

Occupational Therapists (OTs) and FASD

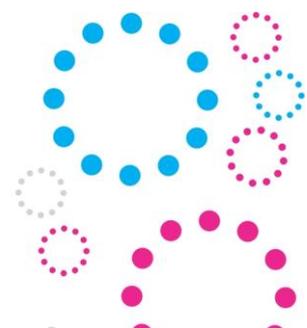
Occupational Therapists support individuals to successfully participate in meaningful activities of daily life. This can include developing a person's skills in the areas of motor, learning, social, sensory, or independent living, making changes to the way an activity is completed, or by making the environment more supportive.

The term "occupation" refers to our routines and the things we do to occupy our time. Occupations are the things we need, want or are expected to do. For an infant, this includes feeding, sleeping, playing, bonding with caregivers, and typical developmental milestones. For a child, occupations include playing, participation in childcare or school, daily self-care tasks, making friends, and engaging in sports or hobbies. An adult's occupations might include work, study, driving, shopping, looking after their health, household chores, and caring for others.

Occupational Therapists (OTs) will often:

- Look at all the requirements of a task and break it into small steps
- Investigate what is causing problems for your child – e.g., balance, strength, coordination, memory, concentration, attention, self-regulation, or mood
- Assess the environment – e.g., available or necessary tools, physical layout, distractions, lighting, and sound
- Develop an individual plan for your child with strategies targeted to develop and improve their physical abilities such as precision motor control, bilateral coordination, balance skills, or sensory processing abilities
- Modify the tools used and the environment to support the child's ability to participate in daily tasks at home, school and in the community

Activities of Daily Living	Skills Required	OT Strategies	Goals
Self-Care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mealtimes – eating, drinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motor skills – gross, fine, and visual • Sensory processing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the skills and factors that are a person's strengths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase participation in meaningful activities



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sleeping • Bathing and dressing • Toileting • Grooming (i.e., brushing teeth) <p>Productivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going to school or childcare • Learning tasks • Household chores • Attending work • Going shopping • Learning to drive <p>Leisure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing with toys/objects • Exploring • Playing sport or musical instruments • Enjoying hobbies • Spending time with friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive skills – problem solving, planning, imagination • Active listening • Behavioural and social skills • Attention and concentration • Graphic skills – handwriting, drawing • Cooperation and working with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the steps in the task that a person is finding difficult • Determine how the environment helps or makes things more difficult • Build on strengths by teaching and practicing different ways of doing things • Develop skills that are the building-blocks for more complex tasks • Find ways to do tasks differently • Change the environment to reduce barriers or challenges • Use equipment and aids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the impact of individual differences in daily routines • Increase engagement and success experienced at home, school, and in community • Increase independence • Support positive friendships and social interactions • Reduce frustration and increase enjoyment during daily routines
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Many strategies used by OTs will achieve multiple goals – for example, a visual timetable reduces the demand on a child to follow verbal instructions, but still supports them to learn how to follow instructions and develop independence. Some children will only need environmental modifications until they have learnt a new skill – others will need these to be ongoing.



General OT interventions with children			
Issue	Why is problem occurring	Goal of intervention	Technique (<i>Direct/Capacity Building Strategies or Indirect/Environmental Strategies</i>)
Poor handwriting	Fine motor, visual motor, or other processing difficulties; difficulty in planning and doing physical movements	To involve other senses (visual, auditory, tactile, proprioceptive) to increase learning capacity	Recommending multisensory techniques for teaching handwriting (e.g., textured paper with raised lines, writing letters with a hose on a fence, making letters with body shapes)
		To provide a framework to assist child to plan and successfully execute movements	The “CO-OP” approach - cognitive based problem-solving approach where OT works with child and family to promote skill development using the steps: GOAL – PLAN – DO – CHECK
	Poor pencil grip, weakness in core muscles (hard to sit at table) or hand muscle weakness	To build core strength and fine motor muscles and coordination to improve handwriting	Exercises to strengthen muscles, using supportive seating to improve posture, using pencil grips or thicker pencils
	Poor pencil grip, weakness in core muscles (hard to sit at table) or hand muscle weakness	To find other ways to perform a task e.g., schoolwork that does not require handwriting	Using a keyboard or iPad, using dictation software, providing child with written information as well as verbal to reduce need for notetaking in class, emailing homework.
	Has difficulty paying attention and focussing on handwriting	Maximise child’s potential to focus on the task	Recommending strategies, e.g., allow child to do physical activity before attempting handwriting task; taking frequent breaks. Programs such as “ALERT” program to develop child’s skills in self-regulation
Constantly moving, touching things, bumping into things. Avoidant of noises, fearful, avoids being close to others, doesn’t like certain clothes	Difficulty processing sensory input (touch, taste, smell, sound, sight, movement), leading to sensory seeking/avoiding behaviours	Develop the child’s ability to cope with sensory input	“Sensory diet” – structured/timed activities such as trampolining, using big muscles, swinging, wearing a weighted backpack; tactile activities such as slime or goo, deep pressure massage, chew toys, visual instructions; Increasing exposure to sensory input in a graded manner.
		Reduce the amount of sensory input the child is required to process	Reduce the noise in the room, use ear plugs or noise cancelling headphones, dim lighting, creating spaces for children to withdraw; remove tags from clothing, remove visual distractions.

Difficulty in social interactions with peers	Difficulty in planning and sequencing, emotional regulation, or social communication	Develop child's skills in interacting positively with others, including communication and self-regulation skills.	Therapy such as "Learn to Play" – OT sessions with child to increase play skills including sequencing, using role play and play scripts.
			Social Skills Groups – teaching problem solving skills, self-regulation, how to make and keep friends.
			Programs such as "Zones of Regulation" to teach self-regulation skills by teaching children to identify emotions and use tools to self-monitor and self-regulate.
		Reduce the expectations on the child to manage social situations	Recommending strategies to adapt expectations for the child, e.g., Increase supervision of play, reduce the size of the group, provide structured rather than unstructured play experiences, limit the duration of free play.

Occupational Therapists also use specific interventions targeted to the age and developmental stage of the individual. Examples include:

Interventions for Infants			
Issue	Why is problem occurring	Goal of intervention	Technique (<i>Direct/Capacity Building Strategies or Indirect/Environmental Strategies</i>)
Not using hands as expected, not reaching for or picking up toys	Poor muscle tone, weakness, poor motor control	To build skills through practice and increasing opportunity	Education for parents about positioning toys, using stimulating toys, providing lots of opportunities for practice.
Unsettled, difficult to settle	Difficulties tolerating sound, touch or light, under-developed sensory processing	To build their capacity to tolerate touch, sound, light and other sensory input	Relaxing activities, tactile therapies, designed to gradually build tolerance of touch
		To reduce the stimulation in their environment	Reducing unnecessary stimuli; creating a quiet environment, using supports to position child.

Interventions for young people			
Issue	Why is problem occurring	Goal of intervention	Technique (<i>Direct/Capacity Building Strategies or Indirect/Environmental Strategies</i>)
Difficulty managing the organisational requirements of secondary school	Difficulty with planning and sequencing	To develop the young person's planning skills	Cognitive Interventions such as the CO-OP program, ALERT program, or student support groups; explicit teaching of planning skills.
		To simplify the demands on the young person	Recommendation of tools such as planners, colour coding of books by class, using apps such as reminders, visual checklists or to do lists, decluttering and visual aids.
			Recommending teachers provide homework in printed form or email as well as verbally, emailing reminders to student about due dates
Need to develop independent skills, e.g., catching public transport, self-care, cooking and household chores	Difficulty with planning and sequencing, memory, attention	To build skills in planning and executing daily tasks	Cognitive Interventions as above
		To simplify the task	Breaking down task into steps, creating visual or electronic reminders, supervision, recommending equipment to reduce risk/errors (e.g., kitchen equipment).

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