

How to Choose a Massage Therapy School





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Once you've made the decision to become a massage therapist, the next major decision is where to attend massage therapy school. You'll want to find a program that matches your career objectives but also fits your location and lifestyle. It is hard to tell which massage school will give you the best training for your money.

Step 1

Become familiar with your state's education requirements for massage therapy. In the state of Florida, 500 hours of education is required to receive a professional license.

Some schools offer a two-year program to obtain an associate's degree in massage therapy but a degree is not required.

State Licensing – this part of the process will require individual research as the hours of practical hands on experience, class education, and certification and continuing education requirements differ between each state. However, any top school should be able to answer the question, "Will your program enable me to apply for a state license?"

Step 2

Research what massage therapy programs are available near you.

Step 3

The accreditation of massage therapy schools.

For the Certification and/or accreditation of massage therapy schools. Search the Commission for Independent Education (CIE) at www.fldoe.org

You can also see if the school is Certified by American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA) www.amtamassage.org

Step 4

Define your goals and areas of interest. Learn more about the different massage specialty areas, and think about where you would like to work after school.

Examine each school's' education philosophies and techniques. You can opt for a spa-oriented approach or one that is more medical. Some schools also instruct in Eastern techniques. If you're not sure, consider choosing a school that teaches all three so you can learn more about each.

Look at how classes are set up. Find out if you can take classes part-time or must be enrolled as a full-time student. Some schools only offer certain classes at specific times of the year.



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Step 5

Set up a tour of the massage therapy school and see if you can attend a class or two.

Meet teachers and ask questions. Some schools may even provide a career day for prospective students.

- Don't be afraid to speak up. Ask about class sizes and the level of expertise among teachers. Discover the extent of a program's hands-on training. Ask how many program graduates go on to work in their field.
- If possible, talk to graduates of the program to ask about their experience and to get a feel for the school's reputation. Ask whether the school's job placement assistant program was helpful.
- Ask for a student massage so you can evaluate a student's performance firsthand.

Step 6

Determine the fees and costs of attending the school.

It is nearly impossible to compare massage schools against each other because schools are all so different. The cost of massage school may be one of the most appealing factors, but the cheapest massage schools are not always the best massage schools. Ask if financial aid or scholarships are available. Some schools may offer their own financing or payment plans to help you financially.

Step 7

Realize that learning will be ongoing.

Check out the school's continuing education for professional massage therapists.

The thing is that it can be a different way. You can make a great living as a massage therapist and also be very happy doing so. It can be a rewarding career in all ways when you learn what it is really about. It is more about learning to take care of yourself – not others.





Criteria to evaluate massage schools

All massage schools are not the same so we recommend that you use the criteria below to evaluate massage schools that you are considering.

Specialization

Does the school specialize in training massage therapists? You want to avoid schools that offer every program under the sun or that specialize in areas outside of massage therapy. Many quality massage schools also offer other alternative health programs or spa-related programs (including skin care). But, if the school you are looking at seems to focus on other things, you need to ask some hard questions to make sure that they are offering a quality massage therapy program.

Modalities Taught

A quality massage program will teach a great many modalities (types of massage). Some schools will just teach you a basic Swedish massage, which is fine as far as that goes, but there is so much more to massage therapy than that. And, if you don't know more than Swedish massage, your career is going to be a short one. The more modalities a school teaches, the better the program is likely to be, the better massage therapist you will be, and the better your massage therapy career will be.

Modalities

The best massage schools also teach a wide variety of massage modalities. Here are just a few of the modalities that many of the best schools teach:

Deep Tissue Massage

Hydrotherapy and Spa Techniques

Injury Massage / Rehabilitation Techniques

Myofascial Techniques

Neuromuscular Massage

On-Site Chair Massage

Swedish (Classic Western) Massage

Reflexology

Sports Massage

Trigger Point Therapy



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Hands-on Training

With the advent of online learning, multiple schools in massage therapy have started offering 100% online training and education. However, within this profession, hands-on applied training with a certified trainer is favored very highly. Most high-end spas will not even consider employment of massage therapists until they have achieved at least 1,000 hours of hands-on experience. There are multiple schools that offer such hands-on experience within their programs, although many more only offer 500-600 hours.

Years in Business / Reputation

The longer a massage school has been in business, the more likely it is that it offers a quality massage therapy education. Word gets out about bad schools and they don't tend to last. Ask how long the school has been in business (or, if it is a massage therapy program in a school that doesn't focus on massage, how long the massage therapy program has been offered). Ask people who hire massage therapists in your area – spa directors, doctors, chiropractors – which school's graduates they prefer to hire. This will tell you volumes about the quality of education you will receive at a particular school and the quality of the career you are likely to have after graduation.

Certification Examination Preparation

If a school does not have any preparation for certification by one of the 8 certification testing organizations then it is not a top school. Furthermore, most top schools will have preparatory classes for the MBLEx certification exam.

Career Services

Talk to the Career Services representatives at any massage school you are considering attending. How much help does the school offer its graduates in finding a job? What is the quality of that support? Some schools post a few jobs on a bulletin board and call that Career Services. Other schools work with students and graduates and employers to make sure that their graduates have the best possible chance of landing the job of their dreams. When you talk to the Career Services representatives, ask specific questions. How many job listings do they have for their students? What will the school do to help you find a job? And, how long will you get the support you need? The best massage schools offer job placement assistance to their graduates throughout their careers.

Schedules / Time Frame

Check to make sure that any massage school you consider has a class schedule available that matches your availability to go to class ... and a schedule that will allow you to complete the program in a time frame that is acceptable to you. Do you need evening classes? Do you need to be done with school within a year? Compare the different schools you are considering to make sure they can accommodate you.





Summary

Top rated massage therapy schools have all the options mentioned here: a great reputation, excellent recognized teachers, specialized coursework that encompasses the counseling and the business side of the industry.

Plus, variable program lengths for longer hands-on options and specialization options as well. These schools provide a step up from average schools because they are recognized as the best, much like Harvard, MIT or Princeton are each recognized and accepted as top schools.

Aiming to be hired by the top 5% of companies in massage therapy require being trained by the top educators. Whenever possible, start your search by searching for the top 10 massage therapy schools in your locality. You can't go wrong with them. In addition, utilize the best practical tools and resources in vetting out the best massage school for your specific needs.



Questions to Ask



In choosing a massage therapy school be sure to ask these questions:

What licensing is required where you live?

How many teachers at your school have or have had a full time massage practice?

How many of your graduates have found jobs or started their own business?

How many of your graduates are still working after one year? after 2 years? after 5 years?

How much can I make as a massage therapist in an entry level job?

How much can I make as a massage therapist in after a few years
of working in an entry level job?

How much can I make if I open my massage business right after massage school?

What does it take to open a massage business?

How many hours of training does your school have?