

# Orthoptist

Orthoptists specialise in diagnosing and managing eye conditions, in a wide age range of patients, that largely affect eye movements, visual development or the way the eyes work together.

## Working life

Orthoptics is an exciting and varied career. It offers you the chance to make a difference, a high degree of flexibility and excellent employment prospects. You'll work with patients every day to help improve their care and their lives.

Orthoptists investigate, diagnose and treat defects of binocular vision and abnormalities of eye movement. For example, they may deal with:

- misalignment of the eyes (strabismus or squint)
- double vision (diplopia)
- reduced vision (amblyopia)

## What you'll do as an orthoptist

You'll see a huge variety of patients and help them with many different issues as an orthoptist. Some examples of things you might work on include:

- assessing the vision of babies and small children including children with special needs
- ensuring speedy rehabilitation of patients who have suffered stroke [1] or brain injuries
- diagnosing and monitoring long term eye conditions such as glaucoma

Variety is one of the most exciting things about being an orthoptist. As well as seeing different patients and conditions you'll also have the opportunity to work independently as well as part of a multi-disciplinary team including consultant eye surgeons (ophthalmologists), optometrists and nurses.

Treatments can include eye patches, glasses or exercises. Some eye problems, such as double vision, may be indicators of other health problems including multiple sclerosis or tumour. You'll play an important part in spotting these serious conditions.

Most orthoptists work in the NHS. You may work in an eye hospital, hospital eye department or a community health centre. You may also visit schools, including special schools. Outside the NHS, you may work in private clinics.

You'll work independently or with other eye specialists such as consultant eye surgeons (ophthalmologists), optometrists and nurses [2]. You may work in multidisciplinary teams dealing with, for example, children or stroke [1] patients.

# How to become an orthoptist

To become an orthoptist you'll need to train and study for an undergraduate degree. Entry requirements vary depending on where you'd like to study. You can find the orthoptics course to suit you using our Course Finder tool. [3]

## Want to learn more?

- Find out about the entry requirements and training to be an orthoptist. [4]

- Pay and conditions

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Orthoptists in the NHS work standard hours, which are likely to be around 37.5 a week. You will usually start on band 5 of the Agenda for Change pay rates [5]. In a private clinic, your hours of work depend on client needs and may include evenings and weekends. Some orthoptists have to travel to clinics, health centres or schools.

- Where the role can lead

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Once qualified, you're likely to join the British and Irish Orthoptists Society [6] (BIOS). You'll have to keep your skills and knowledge up to date with annual CPD (continuing professional development). BIOS runs courses, conferences and seminars where orthoptists can exchange ideas and update their skills.

In the NHS, with experience, you could become a specialist orthoptist. You could also progress to senior or head orthoptist. As head of an orthoptics service, you would be responsible both for a team of staff and for managing a budget.

You might also choose to move into teaching orthoptics or into research.

There may be opportunities to work in a private clinic. Some orthoptists set up their own clinics, often with other eye professionals.

- Job market and vacancies

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In November 2018, there were 1,495 orthoptists registered with the Health and Care Professions Council [7].

The British and Irish Orthoptists Society (BIOS) [6] has a jobs section on its website.

Most NHS trusts advertise their vacancies on NHS Jobs [8]. Some advertise on their own websites.

You can find a list of NHS organisations NHS Choices [9].

If you're applying for a role either directly in the NHS or in an organisation that provides NHS services, you'll be asked to show how you think the NHS values apply in your everyday work. The same will be true if you are applying for a university course funded by the NHS.

Find out more about NHS values. [10]

- Further information

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- British and Irish Orthoptic Society [11]

## Other roles that may interest you

- Ophthalmology [12]
- Ophthalmic and vision science [13]
- Optometrist [14]
- Prosthetist/orthotist [15]

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**Source URL:** <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/roles-allied-health-professions/orthoptist>

### Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Stroke>

[2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing>

[3] [http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/course-finder?field\\_leading\\_to\\_a\\_career\\_in\\_tid=193&field\\_qualification\\_type\\_tid=All&field\\_study\\_mode\\_tid=A](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/course-finder?field_leading_to_a_career_in_tid=193&field_qualification_type_tid=All&field_study_mode_tid=A)

[4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/orthoptist/entry-requirements-and-training-orthoptist>

[5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits/agenda-change-pay-rates>

[6] <http://www.orthoptics.org.uk/>

[7] <http://www.hcpc-uk.org>

[8] <http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/>

[9] <http://www.nhs.uk/aboutnhs/howthenhsworks/authoritiesandtrusts/Pages/Authoritiesandtrusts.aspx>

[10] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/working-health/nhs-constitution>

[11] <https://www.orthoptics.org.uk/>

[12] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/ophthalmology>

[13] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/healthcare-science/roles-healthcare-science/physiological-sciences/ophthalmic-and-vision-science>

[14] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/clinical-support-staff/optometrist>

[15] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/roles-allied-health-professions/prosthetistorthotist>