

Ultimate Pre-Physical Therapy Student FAQ Guide

Texas Physical Therapy Organization

Section 1. Preparing to apply

Shadowing

- ❖ How do I find places/PTs to shadow?
 - PTO website
 - FindaPT.com
 - Can find PTs by location and specialty area
- ❖ How many hours/settings do I need?
 - Hours vary by school- most schools above 100 hours
 - Typically need at least 2 different types of settings
- ❖ Will my tech job count toward my shadowing experience?
 - Some schools count paid experience for shadowing hours, others don't
 - Check with schools

ProTips

- ✓ Keep a log of contact information for each PT you shadowed, the facility you shadowed them in, the dates and times you shadowed them and total number of hours you were at the facility. Include details of what you did there and what impacted you most about each setting.
- ✓ For each location you shadow/volunteer, write a small paragraph about what you learned from that setting.
- ✓ Use this information when planning your personal statement

Volunteering

- ❖ How much community volunteer hours should I have?
 - What's commonly said among recruiters is that passion for the community reflected in your application is more important than getting a lot of hours.
 - This can be achieved by consistently volunteering with the same organizations rather than having a few hours from multiple, random organizations that don't mean much to you
 - You can demonstrate your passion for the service you did at this organization in your personal statement or in supplemental essays.

Leadership

- ❖ What types of leadership experience are schools looking for?
 - Any experience that shows you have had to make decisions that impact others and work as a member of a team is great leadership experience.
 - Some examples of leadership experience include being an officer for an organization, a coach, a supervisor, a mentor, TA, orientation advisor, project manager on a research team, etc.

Work Experience

- ❖ Should I try to get a job as a tech as an undergrad to help my application?
 - Consider your time management skills first, having any job is not worth letting your grades slip. Even if you have a lot of shadowing hours, PT schools won't accept poor grades.
 - Remember PT schools are not just looking for applicants with a lot of experience in one area. They want applicants who have seen the breadth of PT. So don't solely rely on tech shadowing hours.
 - Other jobs are great to have in undergrad too, such as coaching or teaching. These also help your application look well rounded and prepare you for PT school in other ways (ex. Interacting with people frequently)

Resumes

- ❖ How do I make myself look good on paper?
 - Example resumes and a resume template can be found on career service page on Health Professions Office website <https://cns.utexas.edu/career-services/resumes-cover-letters/resumes>
 - Career Services offers free resume consultations
 - Not all schools require resumes for the application- check if your schools require resume

Personal statement

- ❖ How do I make my personal statement stand out?
 - Schedule a personal statement brainstorming appointment with the Health Professions Office [\(512\) 471-3172](tel:5124713172)
 - First thing to consider is "Why do I want to be a PT?" tie this answer into the prompt of the paper
 - Include experiences that you had from your shadowing
 - Convince the admissions board that you are passionate and knowledgeable about the field and you care about patient outcomes

Prerequisites

- ❖ How do I know which prerequisites to take?
 - Visit the website for the schools you wish to apply
 - Look at the Health Professions Office PT School Prerequisite List- updated each year for the Texas Schools.
- ❖ Do I need to take my prerequisites in a certain order?
 - Some prerequisites are prereqs for others (ex. BIO I and BIO II). However, for courses like Anatomy and Physiology, it doesn't matter which order you take them in. Many say that it is easier to take anatomy first.
- ❖ My course schedule deviates from the prerequisite timeline, is this okay?
 - The prerequisite timeline on the Health Professions website is a suggested model meant to help students plan their course load. It is not something that needs to be strictly followed.
 - However, if it looks like you are falling behind in your prerequisites, you can make an appointment to speak with a Health Professions advisor [\(512\) 471-3172](tel:5124713172) to plan the best time to apply.

ProTip:

- ✓ Schedule an appointment with the Health Professions office as well as your regular academic advisor each semester to ensure you are on track to finish both your prerequisites for PT school and your UT degree
- ❖ A prerequisite that I took isn't accepted by one of the schools for which I wish to apply. Do I have to take another class?
 - Call the school you are applying to and ask. You may be able to petition for the course to be accepted as a prerequisite and only need to send the syllabus to the academic coordinator at their school.
- ❖ Can I take prerequisites at a community college and get credit transferred to UT, or will that reflect negatively on my application?
 - Most schools try to remain unbiased regarding the school that classes were taken. However, if all of your hard science classes were taken at a community college instead of a university it will definitely look like you avoided taking science classes at a harder school.

GPA

- ❖ I'm really struggling in a class and I don't want it to affect my GPA, what do I do?
 - Develop a plan of how to improve your grade and stick with it
 - Visit Sanger Learning Center for free tutoring
 - Speak with your TA/professor and go to office hours
 - If those don't work, you can re-take the class at another time- The grades from the two attempts at the course will either be averaged or replaced with the higher grade, depending on the school.
- ❖ My GPA is lower than the average accepted for many schools, is there a chance for me to get in?
 - There is always hope. Even if your GPA is low, schools like a well-rounded student. If they can see reasons in your application for why your GPA would be low (ex. You had a very heavy course load one semester, you were working while going to school, you didn't know how to study when you were a freshman, etc.) they will have mercy.
 - Schools love to see that an applicant's GPA improved over time. So if your GPA was poor when you started at UT but has improved, they will take a positive note of that.
 - Also, multiple GPAs are calculated for applicants- overall GPA, last 60 hours and prerequisite GPA. If you are trying to improve your GPA, really focus on those science prerequisite classes and those taken in your last 60 hours.

GRE ***

***detailed information available on the GRE resources page on PTO website or
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1dsodXDg7SWyJ0lkmvjDO_6mZkxSTEVE8 ***

Recommendation letters

- ❖ Does the professor I get a rec letter from need to be a science professor?
 - No. It is beneficial that the professor is from a prerequisite course or a hard science course, because it will demonstrate that you performed exceptionally in a course meant to prepare you for PT school. However, if a professor from a different department can write a better letter, use them.
- ❖ How do I ask a professor or PT for a rec letter?
 - Depending on your relationship with them, you can ask them in person first and then send an email, or just send a formal email requesting a strong, supportive recommendation letter.

- Let them know that if they don't feel they can provide you with a strong, supportive letter, you understand and hold them to no obligation to do so. If they can't write you a good letter, you don't want them submitting anything on your behalf.
- ❖ Who else can I ask for a letter besides a professor or PT?
 - Each school has different criteria for recommendation letters. Check their website or the PTCAS directory to see the accepted reference letter sources for each school.
 - Some possible references include employers, your supervisors in a volunteer organization, church elders, graduate students or their advisors that you did research with, etc.
- ❖ I got a good grade in a class, is that enough to request a recommendation letter from the professor?
 - For some professors, yes. However, if the professor did not know you well it is likely the letter will just be a generic letter that they write for all students. This will not impress PT schools. Try to ask for recommendations from professors who you have developed a relationship with and are confident could provide a good letter.
- ❖ How can I get a good recommendation letter from a PT?
 - Show initiative, demonstrate compassion toward patients, ask questions- both about themselves and the PT field

Section 2. Application and Interviews

Application

- ❖ How do I apply to PT school?
 - Make an account on [www.PTCAS.org](http://www.ptcas.org)
 - Read PTCAS Application Instructions <http://www.ptcas.org/ApplicationInstructions/>
 - Fill out the application online
 - Some schools will require supplemental applications/fees- check each schools' website
 - Make sure PTCAS receives all your transcripts, observation hours, recommendation letters, etc. These will be sent to every school.
 - School specific essays will only be sent to the schools you are writing them for on PTCAS.
 - Your personal statement goes to ALL SCHOOLS, don't write anything specific about a certain school in your personal statement
 - If you have questions about anything, email ptcasinfo@ptcas.org (responds in 3 days) or call 617-612-2040

ProTip

- ✓ Start applying early. This reduces stress about anything not getting in on time.
- ✓ Submit the application early. It can take PTCAS weeks to process applications if you submit it during a peak period.
- ✓ Make a spreadsheet of application requirements of schools you wish to apply to
 - Include DEADLINES, Supplemental applications and fees, number of observation hours, and who they require recommendation letters from, etc.
- ❖ How many schools should I apply to?
 - As many as you feel is necessary. This is completely individual for everyone.
- ❖ How do I determine which PT schools to apply to?
 - The meetings provide opportunities to speak with representatives from Texas PT programs about the outstanding features of their program

- Consider what you value most in your graduate education- research, student: faculty ratio, well-renowned staff and program, first time pass rate on the board exam, etc? Then compare statistics of each school.
- ❖ What are rolling admissions?
 - Applications are reviewed and applicants are invited for interviews throughout the admissions cycle, not just after the deadline.
 - Can hear back from schools earlier
 - The earlier you apply, the better your chances are of getting in.
- ❖ How will I know that I've been offered an interview?
 - You will get an email from the school with interview dates.
 - You will need to reply confirming a date that you are available to interview.
 - If you decide not to interview with a school, it is a professional courtesy to notify the school so they can invite another applicant.
- ❖ What if I don't get an interview?
 - That is okay, contact the school and inquire about the reason(s) your application was not chosen

Interviews

- ❖ What should I wear to my interview?
 - Dress professionally, like you're going into a business meeting. You can't look too professional for this day.
- ❖ How should I prepare for my interview?
 - KNOW THE FIELD: important issues such as direct access, Vision 2020, The Physical Therapy Vision Statement etc.
 - Practice answering questions out loud
 - Look up common interview questions for PT school. For each question, write bulleted talking points so you have an idea of what to say in case you are asked that question in the interview.

Section 3. After the interview

- ❖ When should I expect to hear from the schools?
 - Depending on the school and the quality of your application/interview- could be anywhere between a week to a few months.
- ❖ I got into PT school, YAY! What do I do next?
 - Will need to accept or decline the school's offer of admission
 - May need to pay a deposit, depending on the school
 - Need to get immunizations and send to the school
 - May need to get BLS, ACLS or CPR training depending on school
 - Potentially need to find housing
 - Get connected with future classmates ☺
- ❖ I didn't get in...what do I do now?
 - Contact schools and inquire regarding the weak portions of your application
 - Spend the next year improving your application

Gap Year

- ❖ How can I spend my gap year to improve my application?

- Some productive ways to spend a gap year are shadowing, retaking courses, volunteering, working as a tech, retaking the GRE, etc.

Section 4. PTO

Meetings

- ❖ How do I get the most benefit from the meetings?
 - Attend the meetings
 - Request notes from the secretary for each meeting or take your own to supplement
 - Ask questions
 - Introduce yourself to the speaker and ask questions/have conversation after the meeting
 - Ask questions during the presentation
- ❖ The information presented at the meetings is discouraging, how will I ever get into school?
 - The statistics are definitely scary- keep in mind some key points:
 1. Most applicants who apply don't meet all requirements for the applications to each school and are immediately removed from applicant pool
 2. Others don't have a GPA or GRE score high enough to meet the MINIMUM requirements of the school and are weeded out
 3. Then, some students don't have diverse shadowing experiences and are removed
 4. Applicants may have poorly written essays or recommendation letters and are removed

*This significantly reduces the number of competitive applicants. Focus on weak areas in your application to make it as well-rounded as possible.

Active membership

- ❖ How do I become an active member?
 - Have 7 points and pay dues
- ❖ What are points and how do I get them?
 - Points are the way that we measure active status in PTO. Points are gained by attending meetings, socials, volunteer events and study sessions. Once a member reaches 7 points during a semester, and they have paid dues, they are an active member.

Study Sessions

- ❖ What are PCL Study sessions?
 - They are a chance for students to study in a room that PTO reserves in the PCL once a month. This provides members with a designated study time and area. It also motivates members to study by being surrounded by other studying students.

Resources

- ❖ What are the newsletters for?
 - They keep members informed about basic, important topics in the PT field. They also provide announcements and officer contact info.
- ❖ What is the alumni database?

- This is a database that alumni of PTO have agreed to be added to in order to be used as a contact for students who are applying/ about to apply to PT school. It is updated each year. This includes which PT school the student is enrolled in, their year in school and contact information.

❖ What is included in the GRE resources? ****

- Practice questions, advice from students and more!

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1dsodXDg7SWyJ0lkmvjDO_6mZkxSTEVE8

❖ How do I find all of these?

- Visit the PTO website, <http://texaspto.wixsite.com/ptorg> and click on resources! You will find the newsletters, shadowing locations, the GRE resources, the alumni database and a copy of this FAQ guide will be there!