



Helping children to develop and thrive





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All children have a very important job to do. They have to grow, learn, socialise and play. Children do this every day by exploring the boundaries of their abilities. When they are successful, children develop and thrive and this sense of achievement makes them happy.

However, if children have learning, emotional, psychological or physical difficulties, this can hinder their ability to grow, learn, socialise and play, resulting in them not coping with basic activities such as getting dressed or brushing their teeth. Equally at school, children may have difficulty concentrating in class or lack the confidence to take part in playground games such as playing catch. This will affect their ability to learn, participate in school activities and make friends, which can be difficult, because 'fitting in' is so important to a child's self-esteem and happiness.

An occupational therapist can help

Occupational therapists (OTs) work with the child, parents and teachers to find solutions to minimise the difficulties children face, helping them get the most from life.

The table opposite provides some examples of the ways an occupational therapist can help children who have additional or special needs.





Self-care



School work



Play

How an occupational therapist can help

An OT will...

Use games and daily activities to improve finger skills to enable a child to dress themselves.

An OT will...

Enable a child who has an aversion to certain smells and tastes to enjoy new foods by improving tolerance to food tastes and smells.

An OT will...

Recommend a profiling bed to help a severely disabled child to get into and out of bed safely.

Develop activities to increase hand strength and provide equipment to help a child to hold a pencil.

Help a child who is hyperactive to concentrate in lessons.

Provide a slanted desktop for a child with co-ordination difficulties to support their posture to enable the child to complete their work.

Show the parents of a 6-month old baby with poor head control the positioning and support that will enable their baby to play on their tummy.

Guide a child with social difficulties such as autism to participate in games by teaching turn-taking and sharing.

Identify appropriate sensory toys to help a child with limited vision to be able to play.

What do occupational therapists do?

An occupational therapist will advise you on the best way to carry out daily tasks, whether it's household chores, personal care, social activities or carrying out a job that you can't do owing to poor mental or physical health, mobility problems or illness.

An occupational therapist can:

- Provide help and training in undertaking daily activities such as bathing, dressing, eating, playing and participating in a favourite hobby
- Help people with work-related stress to re-prioritise and improve their work-life balance
- Assess and recommend equipment such as mobility aids, wheelchairs and artificial limbs and, if needed, advise on special devices to help around the home, school or workplace
- Support people to remain in or return to work

How to contact an occupational therapist

Ask your GP, nurse or other health or social care professionals

To find an occupational therapist in your area, visit:

www.COT.org.uk

or telephone: **0800 389 4873**



Occupational Therapy
Helping people
to live life their way

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