

Table 3-1

The Occupational Therapy Toolbox

	About Occupation	About Humans and Environments
Tools for Thinking	Occupational conceptual models	Basic conceptual models
Tools for Acting Therapeutically	Occupational models of practice	Basic models of practice

The Model of Human Occupation is a good example of this. The conceptual model associated with the Model of Human Occupation gives us theory to explain the relationship among skills, habits, motivations, and human occupation. The model of practice associated with the Model of Human Occupation offers us assessment tools and intervention techniques that apply the conceptual model or that instruct us how to act therapeutically according to this approach. These practice tools are meant to allow us to assess and treat different types of performance, habituation, or volitional problems to produce predictable changes in occupation.

OT tools are further divided into tools that apply specifically to occupation and tools that apply generally to human beings and their environments. Tools focused on occupation are most often developed by occupational therapists and explain what occupation is, how it contributes to health, and how it relates to a variety of other factors. Tools borrowed from other disciplines help us understand human beings in context. They tell us more about the human organism, its component parts, its underlying processes, and its relationship to its environment. For example, anatomy, physiology, biology, pathology, kinesiology, and other basic biomedical sciences offer us tools that help us to understand the physical aspects of human beings.

The distinction between *occupational theory* and *basic theory* is important. Ideas classified as *occupational theory* describe occupation, each from its own particular perspective. For example, Mosey developed a theory in the 1970s entitled “recapitulation of ontogenesis” (Mosey, 1974). This would be considered *occupational theory* because it explains the development of occupation and discusses specific occupational tasks (such as vocational choice and self-care) from a developmental perspective. On the other hand, developmental theories like those developed by Piaget (1928) and Erikson (1959) would be considered *basic theories* because they discuss the development of human beings and of specific human components such as cognition and social relationships. Basic theories, then, describe the components necessary for the development of occupation, such as cognitive development, physical development, social development, and so on but do not address occupation directly.

For all of these tools, we need a toolbox—a system of organizing the many tools at our disposal to allow us to find the right one for the job at hand. The toolbox is a repository from which occupational therapists can select ideas, concepts, principles, assessments, and interventions that help them to understand and influence the occupational performance of their clients. The preceding discussion suggests that this toolbox should be divided into four quadrants (Table 3-1), to accommodate the following:

- Tools for thinking about occupation
- Tools for thinking about humans and their environments
- Tools for acting therapeutically with regard to occupation
- Tools for acting therapeutically toward humans in the context of their environments

To that end, we offer four terms and their definitions that will be used throughout this book:

1. *Occupational conceptual models* are tools for thinking about and understanding occupation. Occupational conceptual models help us understand occupation and the things that interfere with occupation to produce problems. For example, theories about how occupation is acquired and how personal factors can affect the acquisition of occupation would be considered occupational conceptual models.
2. *Occupational models of practice* are tools for acting therapeutically to make a change in occupation. This is theory that helps us to know how to act to help clients improve their occupation. As an example, theory about how the environment may be modified to enhance occupation would be considered an occupational model of practice.
3. *Basic conceptual models* are tools for thinking about humans and their environments. These include conceptual models from other disciplines that help us understand human beings in general. They do not deal specifically with occupation but rather with the components of people and environments that admittedly influence occupation. For example, basic conceptual models about how