

What you need to know about becoming an

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 spectacles 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 (BIO 105 and 106)
General Chemistry (CHE 110 and 111)
General Physics (PHY 110 and 111)
English (ENG 110 and ENG 276/278)
Math (MAT 150 and 190)

Recommended courses include:

Biochemistry (CHE 310)
Psychology (PSY 105)
Anatomy and Physiology (BIO 245/345 or 208/209)
Microbiology (BIO 232)
Organic Chemistry (CHE 210/211)

Accepted Student Profile

Optometry school programs have many applicants and are very competitive.

Applicants should have:

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

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.liaisoncas.org

Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry: www.opted.org

American Optometry Association: www.aoa.org

OAT: www.ada.org/oat