# Pre-Optometry Primer

## What Does a Doctor of Optometry (O.D.) Do?

- Perform vision tests to check for sight problems, such as nearsightedness or farsightedness
- Check for eye diseases, such as glaucoma; prescribe eyeglasses, contact lenses, and medications
- Provide other treatments, such as vision therapy or low-vision rehabilitation
- Provide pre- and postoperative care to patients undergoing eye surgery—for example, examining a patient’s eyes the day after surgery
- Evaluate patients for the presence of diseases such as diabetes and refer them to other health care providers as needed; promote eye health by counseling patients

From the online *Occupational Handbook, 2012*

## What Degree Do I Need to Be an Optometrist?

You must earn an O.D. from a college that meets accreditation standards set by the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO).

## What Classes Do I Need to Take to Get into Optometry School?*

Some typical prerequisite courses include:

- 6-8 credits of general biology with lab
- 6-8 credits of inorganic chemistry with lab
- 4-8 credits of organic chemistry with lab
- 6-8 credits of physics with lab
- 3-5 credits of microbiology with lab
- 6 credits of English
- 3-6 credits of mathematics
- 6-15 credits of humanities and social sciences

*The above list is not exhaustive, and prerequisites for admission vary by school. For specific college requirements, visit the ASCO admission requirements handbook.

## What Test Do I Need to Take for Admission?

In addition to satisfying pre-optometry course requirements, applicants must submit test scores from the Optometry Admission Test (OAT). The OAT covers Natural Sciences, Reading Comprehension, Physics, and Quantitative Reasoning.

## What Does a Competitive Applicant Look Like?

The average OAT score for matriculants is about 320 and the average GPA is about 3.4.

## How Do I Apply?

All 21 schools and colleges of optometry are participating in Optometry’s Centralized Application Service (OptomCAS). Applicants who apply through OptomCAS submit a completed web-based application comprised of biographical data, colleges and universities attended, academic course history, letters of recommendation, work experience, extracurricular activities, honors, and a personal essay. For more information about OptomCAS and to access the application, please visit [www.optomcas.org](http://www.optomcas.org).

## When Do I Apply?

*Don’t procrastinate!* OptomCAS typically opens late June/early July. Application deadlines vary, and it is your responsibility to know the deadlines for each of the schools to which you apply. Apply well in advance in order to have the best chance of admission.

## What Sites Do I Need to Check Out?

- Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO): [www.opted.org](http://www.opted.org)
- American Optometric Student Association: [http://www.theaosa.org](http://www.theaosa.org)