

Prosthetist/orthotist

Prosthetists provide an artificial replacement for patients who are missing a limb. Orthotists provide a range of aids to correct problems or deformities in people's nerves, muscles or bones.

This page has information on being a prosthetist and an orthotist with links to further information.

Working life

As a **prosthetist** your aim is to design and create [prostheses](#) [1] which match as closely as possible the missing limb.

As an **orthotist**, you'll provide splints, braces and special footwear (orthotics).

As a **prosthetist**, you first make a model of the area where the prosthesis will be fitted.

An important part of the work is assessing the patient and understanding what they want and need their prosthesis to help them achieve. For example, some [prostheses](#) [1] are designed for particular sports.

Once the prosthesis is made, you'll fit it. You'll may need to make adjustments to ensure the patient's comfort and best possible performance. You'll spend time helping patients get used to using the new prosthetic.

You'll work with people of all ages who may have

- been born with a limb missing
- lost an limb in an accident or during military service
- had a limb amputated as a result of a condition such as diabetes

As an **orthotist** your aim is to aid movement, correct deformity and relieve discomfort. This involves assessing the patient's needs.

You'll treat people of all ages with a wide range of conditions, including

- arthritis
- cerebral palsy
- [stroke](#) [2]

- spina bifida
- scoliosis

Both prosthetists and orthotists use up to date digital imaging techniques and CAD (computer-aided design) and CAM (computer-aided modelling).

In either role, you'll work alongside [doctors](#) [3], [nurses](#) [4], [podiatrists](#) [5], [physiotherapists](#) [6], [occupational therapists](#) [7] and [technicians](#) [8].

You are likely to be based in a hospital but may also work in private clinics.

How to become a prosthetist or orthotist

To become a prosthetist or orthotist you'll need to train and study at a degree level - either through a full-time course or a degree apprenticeship in prosthetics and orthotics. For full-time courses, entry requirements vary depending on where you'd like to study. You can find the prosthetics and orthotics courses using our [Course Finder tool](#) [9].

Want to learn more?

- [Find out more about the entry requirements and training needed for being a prosthetist or orthotist.](#) [10]
- Pay and conditions

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Prosthetists and orthotists in the NHS work standard hours, which are likely to be around 37.5 a week. You may have to work shifts, including evenings, nights and weekends. You'll start on band 5 of the [Agenda for Change pay scales](#) [11]. Elsewhere, your hours will depend on where you work. In a private clinic, you may work evenings and weekends to suit private clients.

You may have to travel between client appointments.

- Where the role can lead

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Once qualified and registered with the Health and Care Professions Council, you can choose to specialise either as a prosthetist or an orthotist. You can also join the [British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists \(BAPO\)](#) [12].

You'll have to keep their skills and knowledge up to date with annual CPD (continuing professional development). BAPO runs courses, conferences and seminars where they can exchange ideas and update their skills.

You may choose to specialise in a particular area of practice such as sports injuries, diabetes, forensic podiatry or working with children. Teaching or research are also options.

You could also move into management, either within orthotics and prosthetics services or general management. As head of a local orthotics and prosthetics service you would be responsible both for a team of staff and for managing a budget.

You may decide to set up your own clinics, on your own or with other professionals. There may be opportunities to work overseas.

- Job market and vacancies

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In November 2018, there were 1,098 prosthetists and orthotists registered with the [Health and Care Professions Council](#) [13].

The [British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists](#) [12] advertises jobs on its website.

Most NHS trusts advertise their vacancies on [NHS Jobs](#) [14]. Some advertise on their own websites. You can find a list of NHS organisations on [NHS Choices](#) [15].

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.](#) [16]

- Further information

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- [British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists \(BAPO\)](#) [17]

Other roles that may interest you

- [Orthotic technician](#) [18]
- [Prosthetic technician](#) [19]
- [Occupational therapist](#) [20]
- [Podiatrist](#) [21]

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

Links

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

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

- [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-medicine>
- [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing>
- [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/chiropracistpodiatrist>
- [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/physiotherapist>
- [7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/occupational-therapist>
- [8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/clinical-support-staff/orthotic-technician>
- [9] http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/course-finder?field_leading_to_a_career_in_tid=197&field_qualification_type_tid=All&field_study_mode_tid=All&
- [10] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/prosthetistorthotist/entry-requirements-and-training>
- [11] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits/agenda-change-pay-rates>
- [12] <http://www.bapo.com/>
- [13] <http://www.hcpc-uk.org>
- [14] <http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/>
- [15] <http://www.nhs.uk/aboutnhs/howthenhsworks/authoritiesandtrusts/Pages/Authoritiesandtrusts.aspx>
- [16] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/working-health/nhs-constitution>
- [17] <http://www.bapo.com>
- [18] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/clinical-support-staff/orthotic-technician>
- [19] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/Explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/clinical-support-staff/prosthetic-technician>
- [20] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/roles-allied-health-professions/occupational-therapist>
- [21] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/roles-allied-health-professions/podiatrist>