

**Quick  
Reference  
Dictionary**

**FOR**

**Occupational  
Therapy**

**SECOND EDITION**

Edited by

**Karen Jacobs, EdD, OTR/L, CPE, FAOTA**

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# **Quick Reference Dictionary FOR Occupational Therapy**

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**Karen Jacobs, EdD, OTR/L, CPE, FAOTA**

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Boston, Massachusetts

**SLACK**  
INCORPORATED

6900 Grove Road, Thorofare, NJ 08086

Publisher: John H. Bond

Editorial Director: Amy E. Drummond

Assistant Editor: Elisabeth DeBoer

Illustrations of Range of Motion and Splints by Barbara Revilla

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Quick reference dictionary for occupational therapy/edited by  
Karen Jacobs.--2nd ed.

p. cm. Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 1-55642-412-4 (alk. paper)

1. Occupational therapy--Dictionaries. I. Jacobs, Karen.

[DNLM: 1. Occupational Therapy Terminology--English.

WB 15 Q6 1999]

RM735.J345 1999

615.8'515'03--dc21

DNLM/DLC

for Library of Congress

99-21245

CIP

Printed in the United States of America.

Published by: SLACK Incorporated

6900 Grove Road

Thorofare, NJ 08086-9447 USA

Telephone: 856-848-1000

Fax: 856-853-5991

World Wide Web: <http://www.slackinc.com>

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Last digit is print number: 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

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## Acknowledgments

*The quality of life is determined by its activities. — Aristotle*

To write a book takes an indomitable will, but to complete it requires the support, assistance, and perseverance of many. My appreciation and gratitude are extended to my friends at SLACK Incorporated—Amy, John, Peter, Jenn, Debra, and Betsy—for making this second edition a splendid reality. I thank the authors of the following SLACK Incorporated textbooks, whose glossaries were the mainstay of terms: *Occupational Therapy: Overcoming Human Performance Deficits*, by Charles H. Christiansen, EdD, OTR, OT(C), FAOTA, and Carolyn M. Baum, PhD, OTR, FAOTA; and *Practice Issues in Occupational Therapy: Intraprofessional Team Building and Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant: Principles, Concepts, and Techniques* (2nd ed.) by Sally Ryan, COTA, ROH.

I offer appreciation to the colleagues who provided peer review. Your feedback has been invaluable in guiding this second edition to keep pace with the changing marketplace. Special thanks are offered to Yvette Méré, who wrote the Appendices of Spanish phrases and words, and to those students at Springfield College's occupational therapy program, who compiled the Appendix on Common Frames of Reference Used in Occupational Therapy.

To my family and friends, you are my source of love and strength. Thank you for always being there for me.

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## About the Editor

Karen Jacobs, EdD, OTR/L, CPE, FAOTA, is an occupational therapist and an ergonomist, as well as a Clinical Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy at Boston University. She is the current President of the American Occupational Therapy Association and its past Vice President, author of texts on work practice, the founding editor of the interdisciplinary & international journal, *WORK: A Journal of Prevention, Assessment & Rehabilitation* (IOS Press, The Netherlands), and is widely published. Professor Jacobs is also the co-editor of the SLACK Incorporated books *Work Hardening: State of the Art* and *Functions of a Manager in Occupational Therapy*. She is internationally recognized as an expert in work practice and has presented numerous workshops, keynote addresses, and training programs related to ergonomics and marketing.

Professor Jacobs is married to Matthew Gold and is the mother of three children—Laela, Joshua, and Ariel. They live in Andover, Massachusetts. She balances work with occupations such as gardening, travel, photography, and cross-country skiing.

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## Introduction

*Never bend your head. Always hold it high. Look the world straight in the face. —Helen Keller*

We are entering the new millennium and with it heralds an even more rapidly changing health and rehabilitation age. The significant challenge we face is how can we best prepare future occupational therapy practitioners to successfully meet the demands of being a competent, ethical, skilled, and knowledgeable practitioner? The future occupational therapy practitioner will need to go beyond our scope of practice and become a technologically savvy, globally aware entrepreneur who is proficient in:

- effective communication skills;
- critical thinking and problem solving skills;
- team building skills;
- risk-taking and negotiation skills; and
- marketing and business skills.

Importantly, our future practitioners will need to be customer rights advocates and policy change agents. The second edition of the *Quick Reference Dictionary for Occupational Therapy* has been designed and updated to assist you in this quest.

Keeping with its user-friendly, pocket size, this second edition has been greatly expanded from the foundation of terms used in its predecessor. The appendices have increased too, from 19 to 35, with new additions such as: prescription drugs delineated by disease or disorder; charts of range of motion, reflexes, and seizures; diagrams of muscles and cranial nerves; and a snapshot of commonly used frames of reference. To aid in becoming bilingual, useful Spanish phrases and words are also included.

As the profession of occupational therapy evolves, so too, will the *Quick Reference Dictionary for Occupational Therapy*. I welcome your comments for suggestions in keeping this a dynamic resource.

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# A

**Abbreviation Expansion Program:** Software that allows a person to rapidly enter a few defined characters (abbreviation) to print out an expanded long string of characters (expansion) on a computer or communication aid. This system saves the user typing time and effort.

**abduction (ABD):** Movement of a body part (usually the limbs) away from the midline of the body.

**absence:** An epileptic seizure characterized by abrupt loss of consciousness for a few seconds, followed by a rapid, complete recovery.

**absolute endurance:** Muscular endurance when force of contraction tested does not consider individual differences in strength.

**absorption:** Process by which a substance is made available to the body fluids for distribution.

**abstract thinking:** Ability to derive meaning from an event or experience beyond the tangible aspects of the event itself.

**acceleration:** Increase in the speed or velocity of an object or reaction.

**accessibility:** Degree to which an exterior or interior environment is available for use, in relation to an individual's physical and/or psychological abilities.

**accessory movers:** Muscles capable of performing a motion; assist prime movers.

**accommodation:** Process of adapting or adjusting one thing or set of things to another.

**accreditation:** Process used to evaluate educational programs against a set of standards that represent the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for competent practice. The Accreditation Council of Occupational Therapy Education accredits occupational therapy programs.

**accuracy of response:** Percentage of errors and correct responses recorded.

**achalasia:** Failure of a circular sphincter or other muscle to relax and open (e.g., cardiac sphincter between the esophagus and stomach).

**achievement behavior:** Guided by societal standards, the behavior facilitates risk-taking ability and the development of a sense of competition.

**achieving stage:** Schai's early adulthood stage that involves the application of intelligence to situations that have profound consequences for achieving long-term goals (e.g., those involving careers and knowledge).

**achromatopsia:** Color blindness.

**acquired amputation:** Person is born with all limbs, but after injury or accident, a limb is removed in part or total.

**acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS):** Syndrome caused by the human immunodeficiency virus that renders immune cells ineffective, permitting opportunistic infections, malignancies, and neurologic diseases to develop; it is transmitted sexually or through exposure to contaminated blood.

**acromion process:** Outer projection of the spine of the scapula; considered to be the highest part of the shoulder, it connects laterally to the clavicle.

**active assistive range of motion (AAROM):** Amount of motion at a given joint achieved by the person using his or her own muscle strength with assistance.

**active listening:** Skills that allow a person to hear, understand, and indicate that the message has been communicated.

**active play therapy:** Therapy in which the therapist uses toys and particular play to advance a child's treatment or development.

**active range of motion (AROM):** Amount of motion at a given joint achieved by the person using his or her own muscle strength.

**active stretch:** Stretch produced by internal muscular force.

**activities of daily living (ADL):** Self-maintenance tasks.<sup>UTIII</sup> The typical life tasks required for self-care and self-maintenance (e.g., grooming, bathing, and eating).

**activity:** The nature and extent of functioning at the level of the person. Activities may be limited in duration and quality. <sup>ICIDH-2</sup> Productive action required for the development, maturation, and use of sensory, motor, social, psychological, and cognitive functions.

**activity analysis:** Breaking down the activity into components to determine the human functions needed to complete the activity.

**activity configuration:** An evaluative tool that identifies one's use of time, the value of one's daily activities, and the changes one would like to make in time management and routines.

**activity pattern analysis:** Any method for determining the type, amount, and organization of activities in which individuals engage on a recurring basis.

**activity theory of aging:** Psychosocial theory of aging suggesting that successful aging occurs when the older person continues to participate in the satisfying activities of his or her earlier adulthood.

- activity therapies:** Therapies in which doing, rather than talking, is the primary mode of intervention.
- activity tolerance:** The ability to sustain engagement in an activity over a period of time.
- acuity:** Ability of the sensory organ to receive information.
- acupressure:** Use of touch at specific points along the meridians of the body to release the tensions that cause various physical symptoms.
- acupuncture:** Chinese practice of inserting needles into specific points along the meridians of the body to relieve pain and induce anesthesia. It is used for preventive and therapeutic purposes.
- acute:** Of short and intense duration.
- adaptation:** Satisfactory adjustment of individuals within their environment over time. Successful adaptation equates with quality of life.
- adaptive device:** Special tool that is an adaptation of a common item designed to allow an easier completion of self-care, recreation, or work-related activities by a person.
- adaptive response:** Behavior elicited by sensory stimulation that is of a more advanced, organized, flexible, or productive nature than that which occurred before stimulation.
- additive activities profile test (ADAPT):** Self-administered test that relates activities of daily living to physical fitness.
- adduction (ADD):** Movement toward the midline of the body.
- adductor pads:** Pads at the sides of a wheelchair to hold the hips and legs toward the midline of the body.
- adenohypophysis:** The anterior lobe of the pituitary gland.
- adhesion:** Fibrous band holding parts together that are normally separated.
- adjustment reaction disorder:** Characterized by reduced ability to function and adapt in response to a stressful life event. The disorder begins shortly after the event and normal functioning is expected to return when the particular stressor is removed.
- administration:** Management of institutional activities.
- Administration on Aging:** U.S. Federal agency designated to carry out the provisions of the Older Americans Act of 1965.
- administrative controls:** Decisions made by management intended to reduce the duration, frequency, and severity of exposure to existing workplace hazards. It leaves the hazards at the workplace, but attempts to diminish the effects on the worker (e.g., job rotation or job enlargement).
- adverse effects:** Undesired consequences of chemical agents resulting from toxic doses or allergies.

**advocacy:** Actively supporting a cause, an idea, or a policy (e.g., speaking in favor); recommending accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**aerobic exercise:** Any physical exercise that requires additional effort by the heart and lungs to meet the increased demand by the skeletal muscles for oxygen. Oxygen is present during exercise (as opposed to during anaerobic exercise).

**aerobic metabolism:** Energy production utilizing oxygen.

**aerobic power:** Maximal oxygen consumption; the maximal volume of oxygen consumed per unit of time.

**aesthesiometer:** Tool used to apply and test two-point discrimination stimuli.

**affect:** Emotion or feelings conveyed in a person's face or body; the subjective experiencing of a feeling or emotion.

**affection stage:** Third stage in group development. The focus of this stage is on how group members feel about one another. *Synonym:* stage of group cohesiveness.

**affective disorder:** Marked disturbances of mood; typically characterized by disproportionately elevated mood (mania), extremely depressed mood (depression), or swings between the two (bipolar disorder/manic depressive disorder).

**affective state:** The emotional or mental state of an individual, which can range from unconscious to very agitated; sometimes referred to as behavioral state.

**afferent:** Conducting toward a structure.

**afferent neuron:** A nerve cell that sends nerve impulses from sensory receptors to the central nervous system.

**age-appropriate activities:** Activities and materials that are consistent with those used by non-disabled age mates in the same culture.

**age-integrated housing:** Communities that are for people of all ages.

**ageism:** Prejudice that one age is better than another.

**age-segregated housing:** Communities specifically for older adults.

**age stratification model:** Influential model in human development based on society's behavioral expectations, as expressed through age-specific statuses and roles to which societal participants are expected to conform.

**agglutination:** Act of blood cells clumping together.

**aging:** Passage of years in a person's life; the process of growing older.

**aging in place:** Where older adults remain in their own homes, retirement housing, or other familiar surroundings as they grow old.

**agnosia:** Inability to comprehend sensory information due to central nervous system damage.

**agonist:** Muscle that is capable of providing the power so a bone can move.

**agoraphobia:** An abnormal fear of being in an open space.

**agraphia:** Inability to write, caused by impairment of central nervous system processing (not by paralysis).

**airplane splint:** Conforming positioning splint that is applied after skin graft surgery. It stabilizes and maintains the shoulder in approximately 90 degrees of horizontal abduction.

**akinesia:** Inability to initiate movement.

**alarm reaction:** The body's immediate response to imposed stress.

**alcoholism:** A chronic disease characterized by an uncontrollable urge to consume alcoholic beverages excessively to the point that it interferes with normal life activities.

**alexia:** Condition of being unable to read.

**alienist:** Early term for psychiatrist.

**allele:** Alternative form of a gene coded for a particular trait.

**Allen Cognitive Level Test (ACL):** Test that screens and assesses individual cognitive levels through performance of set tasks. Developed by occupational therapist Claudia Allen.

**allied health:** Broad field of study encompassing diverse health professionals with special training in such fields as occupational therapy, physical therapy, respiratory therapy, speech pathology, and health information services, as well as laboratory, radiology, and dietetic services. It does not include physicians, nurses, dentists, or podiatrists.

**alopecia:** Absence or loss of hair; baldness.

**alpha error (or Type 1 error):** When the null hypothesis is rejected, the probability of being wrong or the probability of rejecting it when it should have been accepted.

**alternative delivery system (ADS):** Generic term for new systems (e.g., managed care) seen as alternatives to traditional fee-for-service indemnity health insurance plans.

**alternative keyboard:** Matrix of shapes, sizes, and switches that is used to input data into a computer.

**altruism:** Unselfish concern for the welfare of others.

**Alzheimer's disease:** Disabling neurological disorder that may be characterized by memory loss; disorientation; paranoia; hallucinations; violent changes of mood; loss of ability to read, write, eat, or walk; and finally dementia. It usually affects people over the age of 65 and has no known cause or cure.

**ambulate:** To walk from place to place.

**ambulatory care:** Care delivered on an outpatient basis.

**American Journal of Occupational Therapy (AJOT):** Official journal of the American Occupational Therapy Association. It provides literature on occupational therapy research, education, and practice.

**American National Standards Institute (ANSI):** Clearinghouse and coordinating body for voluntary standards activity on the national level.

**American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA):** The American professional society that represents the field of occupational therapy and those who practice within that field. It monitors the quality of occupational therapy services through determining guidelines for occupational therapy training programs, setting standards for practice, and supporting regulations, legislation, and research. It also publishes several publications, such as the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *OT Week*, *SIS Newsletters*, and *OT Practice*.

**American Occupational Therapy Foundation (AOTF):** Established in 1965, the AOTF fosters research in the field of occupational therapy.

**American Sign Language (ASL):** Nonverbal method of communication using the hands and fingers to represent letters, numbers, and concepts. (See Appendix 12.)

**American Society of Hand Therapists (ASHT):** Established in 1978, the ASHT is concerned with hand rehabilitation education and research among practitioners in this area. The *Journal of Hand Therapy* is a publication resulting from the work of the ASHT.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) (ADA):** U.S. Federal Act that protects persons with disabilities from discrimination in employment, transportation, public accommodations, telecommunications, and activities of state and local government.

**amnesia:** Dissociative disorder characterized by memory loss during a certain time period or of personal identity.

**amniocentesis:** A low-risk prenatal diagnostic procedure of collecting amniotic fluid and fetal cells for examination through the use of a needle inserted into the abdomen.

**amnion:** Innermost membrane enclosing the developing fetus and the fluid in which the fetus is bathed (amniotic fluid).

**amphetamines:** Group of stimulating drugs that produce heightened levels of energy and, in large doses, nervousness, sleeplessness, and paranoid delusions.

**amputation:** Partial or complete removal of a limb; may be congenital or acquired.

**amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS):** Progressive neural disease that attacks the upper motor neurons in the medulla oblongata and the lower motor neurons of the spinal cord.  
*Synonym:* Lou Gehrig's disease.

**anaerobic exercise:** Exercise without oxygen; oxygen intake cannot keep up with amount of exercise, so oxygen debt occurs.

**anakusis:** Total hearing loss; deafness.

**analgesic:** Drug for reducing pain. Some mild analgesics are non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g., Motrin), and some analgesics are narcotics (e.g., morphine).

**analog:** Continuous information system (e.g., a clock with dials that move continuously on a continuum, as opposed to a digital clock).

**analogue:** Contrived situation created in order to elicit specific client behaviors and allow for their observation.

**analysis:** An examination of the nature of something for the purpose of prediction or comparison.

**analysis of covariance (ANCOVA):** Controlling the effects of any variable(s) known to correlate with the dependent variable.

**analysis of variance (or F ratio or ANOVA):** Establishing whether or not a significant difference exists among the means of several samples.

**anaphylactic shock:** Condition in which the flow of blood throughout the body becomes suddenly inadequate due to dilation of the blood vessels as a result of allergic reaction.

**anaplasia:** Reverting of a specialized cell to its primitive or embryonic state. *Synonym:* dedifferentiation.

**anastomosis:** Surgical formation of a passage between two open vessels.

**anatomical position:** Standing erect, arms at the sides, with palms facing outward.

**anatomic focus:** Title of the Splint Classification System splint category that delineates the major joints or body segments that the splint involves.

**anatomy:** Area of study concerned with the internal and external structures of the body and how these structures interrelate.

**andragogy:** Art and science of helping adults learn.

**androgens:** Substances that produce or stimulate the development of male characteristics.

**anencephaly:** Birth defect that characteristically leaves the child with little or no brain mass.

**anesthetic:** Drug that reduces or eliminates sensation. These can affect the whole body (e.g., nitrous oxide, a general anesthetic) or a particular part of the body (e.g., Xylocaine, a local anesthetic).

- aneurysm:** Localized dilation of a blood vessel due to a congenital defect or weakness in the vessel wall.
- angina:** Chest pain due to insufficient flow of blood to the heart muscle.
- anhedonia:** Inability to enjoy what is ordinarily pleasurable.
- ankylosis:** Condition of the joints in which they become stiffened and nonfunctional.
- anniversary reaction:** Emotional feelings of sadness and loneliness on holidays, birthdays, and on the anniversary of the death of a significant other.
- anomaly:** Pronounced departure from the norm.
- anomia:** Loss of ability to name objects or to recognize or recall names; can be receptive or expressive.
- anorexia nervosa:** Eating disorder characterized by distortion of body image and fear of becoming fat, resulting in the refusal to eat enough to maintain appropriate weight (maintenance of weight 15% below normal for age, height, and body type is indicative of anorexia). Most often occurs in adolescent girls and young women.
- anosognosia:** Inability to perceive a deficit, especially paralysis on one side of the body, possibly caused by a lesion in the right parietal lobe of brain.
- ANOVA (analysis of variance):** Abbreviation for statistical method used in research to compare sample populations.
- anoxemia:** Absence or deficiency of oxygen in the blood.
- anoxia:** Absence or deficiency of oxygen in the tissues.
- antacid:** Drug that neutralizes hydrochloric acid in the stomach.
- antagonist:** Muscle that resists the action of a prime mover (agonist).
- anterior:** Toward the front of the body.
- anterior fontanel:** Region of the head that is found as a membrane-covered portion on the top of the head, generally closing by the time a child reaches 18 months. *Synonym:* the soft spot.
- anthropometry:** Study of people in terms of their physical dimensions.
- antianginal:** Drug that prevents angina.
- antiarrhythmic:** Drug that helps restore heart rhythm to a regular cycle.
- antibiotic:** Chemical substance that has the ability to inhibit or kill foreign organisms in the body.
- anticoagulant:** Agent that delays or inhibits blood clotting.
- antidepressants:** Drugs used for relief of symptoms of depression (e.g., Prozac, Zoloft).
- antimicrobial:** Designed to destroy or inhibit the growth of bacterial, fungal, or viral organisms.



**antineoplastic agents:** Substance, procedure, or measures used in treating cancer, administered with the purpose of inhibiting the production of malignant cells.

**antisocial personality disorder:** Personality disorder resulting in a chronic pattern of disregard for socially acceptable behavior, impulsiveness, irresponsibility, and lack of remorseful feelings. *Synonyms:* sociopathy, psychopathy, or antisocial reaction.

**anuria:** Absence of urine excretion.

**anxiety:** Characterized by an overwhelming sense of apprehension; the expectation that something bad is happening or will happen; class of mental disorders characterized by chronic and debilitating anxiety (e.g., generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, phobias, and post-traumatic stress disorder).

**anxiolytic:** Anxiety-reducing drugs formerly called tranquilizers.

**aphakia:** Absence of the crystalline lens of the eye.

**aphasia:** Absence of cognitive language processing ability which results in deficits in speech, writing, or sign communication. Can be receptive, expressive, or both.

**aphonia:** Inability to produce speech sounds from the larynx.

**apnea:** Temporary cessation of breathing.

**aponeurosis:** Fibrous or membranous tissue that connects a muscle to the part that the muscle moves.

**appearance-reality distinction:** Person's ability to make an inference about underlying reality rather than merely translating perceived appearances into a judgment.

**appendicular skeleton:** Bones forming the limbs, pectoral girdle, and pelvic girdle of the body.

**apprenticeship:** Learning process in which novices advance their skills and understanding through active participation with a more skilled person.

**apraxia:** Inability to motor plan, execute purposeful movement, manipulate objects, or use objects appropriately.

**apraxia of speech:** Disruption of speech motor planning.

**archetypal places:** Settings in the physical environment that support fundamental human functions, including taking shelter, sleeping, mating, grooming, feeding, excreting, storing, establishing territory, playing, routing, meeting, competing, and working.

**architectural barrier:** Structural impediment to the approach, mobility, and functional use of an interior or exterior environment.

**Architectural Barriers Act (1969):** U.S. Federal legislation that requires accessibility to certain facilities.

**arm sling:** Orthosis used to provide support to the proximal upper extremity.