 each year for the following year's entering class. For your best chance of admission in any given year, you should submit your PTCAS application by mid-August.</p>
<b>Application Fee Assistance</b>	<p>A limited number of PTCAS application fee waivers are available to financially disadvantaged applicants and are granted on a first-come, first-served basis, so you should apply at the very beginning of the application cycle if you think you may qualify. Note: Your fee waiver request must be received and processed <i>before</i> you submit your PTCAS application. If the fee waiver is granted, you <i>must</i> submit your PTCAS application within 14 days.</p> <p>If you receive a fee waiver, you may apply to one program through PTCAS for free. If you choose to apply to more than one program, you will pay the regular fee for each additional designation. You also will be responsible for paying each school's supplementary application fee.</p>
<b>Number of schools to which to apply</b>	Nationwide, applicants to D.P.T. programs apply to an average of six schools.
<b>Reference Guide for School Selection</b>	<p>PTCAS School Directory: <a href="http://www.ptcas.org/DirectoryProgramsList/">http://www.ptcas.org/DirectoryProgramsList/</a></p> <p><i>A note about public vs. private PT programs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In general, most applicants have their best chance of admission at the public school(s) in their state of residency and at private schools.</li> <li>• At private schools, all applicants are in the same evaluation pool. In contrast, most public PT programs give strong preference to applicants who are residents of their state. This preference works in your favor at your in-state school(s) but against you at all other public schools, where all out-of-state applicants compete for the small number of seats allocated for out-of-staters.</li> </ul> <p><i>Another note about the geographical distribution of PT programs and the competitiveness of their admissions processes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a general trend, PT programs located in the western U.S. tend to have the most competitive admissions processes. In the eastern U.S., there are far more PT programs per capita, so they tend to have less-competitive admissions processes.</li> </ul>
<b>Letters of Recommendation</b>	<p>Each PT program sets its own guidelines regarding letters of evaluation; refer to the PTCAS School Directory or each program's website for details. <b>Please provide each of your evaluators with a copy of our <i>Pre-Health Guidelines to Recommenders form</i>.</b></p> <p>As a general guideline, the following assortment meets most schools' requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One science* faculty member, ideally one who has taught you in a lecture or seminar course and thus can comment upon your intellectual engagement as a student.</li> <li>• One physical therapist with whom you have worked or volunteered in a clinical setting on a regular basis for at least several months</li> <li>• One supervisor from a long-term work or volunteer experience who can attest to your intrapersonal and interpersonal skills.</li> </ul> <p>*Science, for the purposes of applying to PT programs, is defined as Biology, Chemistry, and Physics (CU Boulder prefixes: MCDB, EBIO, IPHY, NRSC, CHEM, PHYS; note that writing and statistics courses taken in these departments are not considered "science.")</p>