



OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY TERMINOLOGY

Adapted from Various Sources

Occupational Therapy (OT) is a holistic health care profession that aims to promote health by enabling individuals to perform meaningful and purposeful activities across the lifespan. Occupations of children include: play, learning, and self-care. Occupational therapists (OT's) typically evaluate and provide treatment in the areas of cognition, fine motor, functional mobility, social interaction, visual perception, coordination, sensory processing, and activities of daily living. Occupational therapy assistants (OTA's) also provide treatment to individuals under the supervision of an OT.

Activities of Daily Living: activities typically involved with self-care including dressing, feeding, bathing, toileting, and time and money management

Adaptive Response: an action that is appropriate and successful in meeting some environmental demand; demonstrate adequate sensory integration and drive all learning and social interactions

Auditory Figure-Ground: the ability to discriminate between sounds in the foreground and background, so that one can focus on a particular sound or voice without being distracted by other sounds

Auditory Perception: the ability to receive, identify, discriminate, understand and respond to sounds

Bilateral Coordination: the ability to use both sides of the body together in a smooth, simultaneous, and coordinated manner

Bilateral Integration: the neurological process of integrating sensations from both body sides

Binocularity: forming a single visual image from two images that the eyes separately record

Body Awareness: the mental picture of one's own body parts, where they are, how they interrelate, and how they move

Co-contraction: all muscle groups surrounding a joint contracting and working together to provide the joint stability resulting in the ability to maintain a position

Crossing Midline: the ability to use one side or part of the body (hand, foot, or eye) in the space of the other side or part

Depth Perception: the ability to see objects in three dimensions and to judge relative distances between objects or between oneself and objects

Dexterity: see fine motor skills

Directionality: the awareness of right/left, forward/back, and up/down, and the ability to move oneself in those directions

Discriminative System: the component of a sensory system that allows one to distinguish differences among stimuli; not innate but develops with time and practice

Equilibrium: balance; even distribution of weight enabling a person to remain upright and steady

Eye-Hand Coordination: the efficient teamwork of the eyes and hands, necessary for activities such as playing with toys, dressing, and writing

Eye Convergence: movement of the eyes inward when following an object from far to near

Eye Divergence: movement of the eyes outward when following an object from near to far



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Eye Dominance: consistent demonstration of preference of one eye over the other

Fight-Or-Flight Response: the instinctive reaction to defend oneself from real or perceived danger by becoming aggressive or by withdrawing

Figure-Ground Perception: the ability to perceive a figure in the foreground from a rival background. Fine Motor: Referring to movement of the muscles in the fingers, toes, eyes and tongue

Fine Motor Skills: the skilled ability to move the hands and fingers in a smooth, precise and controlled manner; the control essential for efficient handling of classroom tools and materials

Fixation: aiming one's eye at an object or shifting one's gaze from one object to another

Focusing: accommodating one's vision smoothly between near and distant objects

Form Constancy: recognition of a shape regardless of its size, position, or texture

Habituation: the neurological process of tuning out familiar sensations

Hand Dominance: consistent use of a hand to perform skilled activities; consistent use of the other hand as a stabilizer in activities would be considered non-dominant hand use

Hand Preference: use of a preferred hand; precursor to right or left-handedness, which becomes established in a child as lateralization of the cerebral hemispheres develops

High Threshold: a higher than average capacity to tolerate a particular stimulus; pertaining to requiring excessive time to reach a point of being overwhelmed

Hypersensitivity to Movement: a sense of disorientation and/or avoidance of movement that is linear and/or rotary

Inner Drive: the self-motivation to participate actively in experiences that promote sensory integration

Integration: the combination of many parts into a unified, harmonious whole

Lateralization: the process of establishing preference of one side of the brain for directing skilled motor function on the opposite side of the body, while the opposite side is used for stabilization; necessary for establishing hand preference and crossing the body midline.

Linear Movement: a motion in which one moves in a line, from front o back, side to side, or up and down

Low Threshold: a lower than average capacity to tolerate a particular stimulus; Pertaining to reaching a point of being overwhelmed quickly

Low Tone: the lack of supportive muscle tone, usually with increased mobility at the joints; the person with low tone seems "loose" or "floppy"

Midline: a median line dividing the two halves of the body

Modulation: the brain's ability to regulate its own activity

Ocular Motor Skills: the ability to move the eyes independent of the head in various planes smoothly



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Oscillation: up and down or to and fro linear movement, such as swinging, bouncing, and jumping

Palmar Grasp: how an object is held when fingers squeeze against the palm instead of against themselves

Perception: the meaning the brain attributes to sensory input

Pincer Grasp: use of the tips of the thumb and index finger to pick up or hold objects

Position in Space: awareness of the spatial orientation of letters, words, numbers, or drawings on a page or of an object in the environment

Postural Adjustments: the ability to shift one's body to change position for a task

Postural Stability: the ability to maintain one's body in a position to efficiently complete a task or demand, using large muscle groups at the shoulders and hips

Praxis: the ability to interact successfully with the physical environment; to plan, organize, and carry out a sequence of unfamiliar actions; to do what one needs and wants to do; voluntary and coordinated action

Pronated Grasp: how an object is held when the palm is facing down; an immature grasp for writing age

Proprioception: the awareness of posture, movement, changes in equilibrium, and the knowledge of position, weight, and resistance of objects in relation to the body; sensed by muscles, tendons, and soft tissue

Proximal Stability: the strength and stability of the core, trunk and back muscles of the body or those closer to the center of the body

Quadruped: position of the body with hands and knees in contact with the ground, stomach facing down

Rotary Movement: turning or spinning in circles

Self-Care Skills: competence in taking care of one's personal needs, such as bathing, dressing, eating, grooming, and studying

Self-Regulation: the ability to control one's activity level and state of alertness, as well as one's emotional, mental, or physical responses to senses; self-organization

Sensorimotor: pertaining to taking in sensory messages and reacting with a physical response

Sensory Diet: the multisensory experiences that one normally seeks on a daily basis to satisfy one's sensory appetite; a planned and scheduled activity program that an occupational therapist develops to help a person become more self-regulated

Sensory Dormancy: a child's behavior in response to sensory input, reflecting under-responsiveness or a high threshold to a specific sensory input

Sensory Input: the flow of information from sensory receptors in the body to the brain and spinal cord

Sensory Integration: the normal neurological process taking in information from one's body and environment through the senses, of organizing and unifying this information, and using it to plan and execute adaptive responses to different challenges to learn and function smoothly in daily life



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Sensory Integration Treatment: a technique that provides playful, meaningful activities that enhance an individual's sensory intake and lead to more adaptive functioning in daily life

Sensory Modulation: increasing or reducing neural activity to keep that activity in harmony with all other functions of the nervous system; maintenance of the arousal state to generate emotional responses, sustain attention, develop appropriate activity level and move skillfully

Sensory Orientation: selective attention supporting inner drive to engage with the stimulus, respond, and learn

Sensory Processing Skills: the ability to receive and process information from one's sensory systems including tactile, visual, auditory, proprioceptive, and vestibular; behavior, attention, and peer interactions are greatly influenced by the child's ability to process sensory stimuli

Sensory Registration: initial awareness of a single input; assigning value and emotional tone to a stimulus

Sensory Threshold: individual neural responses to sensory input across each sensory system; the point at which the summation of sensory input activates the central nervous system; the mechanism that drives our reactions to sensory input and whether we over-react or under-register the input

Somatosensory: referring to tactile-proprioceptive perception of touch sensations and body position

Spatial Awareness: the perception of one's proximity to, or distance from, an object, as well as the perception of the relationship of one's body parts

Tactile: refers to the sense of touch and various qualities attributed to touch: to include detecting pressure, temperature, light touch, pain, discriminative touch

Tracking: following a moving object or a line of print with the eyes

Tripod Grasp: how an object is held where the thumb and index fingers are squeezing together to hold and the other fingers stabilize behind the object

Vestibular: refers to our sense of movement and the pull of gravity related to our body; changes in head position and to body movement through space

Visual Attention: the ability to maintain visual fixation and concentration on a particular target or object

Visual Closure: the ability to visualize a complete whole when given incomplete or partial information

Visual Discrimination: differentiating among symbols and forms, such as matching or separating colors, shapes, numbers, letters, and words

Visual Figure-Ground: differentiation between objects in the foreground and in the background

Visual Motor Skills: the ability to visually take in information, process it and be able to coordinate your physical movement in relation to what has been viewed; involves the combination of visual perception and motor coordination

Visual Perceptual Skills: the ability to interpret and use what is seen in the environment; including depth perception, directionality, form constancy, position in space, spatial awareness, visual discrimination, visual figure-ground