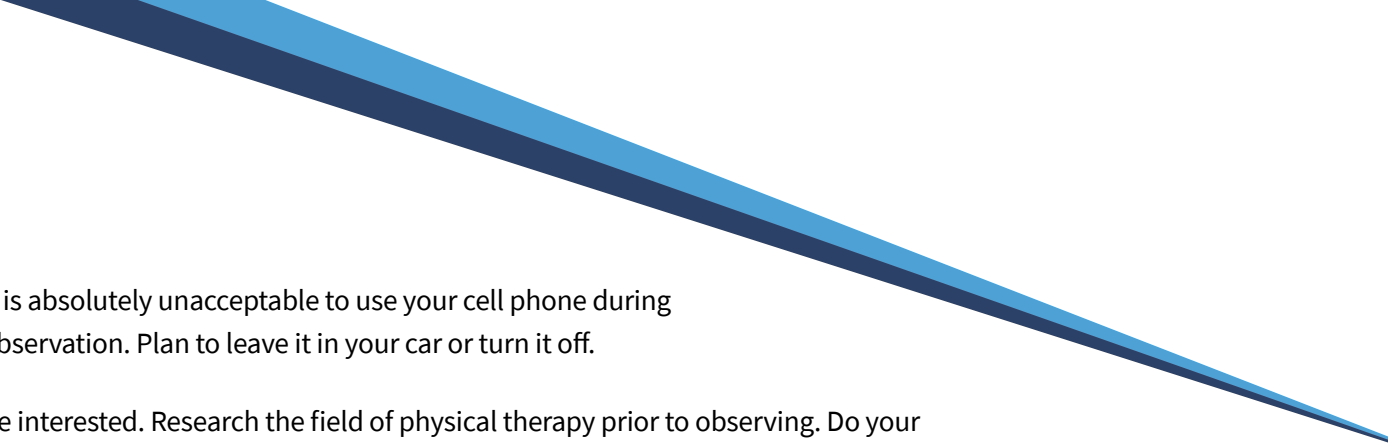


## Tips for Setting up Clinical Observation

Observation in a physical therapy setting is an essential requirement prior to enrollment in the Physical Therapist Assistant Program. This is your opportunity to judge your interest in the field and learn more about physical therapy. Therapists providing this experience will be requested to verify your participation in writing. The required verification form is included on the Rhodes State College PTA program webpage. Twenty (20) total hours, divided between **two different types of facilities**, are necessary to meet minimum program eligibility criteria. It is your responsibility to arrange this experience.

1. Call ahead to arrange an appointment for observation. Explain your interest in a career in the field. In general, physical therapy clinicians are glad to share information. Most facilities have specified times scheduled to spend time with students. Note: You may complete observation hours at any facility that is willing to host you.
2. Expect that it may be one to two weeks before the observation time can be scheduled. Most facilities are quite busy with patient/client treatment and need to plan ahead for observation experiences. Do not wait until the last minute to schedule observation hours.
3. Some programs have a specific therapist, assistant, or volunteer designated to coordinate observation experiences; if so, ask to speak to this person.
4. Notify the PT department if you will be late or absent. Be sure to speak directly with the facility personnel or leave a message with the office staff. Reschedule as soon as possible. Avoid canceling at the last minute.
5. Dress professionally. Even though you are not a part of the program at this time, you are still viewed as a representative of Rhodes State College. Please be neat and clean and wear what is considered “professional and/or business wear” by the general public.
  - clean, well kept hair
  - neat nails (kept short)
  - minimal jewelry and piercings
  - no jeans of any color
  - no shirts with writing or advertising on them
  - no shorts or crop length pants
  - no low cut necklines or crop length shirts
  - no tight fitting clothing
  - no athletic/workout clothing
  - no sandals, no open toe or open heel shoes
  - NOTE: athletic (tennis) shoes are acceptable

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6. It is absolutely unacceptable to use your cell phone during observation. Plan to leave it in your car or turn it off.
  7. Be interested. Research the field of physical therapy prior to observing. Do your homework but don't be afraid to ask questions to learn. Be sensitive. Some questions may not be appropriate to ask in front of the patient.
  9. Conform to any direction from the facility personnel immediately without question in the clinical setting. You may be asked to leave a treatment area if necessary. Wait in a non-treatment area and ask questions at a later time. Remember that the patient/client is the clinician's first responsibility.
  9. Understand that discussing a patient's medical history, present illness, diagnosis, prognosis or treatment with other students, friends, or family is a violation of confidentiality. Uphold the patient's right to privacy. You may be asked to sign a written confidentiality form; take this seriously. It is a legal matter.
  10. When observing physical therapy, be sure to keep interactions related to the scope of physical therapy and the purpose of your visit. Remain professional at all times. If you become involved in a situation which is uncomfortable for you, seek assistance immediately.