

2025

NBCOT Certification Renewal Handbook

OTR[®]

COTA[®]

NBCOT[®] National Board
for Certification in
Occupational Therapy

NBCOT OTR & COTA Certification Renewal Handbook



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Introduction

About NBCOT

The National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, Inc. (NBCOT®) is the national certification body for occupational therapy professionals in the United States.

NBCOT strives to serve the public interest in its diversity by advancing just, equitable, and inclusive client care and professional practice through evidence-based certification practices and the validation of knowledge essential for effective and safe practice in occupational therapy. NBCOT's vision is certified occupational therapy professionals providing just, equitable, inclusive, and effective evidence-based services across all areas of practice worldwide.

Currently, 50 states, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia require NBCOT initial certification for occupational therapy state regulation (e.g., licensing).

NBCOT® certification programs are accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) under their *Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs*.

About This Handbook

This handbook has been developed to provide you with the information you will need to renew your NBCOT certification. NBCOT recognizes the responsibility certificants assume when renewing their certification and our aim is to provide a smooth and positive renewal experience. If you have further questions after reading this handbook, please visit www.nbcot.org, email recert@nbcot.org, or phone (301) 990-7979.

Certification Renewal

Initial certification is just the beginning of your professional journey with NBCOT. Underpinning our mission to serve the public interest, it is our belief that certification is a lifelong tool for the continuous professional development of the nationally certified occupational therapy practitioner. We are a resource for your professional development throughout your career, offering you the tools you need to advance your competence and prepare for new professional challenges.

Certification renewal recognizes that you, the Occupational Therapist Registered (OTR®) or Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (COTA®), have met a national standard for professionalism and promotes continued professional development. We believe that continually supporting your practice has long-term benefits for all stakeholders.

By completing all certification renewal requirements by your scheduled renewal date, you will be granted Active in Good Standing certification status for a three year period. The certification renewal season occurs between January and March annually.

The certification renewal requirement and tools were developed using the [NBCOT Ongoing Professional Practice Content Outline](#) with input from key stakeholder groups including practitioners, employers, and regulators.

Your Credential Status

Active in Good Standing: Individuals currently certified with NBCOT and who have met the certification renewal requirements are Active in Good Standing. These individuals can identify themselves to the public as an OTR or COTA. These individuals can use the OTR or COTA credential after their name.

Retired in Good Standing: OTR and COTA certificants who are Active in Good Standing with NBCOT can request their certification status be changed to Retired in Good Standing. Certificants **MUST** notify NBCOT of this status change by submitting a [Retired in Good Standing](#) request. Once the request has been processed, retired certificants can identify themselves to the public as an OTR, Retired or COTA, Retired. These individuals can use “OTR, Retired” or “COTA, Retired” after their name.

Expired: Individuals who do not satisfy the NBCOT certification renewal requirements by their scheduled renewal date are Expired and CANNOT 1) identify themselves to the public as an OTR or COTA or 2) use the OTR or COTA credential after their name.

When to Renew Your Certification

Certificants who complete all certification renewal requirements by their scheduled renewal date will be granted Active in Good Standing certification status for a three-year period. The certification renewal season occurs between January and March annually, regardless of the month indicated on the certificant's initial certification document. Certificants who do not submit their certification renewal application by the scheduled renewal date will have their certification status changed to Expired. An individual who has an Expired certification cannot use the OTR or COTA certification marks.

Certification Renewal Requirements & Tools

Accruing the Certification Renewal Requirements

Certificants must accrue at least 36 units during their renewal cycle. Units can be obtained through a combination of competency assessment units (CAUs) and/or professional development units (PDUs). Accepted activity types are listed on the [Certification Renewal Activities Chart](#).

Certificants who renewed their certification in 2022 are permitted to carry over up to 10 units earned during their 2019–2022 renewal cycle, provided that the 10 units were in excess of the 36 units required for their 2022 certification renewal.

If audited, certificants must provide documentation from the previous cycle (2019–2022) to show the excess units being carried forward.

How to Convert Units to PDU

Continuing Education Units (CEU) and contact hours can be converted into PDU as described below. Certificants can convert CEU to PDU using the PDU Calculator available through their MyNBCOT account under Renewal Log.

- 1 contact hour (not to include meals or breaks) = **1 PDU**
- 1 clock hour (not to include meals or breaks) = **1 PDU**
- 0.1 Continuing Education Unit (CEU) = **1 PDU**
- One contact hour earned through successfully completed education (workshops, seminars, online courses, or conferences) **with an assessment component at the end of the program** (scored test project, paper) = **1.25 PDU**
- 1 Competency Assessment Unit (CAU) = **1 Contact Hour or 1 PDU**

 **Please Note: NBCOT adheres to the CEU definition defined by the International Association for Continuing Education and Training (IACET) of 1 CEU = 10 Contact Hours.**

NBCOT Navigator®

Navigator is a virtual platform housing a web-based assessment delivery engine and certificant dashboard. The platform is designed to interface with a series of tools to support certificants' continued competency. Through the platform, certificants can identify and access resources related to specific practice areas, receive feedback and track performance on an array of assessment tools, and organize documentation of completed continuing competency.

NBCOT enables occupational therapy professionals to earn competency assessment units (CAUs) toward their certification renewal requirements. These interactive tools are also designed to help employers facilitate the ongoing continuing competency and certification process of their occupational therapists and therapy assistants.

Certificants can access Navigator through their MyNBCOT account on www.nbcot.org. Occupational therapists and therapy assistants can use the tool suite to prepare for certification renewal, accrue CAU, and stay current in their practice areas year-round.

Navigator highlights 15 different primary practice areas:

- Acute Care
- Administration and/or Management
- Developmental Disability
- Geriatrics/Productive Aging
- Health and Wellness
- Home Health
- Mental Health
- Orthopedics
- OT Education and/or Research
- Pediatrics (clinic-based, early intervention)
- Pediatrics (school system)
- Rehabilitation (inpatient)
- Rehabilitation (outpatient)
- Skilled Nursing
- Work and Industry

Navigator Tools

- Case Simulations
- Microcredentials
- Mini Practice Quizzes
- Orthotic Builder
- OT Knowledge Library
- Physical Agent Modalities (PAMs) — **OTR Only**

At the end of every tool, a customized feedback report and recommended reading list are shown.



Units earned through Navigator are also accepted by the *following states* toward their licensure requirements.

NBCOT Certificant Attestation

Below is the complete attestation statement to which a certificant must agree and sign in order to renew their certification.

By my signature, I attest that the information I submit in this application and in any required accompanying or subsequent documentation is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. Additionally, I understand that persons who apply for certification as an OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST REGISTERED OTR® or CERTIFIED OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT COTA®, or persons who have been certified by NBCOT, are subject to NBCOT's Procedures for the Enforcement of the NBCOT's Candidate/Certificant Code of Conduct.

I understand NBCOT reserves the right to not accept or delay approval of this application. I also understand that I may be subject to audit at any time and that NBCOT reserves the right to take action for failure to comply with the audit procedures.

In order to maintain my certification, I understand that from time-to-time NBCOT may amend its requirements, policies, and procedures to include: initial certification, certification renewal, and Procedures for the Enforcement of the Candidate/Certificant Code of Conduct.

I agree to disclose any criminal, legal, or other disciplinary matters within sixty (60) days of any such matter per the NBCOT Candidate/Certificant Code of Conduct.

I also agree to notify NBCOT in writing of any address or name change(s) within thirty (30) days after the change becomes effective. If requested to do so, NBCOT may verify my certification status.

I attest that I have completed all certification renewal requirements.

NBCOT Practice Standards/Code of Conduct

NBCOT has a responsibility to promote and maintain standards of professional conduct in the practice of occupational therapy. In order to protect the public, those applying for NBCOT certification must abide by the code of conduct.

Certificants or certification applicants who do not meet the code of conduct standards are subject to the [*Procedures for the Enforcement of the NBCOT Code of Conduct*](#). These procedures enable NBCOT to protect the rights of candidates and certificants while upholding NBCOT's responsibilities as a certifying agency to the public.

Preamble

The National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, Inc. ("NBCOT," formerly known as "AOTCB") is a professional organization that supports and promotes occupational therapy practitioner certification. This Candidate/Certificant Code of Conduct enables NBCOT to define and clarify the standards of personal and professional conduct required for eligibility for both initial and continued certification, i.e., OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST REGISTERED OTR® (OTR) henceforth OTR, and CERTIFIED OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT COTA® (COTA) henceforth COTA. Where the term "certificant" is used, the term "applicant or candidate" is included in its scope.

It is vital that NBCOT certificants conduct their work in a professional manner to earn and maintain the confidence and respect of recipients of occupational therapy, colleagues, employers, students, and the public.

As certified professionals in the field of occupational therapy, NBCOT certificants will at all times act with integrity; adhere to high standards for personal and professional conduct; accept responsibility for their actions, both personally and professionally; continually seek to enhance their professional capabilities; practice in a competent, fair, honest, equitable, and just manner; abide by all federal, state, and local laws and regulations; and encourage others to act in a professional manner consistent with the practice standards and responsibilities set forth below.

Principle 1

Certificants shall provide accurate, truthful, and timely representations to NBCOT, including, but not limited to:

- The submission of information on the exam application, certification renewal applications, or the renewal audit form;
- Answers to character review questions and, once certified, the disclosure of any criminal, legal, or other disciplinary matters within 60 days of any such matter;
- The submission of information requested by NBCOT for alleged violations of NBCOT's policies, requirements, and standards. Certificants shall cooperate with NBCOT concerning investigations and requests for relevant information; and
- The submission of information regarding her/his/their credential(s), professional license(s), and/or education.

Principle 2

Certificants shall abide by all exam-related security policies including, but not limited to, those involving copying or removing exam content and accessing prohibited devices or materials during their exam.

Principle 3

Certificants shall be accurate, truthful, and complete in any and all communications, direct or indirect, with any client, employer, regulatory agency, or other parties as they relate to their professional work, education, professional credentials, research and contributions to the field of occupational therapy.

Principle 4

Certificants shall comply with state and/or federal laws, regulations, and statutes governing the practice of occupational therapy.

Principle 5

Certificants shall not have pled guilty to or been found guilty of a serious crime.

Principle 6

Certificants shall not engage in behavior or conduct, lawful or otherwise that causes them to be, or reasonably perceived to be, a threat or potential threat to the health, well-being, or safety of recipients or potential recipients of occupational therapy services.

Principle 7

Certificants shall not engage in the practice of occupational therapy while one's ability to practice is impaired due to chemical (i.e., legal and/or illegal) drug or alcohol abuse.

Principle 8

Certificants shall not electronically post personal health information or anything, including photos, that may reveal a patient's/client's identity or personal or therapeutic relationship, without the patient's/client's written consent. (All statements, regardless of intent, about a patient/client can potentially contain sufficient information for a member of a community to recognize the patient/client thus, violating the state and/or federal law (i.e. Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA))).

Principle 9

Certificants shall not misuse NBCOT's intellectual property, certification marks, logos, or other copyrighted materials, including, but not limited to:

- Discussing or disclosing NBCOT examination content;
- Copying, uploading, downloading or sharing NBCOT study tool, continuing competency tool, website or other copyrighted content through any platform including web-based study tools, AI applications, social media outlets, discussion forums, email, etc.;

- Using an NBCOT certification mark when not actively certified;
- Displaying NBCOT logos without express written consent.

Approved June 2002
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Revised January 2010
Revised November 2011

Revised October 2013
Revised February 2014
Revised March 2014

Revised October 2016
Revised June 2018
Revised July 2020

Revised March 2021
Revised July 2022
Revised May 2024

The Renewal Application

The application consists of five sections:

1. **Background information:** The certificant must enter all information requested related to their background. They may also request a name change, if needed.
2. **Character review:** The certificant must answer all of the questions listed under the character review section. If a certificant answers “Yes” to any of the questions, they will be contacted for additional information as a review must be completed before the renewal application may be approved.
3. **Renewal information:** The certificant must verify that they have completed the renewal requirements within the last three years. They will also need to choose one primary area of practice and indicate the number of units that directly relate to that area.
4. **Practice information:** The certificant will answer questions pertaining to their practice.
5. **Signature and attestation:** The certificant must read, sign, and date the [attestation statement](#).

How to Renew Your Certification

Renewing Within Renewal Year

In order for certificants to renew their certification within their renewal year, they must complete the following:

1. Fulfill the requirement of 36 units.
2. Read and agree to abide by the NBCOT Certificant Attestation.
3. Complete the online renewal application or mail in a [paper renewal application](#).
4. Pay the associated fees.

The Reinstatement Process

Certificants who do not renew their certification within their renewal year must apply for reinstatement and be approved prior to using the OTR or COTA credential. The Reinstatement of Certification Renewal application is available to Expired certificants in their [MyNBCOT](#) account.

RENEWING WITHIN ONE MISSED RENEWAL PERIOD

Sally renewed her certification on time in 2017. At the end of 2019, Sally elects to take a career break and decides not to renew her certification when it is due in 2020. In January 2023, she wishes to renew her certification. To renew, she would have to do the following:

- Attain at least 30 units within the last three years from any category listed under the Professional Development Activities section of the [NBCOT Certification Renewal Activities Chart](#).
- Complete the [General Practice Self-Assessment](#) and save the score report page.
- Submit the Reinstatement application through [MyNBCOT](#) with the payment of \$125.
- Upload verification documentation for the activities completed within the last three years, including the [General Practice Self-Assessment](#) score report to CE Broker. Instructions for uploading documentation will be provided once the application is submitted.
- Complete the required six Competency Assessment Units (CAUs) through Navigator. Access is provided after upload of the verification documentation.

Once all requirements are completed, the application will be reviewed within 20 business days.

RENEWING AFTER TWO MISSED RENEWAL PERIODS

Brian does not renew his certification when it is due in 2020. In July 2024, Brian wishes to renew his certification. To renew, he would have to do the following:

- Attain at least 12 units from ID #s 18, 19, and/or 21 on the [NBCOT Certification Renewal Activities Chart](#).
- Attain at least 12 units from any of the categories listed under the Professional Development Activities section on the [NBCOT Certification Renewal Activities Chart](#).
- Submit the Reinstatement application through [MyNBCOT](#) with the payment of \$175.
- Upload verification documentation for the activities completed within the last three years to CE Broker. Instructions for uploading documentation will be provided once the application is submitted.
- Complete the required 12 Competency Assessment Units (CAUs) through Navigator. Access is provided after upload of the verification documentation.

Once all requirements are completed, the application will be reviewed within 20 business days.

Beginning January 1, 2027, any individual who has allowed their certification to lapse for three or more cycles must complete the following steps to reinstate their certification with NBCOT:



- **Submit a completed Reinstatement of Certification Examination application and the fee of \$515.**
- **Undergo a background check.**
- **Pass the current entry-level NBCOT certification examination.**

A reinstatement application is valid for four months from date of initial submission. If there are any deficiencies found during the review of the application, the applicant will be notified within 20 days of receipt of the completed application. If the deficiencies are not addressed within the four-month period, the applicant will have to submit a new reinstatement application and fee if they wish to complete the reinstatement process. **Note: The original application fee is non-refundable.**

Fee Schedule at a Glance

- Online Certification Renewal Fee — \$65
- Paper Certification Renewal Fee — \$75
- Late Fee (applications submitted AFTER March 31 of the scheduled renewal year) — \$25
- Reinstatement of Certification Renewal Application Fee (within one missed renewal cycle) — \$125
- Reinstatement of Certification Renewal Application Fee (outside one missed renewal cycle) — \$175
- Returned Check Fee — \$35
- Credit Card Challenge — \$35
- Application Withdrawal Processing Fee — \$40

! All fees are non-refundable. Certificants submitting their renewal application AFTER the scheduled renewal date will automatically be charged a late fee. It is the certificant's responsibility to know their certification renewal date.

After You Renew Your Certification

Certificants may check their renewal status online at any time by logging into their MyNBCOT account. Certificants will be able to access their updated digital credentials through their Accredible account by logging in/creating an account using the email address on record with NBCOT. If the certificant is unable to access their digital credentials, they should contact NBCOT at recert@nbcot.org. The email should include the certificant's full name, certification number, and the email address associated with their MyNBCOT account.

Certification Renewal Audit

All OTR and COTA certificants who renew their NBCOT certification are subject to a random audit of their compliance with the professional development requirements. The number of certificants audited will be sufficient to provide a 95% confidence level regarding the renewal rate of OTR and COTA certificants. To complete the audit successfully, the certificant must submit evidence of attaining 36 units. Certificants should maintain all of their documentation for one full year after renewing their certification in the event that they are audited.

Any certificant who is selected and does not successfully complete the audit will have their certification status changed to Expired. Expired certification means an individual cannot use the OTR or COTA certification marks. In order to regain certification, a reinstatement application would need to be submitted. (See page 10.)

Active–Duty Military Personnel

Active-duty military personnel who experience difficulties fulfilling the NBCOT certification renewal requirements while serving on long-term deployments overseas are urged to contact the NBCOT Certification Renewal Department for assistance at recert@nbcot.org.

Special Circumstance

Certification renewal candidates who have experienced exceptional personal or medical circumstances impacting the ability to accrue units during the renewal cycle should contact NBCOT before March 31 of their renewal year. NBCOT will review requests for renewal with special circumstance on a case-by-case basis. Please send an email to recert@nbcot.org with a brief explanation outlining the reason(s) for your request.

Appeals Procedures

If, upon submitting a renewal application, NBCOT determines that an applicant has not met the certification renewal requirements—including the submission of incomplete or non-recognized PDU—the applicant has the right to appeal. Within 30 days from receipt of the non-renewal notification, the applicant may submit a letter of appeal. The letter must outline the grounds for the appeal, including the reason(s) the application should be recognized and accepted by NBCOT.

Appeals should be sent via traceable mail (i.e., certified, UPS, FedEx) to:

NBCOT, Inc.
Attn: Certification Renewal Appeal
One Bank Street, Suite 300
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

Certification Information and Updates

In order to stay informed about the latest certification renewal information, it is the certificant's responsibility to keep their mailing and email addresses updated with NBCOT. Any changes to contact information should be updated through the certificant's MyNBCOT account.

Still Have Questions?

Additional information and resources on the certification renewal process can be found at nbcot.org/certification. Any additional questions can be directed to recert@nbcot.org.