

# Testing Accommodations Handbook

**OTR<sup>®</sup> COTA<sup>®</sup>**

**NBCOT<sup>®</sup>** National Board  
for Certification in  
Occupational Therapy

# NBCOT Testing Accommodations Handbook



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AOTCB/NBCOT Exams ID 62 rev011325

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All general correspondence, including requests for information concerning NBCOT Testing Accommodations (TAs), should be directed to:

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# Overview

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), NBCOT® provides reasonable and appropriate testing accommodations (TAs) for exam candidates with disabilities who are otherwise eligible to take the OTR® or COTA® certification examination.

Testing accommodations are changes to the regular testing environment, as well as auxiliary aids and services that allow individuals with disabilities to demonstrate their true aptitude or achievement level on standardized exams or high-stakes tests. Reasonable testing accommodations do not compromise the validity of the examination, jeopardize examination integrity and security, fundamentally alter the measurement of the skills and knowledge the examination is intended to test or impose an undue burden on NBCOT. Accommodations cannot be made to the actual content of the examination.

Some personal items, such as medical devices and medication, do not require a formal request for testing accommodations. Please refer to the Pearson VUE [Comfort Aid List](#) for items that do not need an accommodations pre-approval.

For questions regarding testing accommodations, please contact [accommodations@nbcot.org](mailto:accommodations@nbcot.org).

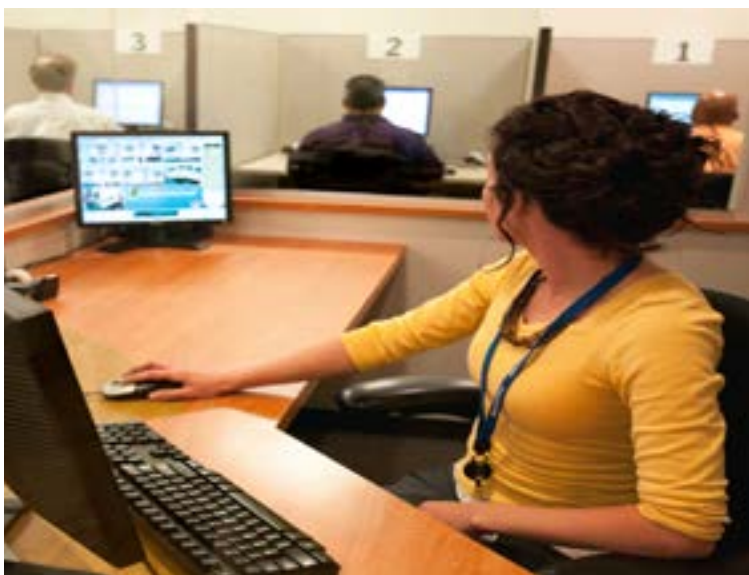
## Standard Exam Administration

A standard NBCOT certification examination is a timed, four-hour, computer-based exam taken in person at a Pearson Professional Center or Pearson VUE Authorized Test Center Select. Pearson VUE is NBCOT's exclusive test administration partner.

Pearson VUE's standard testing environment provides a quiet, reduced/limited distraction test space at all test centers with continual monitoring throughout your exam. The standard environment is an individual cubicle desk (to minimize distractions) with other test takers in the testing room (refer to image below). Earplugs and noise reducing headphones are available at all Pearson Professional Centers and Pearson VUE Authorized Test Center Selects and are provided by the test center.

### EXAM FEATURES

During the exam, candidates can highlight text in the passage area that they feel is important to refer back to as they progress through the exam. A strike-out feature is also available to help candidates visually eliminate possible options from consideration. Candidates can modify the color scheme by changing the exam's background and text colors at any time. Candidates can also change the size of the content by zooming in or out on the screen. The exam timer can be hidden by selecting the clock icon. Monitor brightness can be adjusted with the assistance of the Test Center Administrator. For details on these features and additional exam functionality in the computer-based testing environment, [view the online exam tutorial\(s\)](#).



# Who Can Request Testing Accommodations for the OTR® or COTA® Examination?

Candidates with a documented disability as defined by the ADA may request testing accommodations. The ADA defines an individual with a disability as “a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (such as seeing, hearing, learning, reading, concentrating, or thinking) or a major bodily function (such as the neurological, endocrine, or digestive system)” when compared to most people in the general population. A diagnosed disability does not automatically necessitate testing accommodations.

The decision as to whether testing accommodations are recommended for an NBCOT exam candidate is determined by the candidate’s qualified healthcare professional. A qualified healthcare professional is licensed and/or certified to assess, diagnose, and treat the applicant’s relevant disability. If testing accommodations are recommended, candidates must make the request in their exam application and include supporting documentation from their qualified healthcare professional.

## WHAT IS NOT COVERED BY THE ADA

Under the ADA (revised 2008), **test and performance anxiety are not** considered a disability under federal law. Candidates requesting testing accommodations related to anxiety must be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder that is more generalized and not specific to test or performance anxiety. Both the candidate’s statement and qualified healthcare provider’s diagnostic explanation must include examples of how the anxiety creates a disability in other areas of the candidate’s life beyond testing.

Non-specific diagnoses such as individual learning styles, general learning differences, academic challenges, computer phobias, slow reading, test difficulty, or test/performance anxiety (see above paragraph) in and of themselves do not constitute a disability or impairment and are not covered under the ADA.

English as a second language (ESL) is not covered under the ADA.

## TEMPORARY CONDITIONS, PREGNANCY AND NURSING

Accommodations may be approved for candidates with documented qualifying temporary medical conditions not otherwise covered by the ADA. Candidates with temporary and transitory conditions should contact NBCOT at [accommodations@nbcot.org](mailto:accommodations@nbcot.org) as soon as possible. The decision as to whether a medical condition not covered by the ADA is a “qualifying medical condition” for purposes of NBCOT testing accommodations approval is at the sole discretion of NBCOT.

**Pregnancy**, in and of itself, is not considered a disability under the ADA. However, a one-time use accommodation may be approved for candidates with documented qualifying temporary medical conditions such as pregnancy with medical complications or impairment. The supporting documentation from your healthcare professional must diagnose you with a medical complication or impairment due to your pregnancy, not just pregnancy.

**Nursing candidates:** NBCOT supports candidates who require a break to pump breast milk during their exam. Candidates must request a “nursing mother” accommodation in their NBCOT application and provide documentation that includes the date of delivery and ties the candidate to that delivery. Examples of acceptable documentation include a letter from their qualified healthcare professional on practice letterhead, birthing center or hospital discharge papers or a birth certificate. If approved for this one-time use accommodation, the candidate will receive 60 minutes of stop-the-clock break time and a private space to pump. Approval of this accommodation may require candidates to schedule at a test center different from their preferred location.

# NBCOT's Testing Accommodations Review Process

Approval of testing accommodations requests is based on the candidate's request, the diagnosis of their disability or temporary medical condition or impairment, and supporting documentation from their qualified healthcare professional(s).

Candidates must submit documentation to support **each** testing accommodation request. Please refer to [pages 9-10](#) for details about the required documentation.

NBCOT may request additional documentation at any time from the candidate and/or their qualified healthcare professional(s) to support the requested testing accommodations. NBCOT can only communicate with a third party (e.g., parent, spouse, program director) if the candidate is present and gives verbal permission.

## TIMELINE FOR APPROVAL

An initial review of a testing accommodations request is completed within 10 business days of an exam application submission date **or** the date of the testing accommodations request was made/last updated (whichever is later). Reviews may take longer in peak graduation seasons due to the volume of requests. Requests are reviewed in the order they are received. Candidates are notified by email if additional documentation is needed and when their Testing Accommodations Approval Notice is available in their exam application for review.

## TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS APPROVAL

Upon approval of a candidate's testing accommodations request, the candidate will receive an email advising them to log into their MyNBCOT student dashboard to **read and review** their testing accommodations Approval Notice.

- **The Approval Notice is available in the Testing Accommodations section of the exam application.**
- **The candidate is expected to read the Approval Notice in full to include the IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS section, which details unique information and instructions regarding approved testing accommodations.**
- If the candidate understands and agrees to the approved TA and instructions provided, click "I accept" and save a copy of the Approval Notice.
- If the candidate does not agree with the approved TA, they reserve the right to request an additional review within seven days of receiving the Approval Notice by contacting NBCOT at [accommodations@nbcot.org](mailto:accommodations@nbcot.org). The decision resulting from an additional review is considered final.

## WITHDRAWING A TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS REQUEST

Candidates can withdraw a testing accommodations request at any time before receiving their ATT letter.

- Log in to your MyNBCOT student dashboard.
- Click View My Exam Application.
- Expand the Testing Accommodations section.
- Click the Withdraw TA button.

## SCHEDULING AN NBCOT EXAM APPOINTMENT WITH TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS

After a candidate accepts their Approval Notice **and** all other exam application components are approved (e.g., academic verification documentation, background check), they will receive an **Authorization to Test (ATT) with Testing Accommodations letter** via email and in their MyNBCOT student dashboard. This letter authorizes the candidate to schedule an exam appointment with Pearson VUE.

To schedule an NBCOT exam appointment with testing accommodations, a candidate **MUST** have received an **Authorization to Test (ATT) with Testing Accommodations letter**.

Candidates with testing accommodations must read and follow the scheduling instructions outlined in their ATT letter and Testing Accommodations Approval Notice. Both the ATT letter and Testing Accommodations Approval Notice are available in the candidate's MyNBCOT student dashboard.

Some testing accommodations require special coordination with Pearson VUE. Candidates will receive scheduling instructions in their NBCOT Testing Accommodations Approval Notice if their appointment requires additional coordination with Pearson VUE after receipt of their ATT letter.

### What to Expect When Scheduling with Pearson VUE

- Candidates with testing accommodations should begin the scheduling process by clicking the *Schedule My Appointment* button on their MyNBCOT student dashboard.
- Candidates should review their approved testing accommodation(s) on their Pearson VUE dashboard. Contact NBCOT at [accommodations@nbcot.org](mailto:accommodations@nbcot.org) if there are any questions or discrepancies from your NBCOT Testing Accommodations Approval Notice.
- Some accommodations cannot be scheduled on the web. In this instance, candidates will be directed to call Pearson VUE customer service. You will be notified on the Pearson VUE dashboard, and the phone number will be provided.
- Candidates scheduling by phone should expect time between initial contact and follow-up communication from Pearson VUE to allow for coordination of your approved accommodations.

## REQUESTING TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS AFTER RECEIVING AN ATT LETTER

If a candidate receives their ATT letter and needs to request testing accommodations due to an unforeseen medical diagnosis/complication or temporary impairment, they should email [accommodations@nbcot.org](mailto:accommodations@nbcot.org) as soon as possible to discuss next steps.

## How to Request Testing Accommodations for NBCOT Exams

Testing accommodation requests are part of the exam application and do not need to be submitted before applying.

1. Read the [Certification Exam Handbook](#) available at [nbcot.org](http://nbcot.org).

The Certification Exam Handbook provides information on a standard NBCOT exam administration.



2. Review Pearson VUE's Comfort Aid List for items that do not need an accommodations pre-approval (unless otherwise stated).

▷ Pearson VUE – [Comfort Aid List](#)

3. Gather all required supporting documentation.

Supporting documentation from a qualified healthcare professional must be submitted with each reasonable and appropriate testing accommodations request as outlined in [“Required Documentation for Testing Accommodations Requests” on page 9](#). Candidates are encouraged to gather all documentation before applying for the exam.

4. Open an NBCOT Certification Examination application.

Go to [www.nbcot.org](http://www.nbcot.org).

▷ If applying for the first time, create a MyNBCOT account as outlined in the *Application Process* section of the [Certification Exam Handbook](#).

▷ If you have an existing MyNBCOT account, log in using your unique email address and password, then follow the steps to apply or reapply.

5. Request Testing Accommodations in your exam application.

▷ Select “Yes” when asked if testing accommodations are required.

▷ Answer all presented questions.

▷ If you were granted testing accommodations during previous educational and testing experiences (e.g., college/graduate school, SAT/ACT, GRE, LSAT, or MCAT), click “yes” and add a reference for previously granted TAs to include: year(s) of accommodation, name of institution/organization, and the type of accommodation(s).

6. Upload required supporting documentation.

To protect the confidentiality of testing accommodation requests and all supporting documentation, candidates must upload all required documentation to the Testing Accommodations section of their exam application.

▷ Do not mail or email personal medical or supporting documentation to NBCOT. If a document will not upload, please contact [accommodations@nbcot.org](mailto:accommodations@nbcot.org).

▷ **First-time testing accommodations requests:** Candidates requesting testing accommodations for the first time, whether new applicants or reapplying, must upload all required documentation as outlined on [pages 9-10](#) before continuing with the exam application. **Do not mail/email documentation to NBCOT.**

▷ If a request includes bringing an item into the testing environment, the candidate **MUST** upload a photo of the item with their request. Photo can be in .pdf or .jpeg format.

▷ **Previously approved candidates** who wish to request new testing accommodations for their next exam attempt should refer to [“Reapplying With Previously Approved Testing Accommodations” on page 10](#).

7. Read and confirm the Declaration and Authorization statements.

8. Monitor the email account listed in your MyNBCOT profile.

Testing accommodations requests are reviewed after an exam application is submitted and in the order they are received. NBCOT emails candidates when additional documentation is requested and/



or a Testing Accommodations Approval Notice is ready for review in the candidate's exam application. We recommend regularly checking your email, including your spam/junk folder, for the emails from NBCOT.

# Required Documentation for Testing Accommodations Requests

Supporting documentation must be dated within the past seven years\* and include all the items listed below.

*Candidates do not need to be retested for their stated diagnosis.*

1. Name and credentials of the qualified healthcare professional(s) that qualify them to assess, diagnose, and treat the relevant disability.
  - Include license and/or certification number.
2. Contact information of each qualified healthcare professional providing documentation.
  - Include address, phone number, and email address.
3. Specific and professionally recognized disability diagnosis.
  - Include candidate's diagnosis, DSM/diagnosis code, and diagnosis date.
4. Description of how the candidate's disability substantially limits one or more major life activities (such as seeing, hearing, learning, reading, concentrating, or thinking) or a major bodily function (such as the neurological, endocrine, or digestive system) when compared to most people in the general population.
5. Explain how the candidate's disability impairment impacts their ability to test under NBCOT's standard testing conditions as described on [page 4](#) of the *Testing Accommodations Handbook*. ***(Standard exam is 4-hour computer-based exam taken in a reduced-distraction testing center.)***
6. Document testing accommodations approved for prior standardized testing (e.g., SAT, GRE, college exams).
  - If no prior accommodations exist, the qualified healthcare professional should explain why no accommodations were given in the past and are needed now.
7. Specific recommendations for reasonable testing accommodations.
  - If your qualified healthcare professional recommends any time-related accommodations, the recommendation(s) must clarify if additional time is necessary due to the need for stop-the-clock breaks and/or an exam time extension.
  - Time-related recommendations must be specific and quantitative on duration (ex. 30 minutes, 1.25x) and avoid non-specific recommendations like "extra, extended, additional, more" time.
  - A "limited or reduced distraction" or "distraction-free" environment and a separate room are not one in the same.

Pearson VUE's standard testing environment provides a quiet, reduced/limited distraction test space at all test centers. The standard environment is an individual cubicle desk (to minimize distractions) with other test takers in the room. Earplugs and noise reducing headphones are available at all Pearson Professional Centers and Pearson VUE Authorized Test Center Selects.

A separate room is not soundproof and does not guarantee a distraction or noise free environment. A separate testing room is not available at all Pearson VUE test centers. Approval of this accommodation may require candidates to schedule their exam appointment at a test center different than their preferred location.

8. Detailed explanation of why each accommodation is necessary to minimize the impact of the disability while taking an NBCOT exam.

#### Examples of documentation from a qualified healthcare professional to submit for review:

- NBCOT Testing Accommodations Request Form (Recommended, see appendix A);
- Letter from a qualified healthcare professional on practice letterhead or stamped with office stamp, including all required documentation elements, dated within the past seven years\*;
- A report (e.g., psychological or neuropsychological evaluation) prepared by a qualified healthcare professional, dated within the past seven years\*;
- Documentation of testing accommodations due to disability in an IEP, Section 504 Plan, or documented accommodations from a private school.

*\*Some documentation dated outside of seven years may be considered based on diagnosis.*

#### Examples of Unacceptable Forms of Documentation

- Handwritten letters
- Handwritten patient records or notes from patient charts
- Any documentation on a prescription pad
- Self-evaluations found online or in print
- Correspondence from educational institutions or testing agencies not directly addressed to NBCOT
- Email correspondence between healthcare professional and candidate.

#### Additional/supporting documentation to upload with the request

- Documentation of testing accommodations approval for a similar high-stakes exam such as SAT/ACT, GRE, LSAT, or MCAT.
- Documentation from your institution of testing accommodations received during your OTA or OT program.

## Reapplying With Previously Approved Testing Accommodations

Candidates reapplying for the exam with previously approved testing accommodations will be presented with their previously approved TAs in the Testing Accommodations section of the exam application.

When presented with the question “Do you require testing accommodations?” previously approved candidates click the Yes response to review their previously approved TAs. Candidates may select some or all of their previously approved testing accommodations.

**If you request ONLY previously approved testing accommodations, do not click the *Request New Testing Accommodations* button.** Click the *Continue* button to advance through the exam application.

**Previously approved candidates requesting new/additional testing accommodations complete the following steps:**

- Select the desired previously approved testing accommodations from the list.
- Click the *Request New Testing Accommodations* button in the Testing Accommodations section of the exam application.
- Update questions #1-4 to include the new testing accommodations request. Do not delete any previous requests in Question 1.
- Upload all required supporting documentation as outlined on pages 9-10.

# Appendix A

## TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS REQUEST FORM

A fillable form is available for download at <https://www.nbcot.org/exam/accommodations>

## Certification Exam Testing Accommodations Request Form

ID 71 rev011325

Dear Healthcare Professional:

The exam candidate identified below is requesting testing accommodations to take a National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, Inc. (NBCOT<sup>®</sup>) Certification Examination and is submitting documentation prepared by you in connection with their request.

NBCOT requires supporting documentation from qualified healthcare professional(s) licensed and/or certified to assess, diagnose, and treat the applicant's relevant disability.

### Exam Candidate Information

Candidate Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date (MM/DD/YYYY): \_\_\_\_\_

### Healthcare Professional Contact Information

*(To be completed by the healthcare professional.)*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title/Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Country: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Licensure/Certification Information

*(To be completed by the healthcare professional.)*

License/Certification Number: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Country: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Disability Diagnosis

*(To be completed by the healthcare professional.)*

Disability Diagnosis	DSM/Diagnostic Code	Diagnosis Date

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## Disability Impact

*(To be completed by the healthcare professional.)*

<p>Describe how the candidate's disability substantially limits one or more major life activities (such as seeing, hearing, learning, reading, concentrating, or thinking) or a major bodily function (such as the neurological, endocrine, or digestive system) when compared to most people in the general population.</p>	
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<p>Explain how the candidate's disability impairment impacts their ability to test under NBCOT's standard testing conditions, as described on <a href="#">page 4</a> of the <a href="#">Testing Accommodations Handbook</a>.</p> <p><i>(Standard exam is 4-hour computer-based exam taken in a reduced-distraction testing center.)</i></p>	
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## Prior Testing Accommodations

*(To be completed by the healthcare professional.)*

<p>Document testing accommodations approved for prior standardized testing (e.g., SAT, GRE, LSAT, MCAT, college exams).</p> <p><b>If no prior accommodations exist,</b> the qualified healthcare professional should explain why no accommodations were given in the past and are needed now.</p>	
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**Testing Accommodations Recommendation(s)**  
**(To be completed by the healthcare professional.)**

Please document specific recommendations for reasonable testing accommodations based on the candidate's disability diagnosis and explain why each accommodation is necessary to minimize the impact of disability while taking an NBCOT® exam.

- If any time-related accommodations are recommended, the recommendation(s) must clarify if additional time is necessary due to the need for stop-the-clock breaks and/or an exam time extension.
- Time-related recommendations must be specific and quantitative on duration (ex. 30 minutes, 1.25x) and avoid non-specific recommendations like “extra, extended, additional, more” time.
- A “limited or reduced distraction” or “distraction-free” environment and a separate room are not one in the same. Pearson VUE’s standard testing environment provides a quiet, reduced/limited distraction test space at all test centers. The standard environment is an individual cubicle desk (to minimize distractions) with other test takers in the testing room (refer to [page 4](#) of the [Testing Accommodations Handbook](#)). Earplugs and noise reducing headphones are available at all Pearson Professional Centers and Pearson VUE Authorized Test Center Selects. A separate room is not soundproof and does not guarantee a distraction or noise free environment.

Specific recommendation(s) for reasonable testing accommodations	Explanation why this accommodation is necessary to minimize the impact of disability while taking an NBCOT® exam

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**Declaration**

*(To be completed by the healthcare professional.)*

**IMPORTANT — This document is considered void without the healthcare professional's signature and one of the following:**

- **Digital signature with timestamp (such as DocuSign),**
- **A cover letter on practice letterhead to accompany this form,**
- **An official office stamp (see below)**

I hereby certify that the above information is true and is given pursuant to the authorization to release information by the above-named candidate. I attest I have specific training and experience in the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of the disability identified above. I hereby certify I personally completed this form and provided specific recommendations for reasonable testing accommodations for the NBCOT exam. I may be asked by NBCOT to verify the above information at any time.

**Signature of Healthcare Professional:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printed Name of Healthcare Professional:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Office Stamp

