

2020 COTA[®] Curriculum Textbook and Peer-Reviewed Journal Report

3 About NBCOT

4 Background

5 Purpose of the Textbook and Peer-Reviewed Journal Survey

7 Summary of the Textbook and Peer-Reviewed Journal Survey

7 Method

8 Survey Results

13 Summary of Frequently Used Textbooks

13 Summary of Frequently Used Peer-Reviewed Journals

13 Use of E-Books

14 Percentage of Textbooks and Journal Articles

15 Conclusion

16 References

About NBCOT

The National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, Inc. (NBCOT®) is the national certification body for occupational therapy professionals in the United States.

The mission of NBCOT is to serve the public interest by advancing client care and professional practice through evidence-based certification standards and the validation of knowledge essential for effective practice in occupational therapy.

Currently, 50 states, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia require NBCOT initial certification for occupational therapy state regulation (i.e., licensing).

NBCOT certification programs are accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA). NBCOT is a member of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE) as well as the International Association of Medical Regulatory Authorities (IAMRA).



Background

The Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (COTA®) certification examinations are “high stakes” exams administered at over 350 sites throughout North America, its territories, as well as internationally, and are designed to serve the public by ensuring that an individual has adequate occupational therapy knowledge for practice at the assistant level. In accordance with industry standards, NBCOT certification exams are constructed based on the results of a practice analysis. The ultimate goals of the practice analysis are to ensure a representative link of the test content to practice and to make certain the certification exam contains meaningful indicators of competence while providing evidence that supports the content validity of the exam. Therefore, each item developed for the certification exam must be a valid representation of current entry-level practice. In addition to linking items to the exam content outline, NBCOT subject matter experts, who play a key role in the item development process, are asked to cross-reference their content expertise with current and frequently used occupational therapy references, which further contributes to the validity of the content.

The COTA certification exams not only serve the public, they serve the candidates as well. Passing the certification exam represents a major career milestone, allowing the new certificant to begin a professional career with the appropriate credentials. A candidate who takes the COTA exam should only fail the exam for one reason: insufficient knowledge of occupational therapy practice at the assistant level. Therefore, as noted in the CLEAR *Principles of Fairness* (2015), the duty of the certifying body is to provide the candidate with adequate information about the testing process. This includes posting the following information on the NBCOT website: results of the practice analysis, exam content outline, test characteristics (i.e., type and number of items), computer-based testing environment, and test preparation strategies (e.g., sample items). One primary test preparation strategy is for the candidate to be aware of the common references item writers use to validate the content contained in exam items.

The COTA certification exams not only serve the public, they serve the candidates as well.

Purpose of the Textbook and Peer-Reviewed Journal Survey

The validated domains, tasks, and knowledge statements outlined in the most recent practice analysis serve as the outline for all NBCOT exam forms (NBCOT, 2018). NBCOT conducts periodic surveys to identify textbooks and peer-reviewed journals commonly used in occupational therapy educational programs. Results of the surveys are used when reviewing and updating the NBCOT exam item writer reference list. In fairness to exam candidates, NBCOT makes every effort to select textbooks and journal references that are familiar to the majority of candidates. Additionally, NBCOT posts the results of these surveys on its website to enable program directors and candidates to access this information.

Item writers are tasked with developing exam items that reflect knowledge within specific domains of the exam content outline. As items are written, the content of each item must be verified in a specific textbook or peer-reviewed journal reference. Item writers are encouraged to use reference textbooks and peer-reviewed journal articles from the NBCOT reference list. The textbooks must be the most recent edition (preferably within the last five years), and the reference must validate the knowledge needed to complete the tasks associated with a particular domain of occupational therapy assistant practice.

NBCOT posts the results of these surveys on its website to enable program directors and candidates to access this information.

While not exhaustive, **Table 1** is a list of the top 10 textbook references NBCOT item writers use for referencing and validating the content of newly developed items for the certification exams. As new texts are published and added to educational curricula, the updated references may be used

by NBCOT item writers to validate new item content. In addition to textbooks, a small number of articles from the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* have occasionally been used by NBCOT item writers to clarify, confirm, or update information appearing in entry-level OT texts.

Table 1. Alphabetical Listing of the Top 10 Textbook References Currently Used by NBCOT COTA Item Writers

Textbook Title

Boyt-Schell, B. A., & Gillen, G. (Eds.). (2019). *Willard & Spackman's occupational therapy* (13th ed.). Wolters Kluwer.

Early, M. B. (2017). *Mental health concepts & techniques for the occupational therapy assistant* (5th ed.). Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Jacobs, K., & MacRae, N. (Eds.). (2017). *Occupational therapy essentials for clinical competence* (3rd ed.). SLACK, Inc.

Lohman, H., Byers-Connon, S., & Padilla, R. L. (2018). *Occupational therapy with elders: Strategies for the COTA* (4th ed.). Mosby Elsevier.

Mahle, A. J., & Ward, A. L. (2019). *Adult physical conditions: Intervention strategies for occupational therapy assistants*. F.A. Davis.

O'Brien, J. C., & Kuhaneck, H. (2020). *Case-Smith's occupational therapy for children and adolescents* (8th ed.). Elsevier.

Pendleton, H. M., & Schultz-Krohn, W. (2018). *Pedretti's occupational therapy: Practice skills for physical dysfunction* (8th ed.). Elsevier Mosby.

Solomon, J. W., & O'Brien, J. C. (2016). *Pediatric skills for occupational therapy assistants* (4th ed.). Mosby Elsevier.

Wagenfeld, A. (2016). *Foundations of theory and practice for the occupational therapy assistant*. Wolters Kluwer –Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins.

Wagenfeld, A., & Kaldenberg, J. (Eds.). (2016). *Foundations of pediatric practice for the occupational therapy assistant* (2nd ed.). SLACK, Inc.

Summary of the Textbook and Peer-Reviewed Journal Survey

The following information summarizes the results of the Textbook and Peer-Reviewed Journal Survey conducted by NBCOT in the third quarter of 2020. The scope of this study was to survey program directors of occupational therapy assistant programs.

METHOD

In September 2020, 229 occupational therapy assistant (OTA) program directors were invited via email to complete an internet-based survey (228 associate degree programs and one baccalaureate degree program). Of those receiving the survey, 227 were accredited programs and two were developing programs. The names of the program directors and schools were obtained from a published list provided by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®). The survey invited respondents to provide information about the textbooks and journals that are required, recommended, or not used in their academic programs.

The textbooks and peer-reviewed journals included in the survey were based on

- responses to a similar survey conducted in 2018;
- feedback from OTA educators;
- recommendations from OTR and COTA subject matter experts appointed to NBCOT committees and taskforce projects; and
- an internet-based review of major occupational therapy publishing sites.

For ease of completing the survey, the textbook and peer-reviewed journal titles were formatted in American Psychological Association (APA) style and divided into the following categories: Administration and/or Management; Assistive Technology; Community-Based Practice and Health & Wellness; Comprehensive Occupational Therapy; Documentation; Gerontology-Related; Group Dynamics/Communications/Clinical Problem-Solving; Mental Health/Psychosocial; Occupational Performance/Activities-Based; Pediatric-Related; Physical Dysfunction/Physical Rehabilitation; Practice-Based Science; and Practice Standards/Theory/Ethics.

An email was sent to OTA program directors providing information about the purpose of the study, contact information for questions, the response deadline, a link for accessing the survey, and a PDF copy of the survey. Program directors were given two weeks to complete the survey, and two reminder emails were sent to encourage participation. The survey respondents were asked to select the textbooks and journals from each category that are 1) *Required* for a course; 2) *Recommended* as part of the curriculum; or 3) *Not Used* in the entry-level curriculum at their educational program. An open-response entry was also available for respondents to enter any other textbook or peer-reviewed journal used as a part of their curriculum but not listed in the survey.

Survey Results

Thirty-four percent of the OTA program directors provided complete responses to the survey. All responses were from accredited associate degree programs.

Consistent with previous surveys, NBCOT defined frequently used textbooks or peer-reviewed journals as those required and/or recommended by at least 20% of the respondents. Textbooks and peer-reviewed journals not indicated as required and/or recommended by 20% of the

respondents were not included in the results. In addition, textbooks and journals identified in the open-ended portion of the survey were included if 20% of the respondents indicated the textbook or journal was required and/or recommended. Frequently used textbooks and peer-reviewed journals for OTA programs are presented in **Tables 2 through 13**, with results indicating the percentage of responses rounded to the nearest percentage.

Table 2. Administration and/or Management Textbook		
Text Title	Course Requirement	Recommended
Jacobs, K. (2016). <i>Management and administration for the OTA: Leadership and application skills</i> . SLACK, Inc.	53%	7%

Table 3. Comprehensive Occupational Therapy Textbooks

Text Title	Course Requirement	Recommended
Clifford O'Brien, J. (2011). <i>Introduction to occupational therapy</i> (4th ed.). Mosby Elsevier.	45%	3%
Sladyk, K., & Ryan, S. E. (Eds.). (2015). <i>Ryan's occupational therapy assistant: Principles, practice issues, and techniques</i> (5th ed.). SLACK, Inc.	35%	6%
Morreale, M. J. (2015). <i>Developing clinical competence: A workbook for the OTA</i> . SLACK, Inc.	27%	21%
Atchison, B. J., & Dirette, D. K. (2017). <i>Conditions in occupational therapy: Effect on occupational performance</i> (5th ed.). Wolters Kluwer.	27%	4%
Reed, K. L. (2014). <i>Quick reference to occupational therapy</i> (3rd ed.). Pro-Ed.	26%	27%
Jacobs, K., & Simon, L. (Eds.). (2020). <i>Quick reference dictionary for occupational therapy</i> (7th ed.). SLACK, Inc.	19%	35%
Fairchild, S. L., O'Shea, R. K., & Washington, R. D. (2018). <i>Pierson and Fairchild's principles & techniques of patient care</i> (6th ed.). Elsevier.	18%	3%
Napier, B. (2011). <i>Occupational therapy fieldwork survival guide: A student planner</i> (2nd ed.). AOTA Press.	15%	12%
Lowenstein, N., & Halloran, P. (2015). <i>Case studies through the health care continuum: A workbook for the occupational therapy student</i> (2nd ed.). SLACK, Inc.	12%	22%

Table 4. Documentation Textbooks

Text Title	Course Requirement	Recommended
Morreale, M. J., & Borcharding, S. (2017). <i>The OTA's guide to documentation: Writing SOAP notes</i> (4th ed.). SLACK, Inc.	82%	12%
American Psychological Association. (2020). <i>Publication manual of the American Psychological Association</i> (7th ed.). American Psychological Association.	4%	29%

Table 5. Gerontology-Related Textbook

Text Title	Course Requirement	Recommended
Lohman, H. L., Byers-Connon, S., & Padilla, R. L. (2019). <i>Occupational therapy with elders: Strategies for the COTA</i> (4th ed.). Elsevier.	55%	3%

Table 6. Group Dynamics/Communications/Clinical Problem-Solving Textbook

Text Title	Course Requirement	Recommended
Cole, M. B. (2018). <i>Group dynamics in occupational therapy: The theoretical basis and practice application of group intervention</i> (5th ed.). SLACK, Inc.	64%	8%

Table 7. Mental Health/Psychosocial Textbooks

Text Title	Course Requirement	Recommended
Early, M. B. (2017). <i>Mental health concepts & techniques for the occupational therapy assistant</i> (5th ed.). Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.	87%	3%
American Psychiatric Association. (2013). <i>Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders</i> (5th ed.). American Psychiatric Association.	10%	36%

Table 8. Occupational Performance/Activities-Based Textbooks

Text Title	Course Requirement	Recommended
Thomas, H. (2015). <i>Occupation-based activity analysis</i> (2nd ed.). SLACK, Inc.	60%	14%
Tubbs, C. C., & Drake, M. (2017). <i>Crafts and creative media in therapy</i> (5th ed.). SLACK, Inc.	22%	8%
Cronin, A., & Mandich, M. B. (2015). <i>Human development and performance throughout the lifespan</i> (2nd ed.). Cengage Learning.	18%	3%

Table 9. Pediatric-Related Textbook

Text Title	Course Requirement	Recommended
Solomon, J. W., & O'Brien, J. C. (2016). <i>Pediatric skills for occupational therapy assistants</i> (4th ed.). Mosby Elsevier.	85%	4%

Table 10. Physical Dysfunction/Physical Rehabilitation Textbooks

Text Title	Course Requirement	Recommended
Early, M. B. (2013). <i>Physical dysfunction practice skills for the occupational therapy assistant</i> (3rd ed.). Mosby Elsevier.	54%	5%
Mahle, A. J., & Ward, A. L. (2019) <i>Adult physical conditions: Intervention strategies for occupational therapy assistants</i> . F. A. Davis.	51%	4%
Hall, C. A. (2018). <i>Occupational therapy toolkit: Treatment guides and handouts for physical disabilities and geriatrics</i> (7th ed.). Hallen House Publishing.	18%	17%

Table 11. Practice-Based Science Textbooks

Text Title	Course Requirement	Recommended
Lippert, L. S. (2017). <i>Clinical kinesiology and anatomy</i> (6th ed.). F.A. Davis Company.	36%	5%
Keough, J. L., Sain, S. J., & Roller, C. L. (2017). <i>Kinesiology for the occupational therapy assistant: Essential components of function and movement</i> (2nd ed.). SLACK, Inc.	28%	6%
Biel, A. (2019). <i>Trail guide to the body: How to locate muscles, bones and more</i> (6th ed.). Books of Discovery.	19%	12%

Table 12. Practice Standards/Theory/Ethics Textbooks

Text Title	Course Requirement	Recommended
American Occupational Therapy Association. (2020). <i>Occupational therapy practice framework: Domain and process</i> (4th ed.). Bethesda, MD: AOTA Press.	92%	5%
Wagenfeld, A. (2016). <i>Foundations of theory and practice for the occupational therapy assistant</i> . Wolters Kluwer.	14%	6%
American Occupational Therapy Association. (2020). <i>The reference manual of the official documents of the American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc.</i> (22nd ed.). AOTA Press.	8%	32%

Table 13. Peer-Reviewed Journals

Journal Title	Course Requirement	Recommended
American Journal of Occupational Therapy	63%	32%
Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy	4%	48%
British Journal of Occupational Therapy	4%	44%
Australian Occupational Therapy Journal	4%	37%
Occupational Therapy in Mental Health	3%	35%
Occupational Therapy Journal of Research: Occupation, Participation and Health	3%	31%
Gerontology	3%	23%
Physical and Occupational Therapy in Pediatrics	1%	31%
Physical and Occupational Therapy in Geriatrics	1%	29%
Journal of Allied Health	1%	24%
Journal of Hand Therapy	1%	23%
Journal of Occupational Science	1%	21%
American Journal of Psychiatry	1%	19%

SUMMARY OF FREQUENTLY USED TEXTBOOKS

Twenty-nine textbooks were cited as either required and/or recommended by at least 20% of the OTA program directors. Required textbooks indicated most often, with a response of 80% or higher, are as follows:

- *Mental health concepts & techniques for the occupational therapy assistant (5th ed.)*
- *Occupational therapy practice framework: Domain and process (4th ed.)*
- *Pediatric skills for occupational therapy assistants (4th ed.)*
- *The OTA's guide to documentation: Writing SOAP notes (4th ed.)*

No single textbook was indicated as required by 100% of the respondents. In addition, no textbooks in the Assistive Technology or Community-Based Practice sections met the inclusion criteria of being required and/or recommended by 20% of the OTA program directors. Lastly, although some program directors cited additional textbooks in the open-ended section of the survey, the textbooks were not indicated by at least 20% of the respondents and therefore, were not included in the results.

SUMMARY OF FREQUENTLY USED PEER-REVIEWED JOURNALS

Thirteen peer-reviewed journals were indicated as being required and/or recommended by at least 20% of the OTA program directors. The *American Journal of Occupational Therapy (AJOT)* was the only journal required by more than 50% of OTA program directors. The *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy* was recommended by 48% of the OTA program directors and the *British Journal of Occupational Therapy* was recommended by 44%. Eight journals listed in the survey did not meet the inclusion criteria of frequently used peer-reviewed journals.

USE OF E-BOOKS

Program directors were asked to indicate the percentage of students who use e-books for required or recommended textbooks. The most frequently reported response was 0%, which was indicated by 24 of the 78 respondents. Only two respondents indicated 100% and six respondents reported 50%. Fifteen respondents indicated between 20% and 30% and 27 respondents indicated between 1% and 19%. Three respondents reported “unknown” and one respondent reported “optimal purchase.”

PERCENTAGE OF TEXTBOOKS AND JOURNAL ARTICLES

The final question of the survey asked for program directors to indicate the percentage of their curriculum that included required and recommended textbooks and the percentage that included required and recommended journal articles. The majority of respondents, 54 out of 78, indicated between 90% and 100% of their curriculum consists of textbooks and 0% to 10% consists of journal articles. Twenty-one respondents indicated between 70% and 89% for textbooks and 11% to 30% for journal articles. Two respondents indicated 50% for textbooks and 50% for journal articles. One respondent indicated 0% for textbooks and 100% for journal articles.

The majority of respondents, 54 out of 78, indicated between 90% and 100% of their curriculum consists of textbooks and 0% to 10% consists of journal articles.

Conclusion

The results of this survey provide a list of textbooks and peer-reviewed journals frequently required and/or recommended as part of OTA program curricula. Additionally, results indicate the majority of students in OTA programs use hard copies of textbooks instead of e-books, and textbooks are used more frequently than journal articles.

A limitation of the study is the response rate of the OTA program directors. The response rate was 34%, which was lower than the 44% response rate for the survey conducted in 2018. Fifteen program directors provided a school name, degree level, and program status but did not complete the survey. The lower response rate may be due to the timing of the survey as distribution took place at the beginning of a new academic semester.

The textbooks and peer-reviewed journals identified in this survey will be used in part by NBCOT when indicating references to support content development of items selected for the COTA certification exam and associated study tools. It is important to note, as items are selected to appear on an exam, subject matter experts update references, as needed, to the most recent edition of a textbook, or to alternate or additional textbooks or peer-reviewed journals published within the last five years, in order to verify the content.

References

Gross, L. J., & Showers, B. (2015). *Principles of fairness: An examination guide for credentialing boards*. Council on Licensure, Enforcement, and Regulation.

National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy. (2018). *2017 Practice analysis of the Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant*. National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without prior written permission of the copyright owners.

©2020 National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, Inc. “NBCOT” (formerly American Occupational Therapy Certification Board AOTCB) is a service and trademark of the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, Inc.

“**OTR**” is a certification mark of the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, Inc.

“**COTA**” is a certification mark of the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, Inc.

All marks are registered in the United States of America.

NBCOT® National Board for
Certification in
Occupational Therapy

One Bank Street
Suite 300
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

www.nbcot.org