

## *What you need to know about becoming a* **Optometrist (OD)**

Optometrists are the primary health care professionals for the eye. Optometrists examine, diagnose, treat, and manage diseases, injuries, and disorders for the visual system. They also identify related systemic conditions affecting the eye. Optometrists can prescribe medications, perform certain surgical procedures, provide vision therapy and assist patients with spectacle and contact lenses. Optometrists are involved in both preoperative and post-operative care for patients as well. They can diagnose systemic conditions that have eye-related symptoms and make referrals as needed.

### **Where do they work?**

Optometrists generally work in private offices with consistent hours. They may work evening and weekend hours to accommodate patients. Some optometrists specialize in areas such as geriatrics or vision therapy and may work in group practices to see a greater variety of patients.

Optometry students complete four years of school at an accredited optometry school to earn a Doctor of Optometry. Courses in optometry programs include pharmacology, optics, vision science, and biochemistry. A one-year postgraduate residency is available for students who would like to specialize in areas such as pediatric optometry, low-vision therapy, refractive and ocular surgery, or ocular disease. All states require optometrists to be licensed through the National Board of Examiners.

## Education

Entrance to optometry schools is very competitive.

### Academic requirements include

- Biology
- General Chemistry
- Organic Chemistry
- Physics
- English
- Math
- Optometry school also require a high GPA and above average scores on the Optometry Admission Test (OAT).

## Accepted Student Profile

Optometry school programs have many applicants and are very competitive.

Applicants should have:

- High GPA (around 3.4)
- Leadership experience
- Excellent entrance exam scores (OAT)
- Hands-on patient experience
- Shadowed a practicing optometrist

## Application

Optometry schools use a centralized application service to apply for admissions. Official transcripts and recommendation must be submitted through the OptomCAS, Optometry Centralized Application Service.

Optometry schools require the OAT as well. The Optometry Admission Test will test you on biology, chemistry, organic chemistry, and physics. These classes should be completed before taking your OAT's.

## Web Resources

OptomCAS Application: [www.optomcas.org](http://www.optomcas.org)

Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry : [www.opted.org](http://www.opted.org)

American Optometry Association: [www.aoa.org](http://www.aoa.org)

OAT: [www.ada.org/oat](http://www.ada.org/oat)