

**Professional Readiness Reflection Essay**

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As I near the end of my didactic coursework in OT school, I've been reflecting on how much I've grown both personally and professionally over the last two years. When I started this program, I had a basic understanding of what occupational therapy was, but now I can really see myself stepping into the role of an OT with confidence and purpose. Through my classes, labs, and fieldwork experiences, I've developed skills that show I'm ready to begin professional practice, while also recognizing areas I still want to strengthen.

I can prove that I'm prepared to step into the role of an OT through a combination of academic work, clinical experiences, and professional behaviors. My success in courses like Theory, Application, and Team Collaboration has shown that I can apply anatomy, theory, and evidence-based reasoning to real cases. For example, during case studies in PBL and practical/OSCE exams, I learned how to assess and plan interventions that match the client's goals and occupational needs. In lab, I became more confident using assessments, became more comfortable with activity analysis, and got to experience the practice of creating interventions. I've also been able to show my growing competence through my fieldwork experiences, where I worked directly with clients and learned how to adapt to different settings and populations.

Throughout this program, I've consistently shown the professional behaviors expected of an OT. For me, this has meant being dependable, prepared, and respectful in both classroom and clinical settings. I've communicated clearly with peers, professors, and clients, and stayed open to feedback even when it challenged me. Whether it was group work, lab, or fieldwork, I tried to show professionalism through my actions, my attitude, and the way I interacted with others.

Ethical behavior is one of the most important parts of our profession. Throughout the program, I've learned to align my decisions with the AOTA Code of Ethics, especially when it comes to respecting clients' autonomy and promoting beneficence (AOTA, 2025). During group

projects and clinical scenarios, I tried to be dependable, honest, and compassionate, which are values that I know will carry into my practice. I've also learned that being ethical sometimes means advocating for what's right, even when it's uncomfortable. For instance, when discussing cases where productivity or billing pressures came up, I learned to think critically about how to stay client-centered and ethical.

Over time, I've become much more confident in my critical thinking skills. Early on, I used to rely heavily on what the "right answer" was, but now I can reason through complex situations by combining theory, client context, and evidence (McCombie & Antanavage, 2017). I now approach client problems with curiosity, not fear. For example, at fieldwork, when a client didn't want to participate in my treatment plan, I found ways to adapt it to incorporate more aspects that sparked his interests instead of giving up. I ask questions, think through alternatives, and adjust plans when needed. Even though this used to be scary for me, I am now confident.

The importance of using evidence has been emphasized in almost every course. I've learned to support my clinical reasoning by integrating research articles and best-practice guidelines into decision-making (AOTA, 2023). For example, when we discussed CBT and DBT for clients with bipolar disorder, I learned how evidence informs both the choice of intervention and the way it's delivered. This skill will be key for me in the future, especially when working with clients who have complex conditions.

I've also grown a lot in communication and teamwork. Working with peers on presentations and role plays taught me how to express my ideas clearly and listen to others' perspectives. I learned how to express my thoughts while also being able to effectively take feedback and listen to others. I've also learned to communicate respectfully with people from diverse backgrounds, which is something I value deeply. During my time in Guatemala, I got to

experience firsthand how to communicate and treat people with diverse backgrounds while still honoring their culture, values, and lived experiences. During our interdisciplinary team role plays, I saw how every profession contributes something unique to client care, and how important it is for OTs to advocate for our role while still collaborating effectively.

Working interprofessionally has been one of the biggest learning experiences for me. Through projects like discharge planning role plays, I learned how to communicate with team members like case managers, psychiatrists, and nurses to create a cohesive care plan. I also had the amazing opportunity to co-treat with an SLP student during my fieldwork experience in the stroke clinic. This experience taught me so much about how collaborative care leads to more holistic and effective treatment for clients. These activities helped me understand not just what OT does, but how we fit into the bigger healthcare picture.

For this paper, I asked two peers who have worked closely with me throughout the program to share one behavior they think could become a challenge for me in the workplace. Both were honest but supportive, and their feedback felt very consistent with the things I already know about myself. The first peer shared that I sometimes take on too much responsibility in group work because I want everything to be done well and on time. She said that while this can be a strength, it could also turn into a challenge if I end up overwhelmed or if I don't ask for help soon enough. She mentioned that a future supervisor might worry about me trying to manage more than I realistically should. The second peer said that I can be very detail-oriented, but at times, I get stuck trying to make something perfect rather than moving forward. She felt that in a fast-paced clinic or hospital setting, this could slow me down or make documentation take longer than it needs to. She also said that a supervisor might find it frustrating if I double-check myself too much instead of trusting my clinical judgment.

Honestly, none of this surprised me. I know that I tend to take on a lot and to want things to be done a certain way. Hearing it from my peers made me realize that the same qualities that help me academically could turn into challenges in practice if I'm not careful. It also reminded me that being a good OT doesn't mean doing everything perfectly, but instead being efficient, collaborative, and able to balance quality with reality.

To address these potential challenges, I want to be more intentional about setting boundaries with my workload and practicing asking for help sooner. During fieldwork, I plan to check in with my supervisor regularly to make sure I'm prioritizing tasks appropriately and not taking on unnecessary stress. For the perfectionism piece, I'm going to work on trusting my clinical reasoning by reminding myself how prepared and educated I am. Overall, the feedback was helpful and gave me an idea of what I need to pay attention to as I move into Level II fieldwork and eventually into practice.

Looking back on the past two years, I can see how each class, lab, fieldwork experience, and even the challenges have shaped me into someone ready to grow into the role of an OT. I've built a foundation of professional behaviors, ethical reasoning, communication, and evidence-based practice that I know I will carry with me into fieldwork and beyond. I also recognize that learning doesn't stop here. The feedback from my peers and the moments where I had to adjust, rethink, or advocate remind me that being an OT means constantly evolving. As I move into Level II Fieldwork, I feel motivated, prepared, and grounded in the values that first brought me to this profession. I am proud of how far I've come, and I'm committed to continuing this growth as I work toward becoming a reflective, competent, and compassionate occupational therapist.

## References

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