

Anatomical Terminology

anatomical position - the starting point for all descriptive terminology: location/position/motion

anterior - toward the front (ventral)

posterior - toward the back (dorsal)

medial - toward midline

lateral - away from midline

proximal - near the attachment to the trunk

distal - away from the attachment to the trunk

superior - above/toward the head

inferior - below/toward the feet

superficial - toward the surface

deep - away from the surface

supine - lying face up

prone - lying face down

frontal (coronal) plane - divides the body into front and back/anterior & posterior

sagittal plane - divides the body into right and left

transverse plane - divides the body into top and bottom/superior & inferior

flexion - decreasing the angle at a joint and/or moving in an anterior direction in the sagittal plane

extension - increasing the angle at a joint and/or moving in an posterior direction in the sagittal plane

abduction - movement away from midline in the frontal plane

adduction - movement toward midline in the frontal plane

internal/medial rotation - movement toward midline in the transverse plane

external/lateral rotation - movement away from midline in the transverse plane

lateral flexion (spine) - movement away from midline in the frontal plane

anterior pelvic tilt - the bowl of the pelvis tilts forward

posterior pelvic tilt - the bowl of the pelvis tilts backward

dorsiflexion - movement of the top of the foot toward the shin (foot flexed)

plantarflexion - movement of the top of the foot away from the shin (foot pointed)

inversion - sole of the foot toward midline

eversion - sole of the foot away from midline

supination (foot) - combination of inversion, adduction, and plantarflexion - raises the arch

pronation (foot) - combination of eversion, abduction, and dorsiflexion - lowers the arch

elevation (scapula) - movement in a superior direction

depression (scapula) - movement in an inferior direction

protraction (scapula) - movement away from the spine (anterior/lateral)

retraction (scapula) - movement toward the spine (posterior/medial)

upward rotation (scapula) - movement of the inferior angle away from midline

downward rotation (scapula) - movement of the inferior angle toward midline

supination (forearm) - palm up or palm forward (anatomical position); radius & ulnar are uncrossed

pronation (forearm) - palm down or palm backward; radius & ulna are crossed

horizontal adduction - anterior movement in the transverse plane (from 90 degrees of abduction)

horizontal abduction - posterior movement in the transverse plane (from 90 degrees of abduction)