

The Level II Fieldwork Survival Guide

The Assembly of Student Delegates (ASD) Steering Committee has compiled this *Level II Fieldwork Survival Guide* for occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant students. The purpose is to give students a packet of information collected from students across the country that will be helpful when beginning their Level II fieldwork. A compilation of the data collected can be found on the following topics:

Out-of-State or New Sites

- Finding New Sites
- Finding Housing

Preparation for Fieldwork

- Get By With \$\$Low Funds\$\$
- What To Take With You
- What Will Prepare You Most?

Professional Behavior

- Advice From Those Who Have Been There
- Time and Stress Management
- Tips for a Successful Experience
- Code of Ethics for Fieldwork Students
- Common Fears About the Level II Experience
- Things I Wish I Had Known Before My Fieldwork Experience
- Networking
- Quotes from Students: Things I Wish I Had Known Before My Fieldwork Experience

Out-of-State or New Sites

Finding **New** sites



- Look in the Occupational Therapy publications, such as *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *OT Practice*, or the *SIS Quarterly* newsletters.
- Look in phone books or newspapers from the area to which you are interested in going.
- Contact the state association's presidents. Links to state association Web sites are on the home page of the AOTA Web site (www.aota.org).
- Explore the Internet.

- Join a listserv of your prospective discipline to learn more about new sites and to establish contacts.
- Ask Level I fieldwork supervisors for ideas.
- Check with other students who have already been on fieldwork. Find out which sites they recommend.

Finding Housing



- Contact colleges in the area of the site because they may offer student housing in the dorms or have inexpensive housing options posted.
- Contact the fieldwork facility because they know the area well and may be able to offer advice on how and where to find a place to stay.
- Check local papers for apartment listings, roommates needed, or houses to share.
- Be prepared to pay for housing because most facilities do not offer free room and board.
- Ask around—especially your classmates. In the city you want to go to, perhaps someone has an older relative with a spare room. You could exchange room and board for completing household chores.
- Make sure you complete your living arrangements well before starting fieldwork—you do not want to be without a place to live!
- Contact your school's local alumni association chapter.
- Room with a classmate to decrease living costs.
- Contact an organization that you are active in (religious, civic, etc.) to see if they have contacts in that geographical area.

Preparation for Fieldwork

Get by with **\$\$Low Funds\$\$**



- Save enough money from student loans to cover room and board—or take out a loan if necessary.
- Apply for scholarships—ask your department if they are aware of any, as well as check the Scholarship portion of the AOTA Web site.
- Live on a budget!
- Get a part-time job on the weekends.
- Get a roommate to share expenses.
- Offer to help with the upkeep of the place where you are staying in exchange for reduced rent.



What to Take With You

- Social Security card and picture identification
- Health forms, including immunizations, personal health insurance, and liability insurance
- Word processor or computer
- Occupational therapy textbooks
- Medical dictionary and reference to medical terminology
- Other appropriate references for the setting (i.e., DSM-IV)
- Ask your particular site what they recommend.
- Join the local library for assignment resources.
- Evaluations or other paperwork, ideas, etc., from other fieldwork sites
- Make sure you will have Internet access.



What Will Prepare You Most?

- Volunteer or work in as many occupational therapy–related fields as possible before beginning fieldwork. This will ease the transition to working with people who have disabilities.
- Review textbooks and specific material related to the site.
- Stuff to “Brush Up” On...
 - Goals and note writing (e.g., narrative and SOAP)
 - Theories
 - Manual muscle testing
 - Range of motion assessment
 - Dynamometer
 - Goniometry
 - Transfer techniques
 - Medical terminology
 - Activity analysis
 - Group activities (e.g., arts, crafts, life skills) for mental health fieldwork
 - Group dynamics
 - Clinical reasoning
 - Information about diagnoses relevant to your setting
 - Code of Ethics
 - And remember to take all of the handouts you have on ideas for groups, activities, games, and community resources!
 - Contact your clinical instructor or fieldwork site before beginning your experience. Ask them how you should prepare (e.g. diagnoses, interventions, transfers, notes, etc.).

Professional Behavior



Advice From Those Who Have Been There

- “Don’t expect to know everything. This is a learning experience—ask questions! Don’t be afraid to ask them.”
- “Study up on things you don’t know or remember.”
- “Use the therapist and resources available to you for optimal learning. Take the initiative for your own learning.”
- “Do not be afraid to question logic or the train of thought of your supervisor... just be tactful.”
- “A lack of supervision may sound good, but it usually leads to a poor learning experience.”
- “Remember that you are a guest in this facility. Your supervisor has given up their time to take you as a student. Be appreciative of their effort.”
- “Keep in mind that everyone will have different fieldwork experience. Your classmates may learn skills that are completely different from those that you have learned. Each experience is unique.”



Time & Stress Management

- Make a schedule with prioritized tasks.
- Do not be afraid to ask for help.
- Allow time for documentation throughout the day and be prepared to take work home with you.
- Allow time for research and study.
- Practice good stress management.
 - Budget “me” time.
 - Schedule “down time” every day.
 - Spend time with friends.
 - Know your limits.
 - Get away for lunch—to eat or take a walk.
 - Eat healthy
 - Exercise
 - Get up a few minutes early.
 - Allow adequate travel time.



Tips for a Successful Experience

- Ask lots of questions, get to know your supervisor well, and establish a good relationship with him or her.
- Have an open mind.
- Remember that you can learn from a less-than-optimal situation. Contact your academic fieldwork coordinator for ideas and suggestions.
- Be prepared to use the *Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Process*.
- Have a file of sample groups or individual activities on hand.
- Work with other disciplines to gain their perspectives and further your own learning.
- Show appreciation to the nursing staff; they are a great source of help.
- **Talk** with your supervisor.
- Do not tell your supervisor that you did not want to come to this site or that you are not going to practice in this area.
- Be over-prepared—have lots of ideas if something doesn't work out.
- If away from home, take advantage of what the area has to offer.
- Be **flexible** with changing patients, times, problems, etc.
- If a facility has files of ideas, make copies and create references to take with you.
- Know the expectations of your facility/supervisor.
- Communicate with those around you.
- Be an active learner. Ultimately you, not your supervisor, are responsible for your fieldwork experience.
- Study and know specific theories used at the facility and know the treatment techniques guided by that theory.
- Be open and receptive to learning new things.



Sample Fieldwork "Code of Ethics" for Students

- Respect and adhere to the philosophy, policies, and procedures of the fieldwork center.
- Respect the opinions and decisions of the supervisor. Disagreements with stated policies, procedures, or directions should be discussed with the student's immediate supervisor.
- Respect, protect, and conserve the resources available to the student for learning and therapeutic purposes; prevent misuse, abuse, or destruction of materials, equipment, and resources.
- Maintain the clinic environment in a safe, organized manner and contribute to the maintenance of adequate supplies and equipment.

- Respect the rights and assure the integrity of clients/patients, which includes assuring confidentiality of treatment information regardless of the source as well as maintaining a goal-directed relationship.
- Complete all documentation related to the fieldwork experience in a timely manner and in accordance with fieldwork facility guidelines.
- Adhere to the contractual agreement for fieldwork education between their fieldwork center and academic program.
- Retain proof of current malpractice, professional liability, and health insurance.
- Respect, cooperate, and collaborate with other members of the health team.
- Serve as an advocate for clients, their families, the fieldwork center, and occupational therapy.
- Contact the fieldwork coordinator when resolution of fieldwork problems with the supervisor is not successful or when concerns about continuance of the fieldwork arise.
- Abide by the uniform requirements of the fieldwork facility and assure a professional appearance that does not hinder the treatment environment.
- Commit to continual learning throughout the fieldwork program by using unscheduled time to observe therapies, engage in educational interaction with other team members, review resource materials, or engage in other professionally relevant educational opportunities.
- Be accountable for your actions at all times during the fieldwork experience by recognizing that the facility is first and foremost a treatment environment and secondly an educational environment. Treatment has priority over education, and it is the student's responsibility to assure this process while also maintaining his/her educational needs.
- Self-direct their learning as much as possible, carefully assess the need for supervision during difficult situations, and seek appropriate supervision before proceeding.
- Seek information regarding principles, standards, and policies of the fieldwork setting, fieldwork education, and the profession.
- Support quality assurance and research related to the fieldwork setting practices.
- Do not act improperly or engage in illegal conduct while on the fieldwork or act in a way that would cause your integrity as a professional to be questioned.

Reference:

Crist, P. A., & Slach (1986). Fieldwork philosophy. *Contemporary Issues in Clinical Education*, 7, 67–68.

Common Fears About Level II's



- Don't be afraid to express your thoughts and ideas. It might seem overwhelming at first, but you will feel comfortable and very competent by the end.

- Be enthusiastic—give ideas—everyone appreciates a new or different perspective.
- Relax and remain confident.
- Groups and treatment sessions will fail—it's okay, learn from it.
- Don't be afraid to be wrong, try your ideas.
- Keep a positive attitude, and speak up if there is a problem.
- You won't remember everything, that's what books are for. Use them!
- Expect the worst and hope for the best.
- Don't be afraid to contribute in team meetings.
- Twelve (eight) weeks go by quickly, good experience or bad.
- Go in with an open mind, you may see some pretty different thing.
- Your supervisor is there to help and teach, so use his or her resources.
- You will not be a perfect OT/OTA, not now, not even when you have 10 years' experience.
- Don't be afraid to try new things. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Don't be afraid of your patients—treat them with respect. Learn from your patients, they have much to teach as well.
- Keep a variety of resources, including your textbooks, handy for reference. Use libraries and reference materials available at the site.
- Clearly communicate your learning style with your supervisor in order to prevent yourself from becoming confused or overwhelmed during your fieldwork experience.
- Relax and observe other professionals.
- Be prepared to spend time on documentation techniques and language.
- Learn to set limits with patients.
- Ask for feedback if you feel you need it.
- Keep a journal or patient log, writing down specific diagnoses and how you treated each patient (i.e., treatment plan, activities, what was good, what was bad, what you would have done differently, etc). **Remember not to identify your patients by name or any other personal characteristics.**

Networking



- Contact the president or student coordinator of your state association.
- Join the Student Plus fieldwork listerv at www.aota.org and post your own questions or monitor the questions of others on the student sections. This is a great networking source that allows you to communicate with other students.
- Communicate with your ASD Representative, ASD Steering Committee Officers, and/or AOTA Student liaison. They may have advice or resources you can use.
- Get to know, communicate, and collaborate with other OT/OTA students at your site when possible.

"INITIATE, INITIATE, INITIATE!!!"

Things I Wish I Had Known Before My Fieldwork Experience

"I wish I had known how important it would be, or how important many fieldwork supervisors feel it would be, to have at least one 3-month experience in a rehab setting. This came from therapists working in the schools, by the way! Rehab was downplayed in our program and I really wish I had known what a great basis for practice it would give me...working anywhere!"

"I would have liked to know all of the components of an evaluation for a child in school. That is, clinical element, visual motor, visual perception, etc. We really just looked at individual tests—but a complete eval will have more elements than just a single test."

"The one thing I wish I knew before starting fieldwork is where most OTs start their careers. Specifically, do they start out in a general rehab setting in a hospital or in an upper-extremity clinic? I would've also liked to have been well versed in the general ethical standards expected of us as fieldwork students. Many ethics are common sense, but some situations can be very challenging and I would've liked to have been prepared with some tips on how to handle difficult situations in the clinic."

"For Level II fieldwork I'd really like to have a better understanding of clinical reasoning and what type of reasoning I tend to use, what does my therapist tend to use, and how effective is our reasoning? How can one monitor his/her clinical reasoning and its affect on the therapy process?"

"Proper transfer protocols for different clients would have been helpful. Intervention strategies for specific diagnoses would have been helpful, too."

"To know that there were several therapists and assistants that you would be shadowing and that they would all be evaluating you at the end of the semester."

"Before starting my Level II, it would have been beneficial to have been exposed to various other settings where OTs are employed so that students can have a better idea about where they may enjoy working or completing their fieldwork."

"What role to play during fieldwork experiences (i.e., observer, participant, etc.)?"

"I wish I would have known that my site was so biomechanical oriented and that my theoretical approach would not be appreciated much...another thought, I also wish I had become more competent with range of motion evals."

"I would have liked to of known what comprises a typical initial evaluation, and to have practiced going through one."

“I wish I had known that everyone in this program is going to have a completely different experience and learn a range of skills from fieldwork. I understand now that there is no way to standardize the experience of fieldwork, but I would have appreciated knowing that sooner.”

“I would like to know, in some detail, what the setting I will be working in will be like (i.e. pace, environment, staff, philosophy, routine, etc.).”

“At this point I feel comfortable with starting fieldwork. I think this is because I know I will have adequate supervision.”

“I wish I knew how to write progress notes prior to beginning fieldwork (although after 10 weeks of fieldwork I have a much better understanding of what progress notes entail).”

“For fieldwork I, I don’t think I needed anything additional, as this has really just been observation up to this point. I may feel differently after the week-long outing.”

“I would have liked to know more interventions that might be useful in the different settings. I felt like I was going into the experience somewhat blind and unprepared.”

References:

Alzoni, D., Link, S., & Trone, J. submitted as part of course requirement for OT 410: Administration, Management, and Supervision at Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA