

Vision

*Ophthalmic Assistant/Technician/Technologist,
Optician, Optometrist*



Ophthalmic Assistant/Technician/Technologist, Optician

Ophthalmic Assistant/Technician/Technologist

JOB DESCRIPTION

Ophthalmic assistants, ophthalmic technicians, and ophthalmic technologists assist the medical doctors who specialize in eye care (ophthalmologists). Assistants perform routine procedures such as vision testing, obtaining patient histories, changing eye dressings, and administering eye medications. Technicians perform more advanced technical procedures, such as taking optical measurements or external ophthalmic photographs, and providing limited assistance to the ophthalmologist during surgery. Ophthalmic technologists are the most highly trained ophthalmic medical personnel. They perform procedures requiring advanced technical skill and theoretical knowledge and must be familiar with sophisticated instruments and surgical procedures.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Most ophthalmic medical personnel are employed in hospitals, medical centers, and offices of ophthalmologists. Some may be employed in research laboratories or in the armed forces. Typically, assistants, technicians and technologists work a standard 40-hour workweek and may put in overtime or extended hours as needed.

ANNUAL WAGES

Starting salary.....\$35,000
Overall average.....\$41,000

Salary ranges for 2000. American Medical Association.

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

A high school diploma is necessary for all certifications along with an approved training program or home study course. Assistants and technicians are often trained on the job. Certification is awarded by the Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology (JCAHPO) for the titles of Certified Ophthalmic Assistant, Certified Ophthalmic Technician and Certified Ophthalmic Medical

Technologist. They also offer a subspecialty of ophthalmic surgical assisting, but you must be certified in one of the other three to apply.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

American Academy of Ophthalmology
Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology

For professional organization address and phone information see Appendix B.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

For a listing of educational programs in New York State for Vision see page 74.

Optician

JOB DESCRIPTION

An optician accurately interprets and executes prescriptions for the fitting of eyeglasses and contact lenses. Working with the prescription provided by an ophthalmologist or optometrist, the optician measures the patient's facial contours to determine size, shape and specifications of lenses, frames, and contact lenses; prepares the work orders for the laboratory technicians who will grind the lenses and fabricated eye wear; verifies the quality of the finished ophthalmic products; adjusts the lenses and/or frames to the patient's face and eyes; and instructs the patient how to insert, remove and care for contact lenses. Opticians also repair eyewear and replace lost or damaged lenses or parts.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Opticians usually work in the retail trade, such as optical goods stores, selling lenses and frames. Others are employed by eyewear manufacturer laboratories,

optometrists, ophthalmologists, health maintenance organizations (HMOs), or self-employed in private practice. They can work part- or full-time and may work evenings and weekends.

ANNUAL WAGES

National\$26,354
New York State\$43,971

National and New York State median annual earnings for 2003. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

An associate's degree from a two-year college or an apprenticeship program lasting from two to five years is required. Licensure is required in New York State. To become a licensed optician in New York State, individuals must meet New York State licensing requirements. Detailed information for New York State licensing requirements can be found online at: www.labor.state.ny.us/business_ny/employer_responsibilities/olcny/menu.htm.

Certification, which must be renewed every three years, can be applied for through the American Board of Opticianry and the National Contact Lens Examiners.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

American Board of Opticianry
Commission on Opticianry Accreditation
Contact Lens Society of America
New York State Society of Opticians, Inc.

For professional organization address and phone information see Appendix B.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

For a listing of educational programs in New York State for Vision see page 74.

Optometrists

Optometrists

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Optometrists, or Doctors of Optometry (OD), are independent primary doctoral-level health care providers who specialize in the examination, diagnosis, treatment, and management of diseases and disorders of the eye and visual system. They treat the eye and its associated structures, as well as diagnose related systemic conditions. As health care professionals, in addition to treating diseases and conditions of the eye and associated structures, optometrists regularly identify signs of disease of the body, and when appropriate, work with other health professionals in co-managing the care of patients. Optometrists provide vision care by prescribing ophthalmic lenses, contact lenses, other optical aides, vision therapy, and low vision rehabilitation as indicated. Optometrists provide primary and medical eye care and are authorized to use and prescribe drugs in the diagnosis and treatment of eye problems or diseases in all 50 states. Private practitioners must also assume the administrative duties of running a business.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

The vast majority of optometrists are self-employed and in private practice. Some optometrists may typically work as a salaried employee in a private

practice of another optometrist or an ophthalmologist, health maintenance organization (HMO), retail store, as a consultant, or in public health. They may work as a college instructor or in research. Optometrists generally work at least 40-hour weeks and may also work evenings and weekends. They must be available or arrange coverage to treat patients on an emergency after hours basis.

ANNUAL WAGES

National	\$85,426
New York State	\$67,226

National and New York State median annual earnings for 2003. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

To earn the title of Doctor of Optometry, one must complete a four-year graduate-level professional program at an accredited school of optometry. These schools require applicants to have completed at least three years of undergraduate training in addition to taking the Optometry Admissions Test. Competition for the limited spaces in these programs is strong, and a good academic background is important. All 50 states and the District of Columbia require applicants for licensure to have completed the three-part national licensing exam series administered by the National Board of Examiners in Optometry. At this time, 11 states (but not including

New York) also give candidates for licensure a state optometry board-administered exam in addition to requiring the national Boards. To become licensed as an optometrist in New York State, individuals must meet New York State licensing requirements. Detailed information for New York State licensing requirements can be found online at: www.labor.state.ny.us/business_ny/employer_responsibilities/olcny/menu.htm.

Graduates may seek one year of advanced post-graduate study residencies in family practice optometry, pediatric optometry, geriatric optometry, vision therapy, cornea and contact lenses, hospital-based optometry, primary eye care, ocular disease, low vision rehabilitation, or refractive and ocular surgery. Those seeking research or teaching positions may enter master or PhD programs, which emphasize visual science.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

American Optometric Association
 Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry
 Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry
 National Board of Examiners in Optometry
 New York State Optometric Association

For professional organization address and phone information see Appendix B.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

For a listing of educational programs in New York State for Vision see page 74.

New York State Educational Institutions

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS WITH PROGRAMS IN VISION

(For New York State educational institution address and phone informations, see Appendix A.)

City University of New York New York City

Technical College

Erie Community College-North Campus

Interboro Institute

Monroe Community College

Rochester Institute of Technology

Suffolk County Community College-Western Campus

State University of New York College of Optometry

Source: U.S. Department of Education – Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (www.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/) and the New York State Area Health Education Center System Data Resource Center, September 2003.