

Anatomical Terminology

ORIENTATION AND DIRECTIONAL TERMS

Anatomical position: The standard arrangement of the body used for reference when studying anatomy

Body is erect and at rest

Both feet are flat on the floor and slightly separated

Arms are down by the side, held slightly away from the body

Head, eyes, palms, and toes are all facing forward

Superior: Above or higher	Inferior: Below or lower
Proximal: Closer to the point of attachment	Distal: Farther away from the point of attachment
Lateral: Towards the side; farther away from the midline	Medial: Towards the middle; closer to the midline
Anterior: Towards the front; before	Posterior: Towards the back; behind
Ventral: "Belly side", towards the front (for humans, ventral = anterior)	Dorsal: "Back side", towards the back (for humans, dorsal = posterior)
Superficial: Closer to the surface	Deep: Deeper; farther from the surface
Supine: Having the palms facing up or forward; lying with the body face up	Prone: Having the palms facing down or to the back; lying with the body face down

ANATOMICAL PLANES

Frontal plane (or coronal plane)	A vertical plane, perpendicular to the ground, that runs through the body from side to side and divides the body into front (anterior) and back (posterior) sections
Sagittal plane	A vertical plane, perpendicular to the ground, that runs through the body from front to back and divides the body into left and right sections
Transverse plane (or horizontal plane)	A horizontal plane, perpendicular to the midline of the body, that runs through the body from front to back, and divides the body into upper and lower sections

HISTOLOGY TERMS

Simple	Composed of a single layer of cells
Stratified	Composed of multiple layers of cells
Loose	Tissues that contain large amounts of ground substance; fibers and cells, if present, are loosely arranged
Dense	Tissues that contain more fiber than cells or ground substance; fibers appear closely packed with little open space between them

SKELETAL SYSTEM TERMS

Articulations

Condyle	A rounded process that articulates with another bone
Facet	A small, often flat surface that articulates with another bone
Head	An enlargement at the end of a bone, usually articulating with another bone
Suture	Interlocking junction between cranial bones

Depressions and Openings

Foramen (plural: <i>foramina</i>)	An opening for the passage of blood vessels and/or nerves
Fossa (plural: <i>fossae</i>)	A shallow depression or cavity
Fovea	A tiny pit or depression
Meatus (plural: <i>meatus, meatuses</i>)	A tube-like passageway within a bone
Notch	A depression from one side of a bone to another
Sinus	A recess, cavity or hollow space within a bone

Raised Features

Crest	A prominent border or ridge
Epicondyle	A smaller projection situated above a condyle
Linea	A narrow, line-like ridge (less prominent than a crest)
Process	A prominent projection of a bone
Ramus (plural: <i>rami</i>)	A branch-like process
Spine	A sharp, slender ridge
Trochanter	A relatively large, blunt projection of bone (found only on the femur)
Tubercle	A small, knob-like process (usually smoother than a tuberosity)
Tuberosity	A larger, roughened, knob-like process or thickened area of a bone

MUSCULAR SYSTEM TERMS

Ligament	A band of connective tissue that connects bones to each other
Tendon	A band of connective tissue that connects muscles to bones
Aponeurosis	A broad, flat sheet of connective tissue that anchors a muscle or connects a muscle to the part it moves
Origin	The point of attachment of a muscle that moves the least when the muscle is contracted
Insertion	The point of attachment of a muscle that moves the most when the muscle is contracted