



## What is Physical Therapy School?

Physical Therapy school is a three-year-doctoral program in which students learn how to examine, evaluate, diagnose and treat impairment, functional limitations and disabilities in patients. Upon completing their doctorate, PT graduates may select to pursue a residency to further their training and a fellowship to increase their knowledge in a specific area of practice. (e.g. Neurology, women’s health, orthopedics, sport’s therapy etc.)

## What should I know about Physical Therapy

In the US, new students wishing to practice Physical Therapy must graduate from an accredited Doctorate of Physical Therapy program, and pass their accreditation exams. Physical Therapists work with patients at all stages of life, from newborns to the most elderly. Physical Therapists will evaluate, diagnosis, and design a treatment plan centered around minimizing or preventing the development of permanent physical impairment following an injury.

## Related Fields

Physical Therapy Assistant	Massage Therapy
Occupational Therapy	Chiropractic Medicine
Occupational Therapy Assistant	Social Work
Exercise Science	Public Health
Athletic Training	Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation
Acupuncture	

## Where can I study Physical Therapy?

There are three PT schools in the state of Washington: Eastern Washington University, University of Washington, and University of Puget Sound. Nationally there are approximately 217 programs students can apply to.

## How do I get started?

While considering preparing for and attending Physical Therapy school, you should seriously and truthfully consider these questions and others. Is being a PT the only profession you could ever see yourself doing? Are you willing to go into substantial debt in order to pursue this dream? Are you willing to accept that you might need to give up a significant portion of your social life, especially while in PT School? While answering these questions, students pursuing PT school can remember the acronym “S-T-A-R-T”.

### Shadow

Shadowing is the act of working with, and observing a current Physical Therapist practicing in a clinical setting. Often this can occur in a private practice, hospital, or possibly a long term care facility (e.g. retirement home). Shadowing is a huge part of becoming a well-rounded and competitive applicant. One of the main purposes of shadowing is to help you, the student, become more aware of what it means to be a physical therapist. There are shadowing opportunities out there, but they can be hard to find. Often students find the most success with contacting their own or family members’ Physical Therapist, or by cold calling an office to ask about any opportunities available. An opportunity to work at a PT aide is an excellent method for obtaining the hours necessary to apply to many PT schools.

### Talk

Talk to someone! Being a student interested in going to a graduate program means that a large part of your time should be spent learning as much as possible about the opportunities available to help you develop as a student. Working with your adviser, instructors, and classmates can all be incredibly helpful in connecting you with the resources you will need to kick-start that growth. A large part of being a Physical Therapist is having excellent communication skills. Being able to communicate and listen to your patients, team members, and other health care providers is critical. Therefore, get started utilizing these skills early by consulting and collaborating with friends, attending campus info sessions, being involved in our pre-health community here on campus, etc.

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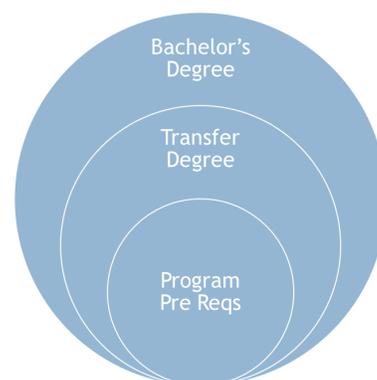
## Academics

Applying to a PT school requires that you have a bachelor's degree and all of the necessary **prerequisites** completed. It is important to note that every school will have different prerequisite requirements. You should check at each school you are considering, but for our three programs in state you may consider:

<u>Eastern Washington University</u>	<u>University of Puget Sound</u>	<u>University of Washington</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• BIOL 241, 242</li><li>• CHEM 161, 162,163,</li><li>• PHYS 114, 115, 116</li><li>• 2 quarters of behavioral science</li><li>• Statistics BC: BA 240 or Math 130</li><li>• 1 quarter advanced physiology</li><li>• 1 quarter upper division biology</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• BIOL 241, 242</li><li>• CHEM 121, 131 OR CHEM 161, 162,163</li><li>• PHYS 114, 115</li><li>• Statistics BC: BA 240 or Math 130</li><li>• 1 quarter behavioral science</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• BIOL 241, 242</li><li>• Any <u>two</u> of: BIOL 211, 212, 213 (OR BIOL 160, 162)</li><li>• CHEM 121, 131 OR CHEM 161, 162</li><li>• PHYS 114, 115</li><li>• 2 quarters behavioral science</li><li>• Statistics BC: BA 240 or Math 130</li></ul>

In addition to the above prerequisite courses, there are two major things to note if you are a student pursuing your bachelor's degree:

1. Most universities do not offer a degree in "Pre-Physical Therapy". However, some schools do offer Exercise Science/Kinesiology majors with a Pre-PT emphasis.
2. There is no particular major that "looks good." You can major in whatever you would like and still be a competitive applicant, but generally you want your program pre-reqs to be housed within your initial bachelor's degree. (see diagram)
3. Most PT schools require from 50-400 hours of experience in a PT setting.



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## Research

Students should thoroughly research multiple physical therapy programs around the county. Keep in mind, while there may be hundreds of certified programs in the US, the average class sizes of these programs can be small. For instance, the University of Washington typically accepts an incoming class of around 46-48. Therefore, it is important that you have a clear vision of the type of education you will want in Physical Therapy school. Furthermore, it is important that you are well aware of the prerequisites required for the schools to which you wish to apply. Especially if looking at out-of-state schools, the courses and structure of the classes you may need to take can vary.

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## Test

All students wishing to apply to a PT program should plan on completing the Graduate Record Exam (GRE). Depending on the program they wish to apply to they may be required to complete the Biology Specialty test as well.

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## What should I do now?

Students interested in getting started on the road toward Physical Therapy school can use a variety of resources here on campus. Attending one of our quarterly Pre-Professional info sessions, researching the profession in our Center for Career Connections, or meeting with an adviser, can all be helpful. Bellevue College's Docs 'n Dents club is available to you as well. If you would like to schedule an appointment with an adviser you can do so by calling 425-564-2212 or by stopping by the advising front desk located on the second floor of the B building.

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*This is an unofficial guide only. It is the student's responsibility to research and communicate with all community college and university programs to which he/she intends to apply to establish prerequisites and admission requirements, as they vary and are subject to change without notice.*

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