

Physical Therapists

SOC: 29-1123 • Career Profile Report

■ Key Facts

\$101,020

Median Salary

267,200

Employment

+11.0%

Growth Rate

■ Requirements & Salary Range

Education: Doctoral

■ Automation Risk Assessment

Low Risk - 8.0% probability of being automated in the next 10-20 years.

This job is relatively safe from automation due to its creative, social, or complex problem-solving requirements.

■ Work-Life Balance

8.6/10 - Excellent work-life balance

■ Personality Fit (RIASEC)

Higher scores indicate better personality fit for this career type.

Realistic	5.4/10	Investigative	8.6/10
Artistic	4.8/10	Social	9.0/10
Enterprising	5.4/10	Conventional	6.2/10

■ Top Skills Required

Communication skills, Compassion, Detail oriented, Dexterity, Physical stamina, Resourcefulness, Time-management skills

✓ Strengths

- High Demand
- Flexible Work
- Continuous Learning

■ Challenges

- Burnout Risk
- Rapid Technological Change

■ What They Do

Physical Therapists help patients **improve movement, manage pain, and recover from injuries or illnesses**. They develop treatment plans, guide therapeutic exercises, and use specialized techniques to restore physical function. Their work is critical in rehabilitation, healthcare, and patient mobility.

This career is well suited for individuals who enjoy healthcare, problem-solving, and working closely with patients to improve physical well-being.

What Do Physical Therapists Do?

These professionals evaluate patients, design therapy programs, and provide interventions to enhance mobility, reduce pain, and prevent disability.

Common responsibilities include:

- Assessing patients' physical condition, mobility, and functional limitations
- Developing individualized treatment plans and therapeutic goals
- Guiding patients through exercises, stretches, and movement techniques
- Using manual therapy, modalities, or assistive devices as needed
- Monitoring patient progress and modifying therapy plans
- Educating patients and caregivers on exercises, safety, and preventive care
- Collaborating with physicians, occupational therapists, and healthcare teams

Key Areas of Physical Therapy

Physical therapists may focus on specific patient populations, conditions, or treatment approaches:

- Orthopedic Therapy: Rehabilitation following musculoskeletal injuries or surgeries
- Geriatric Therapy: Enhancing mobility and balance in older adults
- Neurological Therapy: Supporting patients with stroke, spinal cord, or neurological conditions
- Pediatric Therapy: Assisting children with developmental or physical challenges
- Sports and Rehabilitation Therapy: Preventing and treating sports-related injuries

Skills and Abilities Needed

Physical therapists combine clinical knowledge, analytical, and interpersonal skills.

Core Professional Skills

Personal Qualities That Matter

Education and Career Pathway

This role typically requires advanced education and clinical training:

- Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) Degree: Accredited professional program
- Clinical Internship or Residency: Hands-on experience in rehabilitation or healthcare settings
- Licensure: Required to practice as a physical therapist in all states
- Continuing Education: Maintaining licensure and staying current with therapy techniques and research
- Specialty Certification (optional): Areas such as sports, pediatrics, geriatrics, or neurological rehabilitation

Where Do Physical Therapists Work?

They are employed in organizations that provide rehabilitation and healthcare services:

- Hospitals and Rehabilitation Centers
- Outpatient Therapy Clinics
- Long-Term Care and Assisted Living Facilities

- Schools, Sports Teams, and Athletic Programs
- Home Healthcare Services

Work environments include clinics, hospitals, patient homes, rehabilitation gyms, and schools.

Is This Career Difficult?

This career requires clinical knowledge, physical ability, and interpersonal skills. Physical therapists must design effective treatment plans, motivate patients, and adapt strategies to individual needs.

Who Should Consider This Career?

This career may be a strong fit if you:

- Enjoy helping patients regain or maintain physical function
- Are empathetic, patient, and motivating
- Have strong communication and observational skills
- Can develop creative solutions for rehabilitation challenges
- Want a career enhancing mobility, independence, and quality of life

How to Prepare Early

- Take courses in biology, anatomy, physiology, and health sciences
- Volunteer or intern in rehabilitation, hospitals, or therapy clinics
- Develop communication, observation, and problem-solving skills
- Explore accredited Doctor of Physical Therapy programs
- Gain experience in patient care, exercises, and therapeutic techniques

Physical therapists restore mobility, reduce pain, and improve patients' functional independence, enhancing quality of life through personalized rehabilitation.