

## Early Years Great Careers

Grow. Lead. Succeed.



### What do occupational therapists do?

Occupational therapists support health and wellbeing by assisting children and adults to regain physical functions lost as a result of disability or injury, to develop their abilities and social skills and to maintain and promote independence in their everyday lives.

Occupational therapists assess people's functional, emotional, psychological, developmental and physical capabilities and then plan and support an appropriate therapeutic program. When working with children they use recreational, remedial, social and educational activities to:

- Select and design activities that improve an affected movement or function and help children to regain personal care skills, such as eating and dressing.
- Monitor the progress of children and assist with the coordination of an effective health team.
- Assist children with disabilities to participate in education programs in schools.
- Advise on the use of specialised equipment, such as home modifications, adapted kitchen utensils, wheelchairs and other assistive technologies, which help children within their environment.
- Advise on, develop and run health education programs.

### Fast facts

- Employment opportunities for occupational therapists are excellent; there is almost no unemployment in the occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech pathology professions.
- Salaries commence at \$56,770 a year and will increase depending on experience and responsibilities.
- Occupational therapy is very diverse, with opportunities to work in many settings. With skill development there are opportunities to work as a specialist clinician or to diversify to other areas such as management, consulting, education, research and private practice.
- Occupational therapists working with children may work in hospitals, public and private health care organisations, early childhood education and care services, early childhood intervention services, community health centres, municipal councils and primary schools.

Future employment rating ★★★★★

\*Future employment growth 11% PA or more. Source: DEEWR

### What should I study at school?

Useful subjects include English, maths, biology, chemistry, health and human development, physical education, physics and VET Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance.

### What should I study at university?

**Bachelor of Occupational Therapy**  
(four years)

**Postgraduate Studies in Occupational Therapy** eg Master of Occupational Therapy Practice

**Master of Occupational Therapy**

Some degree programs may provide credits for units from Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance and Certificate IV in Allied Health Assistance.

### What are my other career and leadership options?

Once qualified, management and leadership opportunities include consulting, government and practice management roles.

Related career options include audiologist, speech pathologist, physiotherapist or rehabilitation counsellor.

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**Zanne Kawalsky** Occupational  
Therapist (early childhood intervention)

## What are your major qualifications?

I have a Bachelor of Science (Occupational Therapy).

## How long have you worked in early childhood and in your current role?

I started working with Specialist Children's Services in early childhood intervention services in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development about a year ago.

## What is a typical day?

The wonderful aspect about working in early childhood intervention is that there is no typical day. No day is the same and no day is ever boring.

In this role I work within a family centred model of practice to support children with developmental delays and disabilities in their natural learning environments. This includes visiting children in their homes, early childhood education and care services and can also involve going to the park, playgroups and attending medical appointments with the family.

I work in partnership with the child's parents and early childhood educators to provide routine-based interventions to enhance learning and development.

## What influenced your interest in an early childhood career?

I find working with children challenging and immensely satisfying. Intervention during the early years is when families

can best begin to learn how to support and nurture their child. I work in a wonderful team and feel that the service we provide makes a significant difference in giving the child the best start to life.

## What made you change to early childhood?

My previous experience includes working in disability in the community and also working in acute hospital settings. I have also worked with pre-school aged and school aged children in private practice. I changed to working in early childhood as I wanted to work with children during their formative years. It is extremely rewarding to see a child grow and develop.

## What do you enjoy most about your career in early childhood?

I love being "paid to play". Working as an occupational therapist means that there is a great balance between report writing and paperwork and also being hands-on with the child and their family. Being able to work with a child over a long period of time means that I get to establish a meaningful relationship with the child and their family.

## What is the best experience you have had as an early childhood professional?

I work in partnership with the family to set goals for their child's development, such as enabling the child to walk, go to the toilet independently and play co-operatively with other children. It is extremely gratifying when a child meets their goals.

## What would you say to others who might be considering a career in early childhood?

It is a great career that is mentally stimulating and also fun. It is a great team environment and there are many career opportunities.

## Where do you see yourself in 10 years' time?

I enjoy working with children and their families and hope to get further experience and knowledge to improve my clinical skills.

## Want to know more?

[education.vic.gov.au/earlyyears-careers](http://education.vic.gov.au/earlyyears-careers)  
[deewr.gov.au](http://deewr.gov.au)  
[myfuture.edu.au](http://myfuture.edu.au)  
[careerthatmatter.com.au](http://careerthatmatter.com.au)  
[joboutlook.gov.au](http://joboutlook.gov.au)



All indicative salaries in the document are gross before tax a year for full time employees. Indicative salary figures are taken from [http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/VPS\\_Salary\\_Rates.pdf](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/VPS_Salary_Rates.pdf), Allied Health 2.2.1. Salaries will vary depending on employer, role and Award.

Information regarding course and professional pre-requisites is of a general nature. Please consult a career practitioner and/or check with individual institutions to confirm specific course requirements.