

Overview of Preparing for a Career in Physical Therapy

First Step: Exploring Physical Therapy

- What experiences have you had that make you interested in physical therapy?
- What are your goals and expectations for a major?
- What skills do you associate with a good physical therapist? What activities/experiences would help you develop these skills?
- What can you do to learn more about careers in physical therapy?

Second Step: Getting Involved

- What are your goals and expectations for volunteer experiences? What have you learned or could you learn about yourself and other people by serving others?
- Consider the populations you have served or worked with in any capacity. Do you have breadth and depth of experience with different groups of people?
- What are your research interests? What do you want to learn through research?
- How will you gain observation hours?
- Keep track of your experiences through college (volunteering, research, paid employment, shadowing, hobbies, student organizations, study abroad). Regularly reflect on and write about the competencies (skills and personal attributes) you develop and the ways you learn and grow in the course of each experience.

Third Step: Preparing Your Application

- Do you hope to apply after your junior year, or will you be a stronger applicant after taking a gap year (or two)?
- Develop meaningful relationships with faculty and supervisors by talking with them about their work and career paths, your coursework, and your interest in physical therapy.
- Talk with an advisor at CPHA about steps of the application process the summer before you apply.

Fourth Step: Taking a Gap Year

- What would your goals and expectations be for a gap year?
- What area of your application might you strengthen during a gap year? How could you do this?

Planning Table

Fall	Spring	Summer

Pre-Physical Therapy Planning Guide

Keep in mind that course preparation varies from school to school. This is a summary of the most common requirements. The shaded courses are recommended but not required for most schools.

Course	Options at UW – Madison
General Chemistry	Two options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chemistry 103 (lecture + lab) and Chemistry 104 (lecture + lab) • Chemistry 109 (lecture + lab)
Introductory Biology	Three options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoology 101 (lecture) + Zoology 102 (lab) and an additional bioscience course (such as Genetics, Microbiology, Cell Biology, or Kinesiology) • Biology 151 (lecture + lab) and Biology 152 (lecture + lab) • Biocore
Physics	Four options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physics 103-104 (not calculus-based; lecture + lab) • Physics 207-208 (calculus-based; lecture + lab) • Physics 201-202 (for engineering students; lecture + lab) • EMA 201 and Physics 202 (for BME students; lecture + lab)
Anatomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anatomy 337 (lecture) • Anatomy 338 (lab; required by some programs)
Physiology	Two options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physiology 335 (lecture + lab) • Physiology 435 (lecture + lab)
Physiology of Exercise*	Kinesiology 314
Psychology:	Two required courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory Psychology (Psychology 202) • Abnormal Psychology (Psychology 405)
Human Development	Two required courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Development (may take HDFS 362 or Psychology 460 or Educational Psychology 320) • Adult Development (may take HDFS 363 or Psychology 464)
English, Literature, or Communications	Many options; look for literature and composition courses
Introductory Statistics	Four options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics 371 • Biostatistics 541 • Statistics 301 • Statistics course in your major, such as Psychology 210
Medical Terminology	Can be taken off campus

* The School of Physical Therapy at UW-Madison requires this course.

Resources

Tutoring resources available on UW campus

- Greater University Tutoring Services (GUTS) <http://guts.wisc.edu>
- Peer Learning Association (PLA) <https://win.wisc.edu/organization/pla>
- Chemistry Learning Center (CLC) <https://www.chem.wisc.edu/areas/clc>
- Physics Learning Center (PLC) <https://www.physics.wisc.edu/plc>
- Math Lab <https://www.math.wisc.edu/undergraduate/mathlab>
- Statistics Lab https://www.stat.wisc.edu/courses/Tutorial_Schedule
- Writing Center <http://www.writing.wisc.edu>

Professional organization

- American Physical Therapy Association <http://www.apta.org>