

RUHANI COLLEGE

Registered Massage Therapy Program

Course: RU RMT 01 — Health Care Terminology

Quiz 2 Study Guide & Review — Directional Terms and Body Planes

This guide prepares you for Quiz 2, which covers anatomical directional terminology, the body planes, and the standard anatomical position. Each topic explains the material and closes with review questions. Model answers are provided in the Answer Key at the end.

How to Use This Guide

- Learn directional terms in opposing pairs — knowing one gives you the other.
- Say each term aloud with a real example (“the wrist is distal to the elbow”) to fix its meaning.
- Use the review questions to test recall, then verify with the Answer Key.
- **Focus your revision on:** the anatomical position, the five directional pairs, and the three primary body planes.

Topic 1 — The Anatomical Position

The anatomical position is the standard reference posture on which all directional terms are based. Because everyone uses the same reference, terms such as “anterior” or “medial” always mean the same thing, no matter how the client is actually lying or standing.

The Standard Position

- Standing upright and facing forward.
- Feet flat on the floor, positioned slightly apart.
- Arms at the sides with the palms facing forward.
- Head level, eyes looking straight ahead.

Using a fixed reference position removes ambiguity: a finding described as “lateral” is understood the same way by every reader of the record.

Review Questions

Answer each from memory, then check the Answer Key at the end of this guide.

1. Describe the standard anatomical position, including the body, feet, arms, and palms.
2. In the anatomical position, which way do the palms face?
3. Why is a fixed anatomical reference position necessary when using directional terms?

Topic 2 — Directional Terms

Directional terms describe the location of one structure relative to another. They come in opposing pairs, so learning one member of a pair gives you the other.

Superior	toward the head / above (opp. Inferior)
Inferior	toward the feet / below (opp. Superior)
Anterior (ventral)	toward the front (opp. Posterior)
Posterior (dorsal)	toward the back (opp. Anterior)
Medial	toward the midline (opp. Lateral)
Lateral	away from the midline (opp. Medial)
Proximal	closer to the trunk / attachment (opp. Distal)
Distal	farther from the trunk / attachment (opp. Proximal)
Superficial	toward the body surface (opp. Deep)
Deep	farther from the surface (opp. Superficial)

Applying Directional Terms

Directional terms are always relative — a structure is described in relation to another structure:

- The wrist is distal to the elbow; the elbow is proximal to the wrist.
- The nose is medial to the ears; the ears are lateral to the nose.
- The stomach is inferior to the heart; the head is superior to the neck.
- The skin is superficial to the muscle; bone is deep to the muscle.

Review Questions

Answer each from memory, then check the Answer Key at the end of this guide.

1. Give the meaning of each term and its opposite: superior, anterior, medial, proximal, superficial.
2. What does distal mean — closer to or farther from the point of attachment?
3. Explain the difference between proximal and distal.
4. Does “lateral” mean toward or away from the midline?
5. Complete each relationship: the wrist is ____ to the elbow; the nose is ____ to the ears; the head is ____ to the neck.
6. Explain why directional terms are described as “relative.”

Topic 3 — Body Planes

A body plane is an imaginary flat surface that divides the body to describe sections or the direction of an image, movement, or cut. Three primary planes are used, along with the oblique plane.

Sagittal	divides into left and right portions
Frontal (coronal)	divides into anterior (front) and posterior (back)
Transverse (horizontal)	divides into superior (upper) and inferior (lower)
Oblique	divides at a diagonal angle

A practical link: a CT scan taken horizontally through the abdomen is viewed in the transverse plane. The transverse plane is also called the horizontal plane.

Review Questions

Answer each from memory, then check the Answer Key at the end of this guide.

1. Name the three primary body planes and state how each divides the body.
2. Which plane divides the body into left and right? Which into front and back? Which into upper and lower?
3. Describe the transverse plane.
4. In which plane is a horizontal CT scan taken through the abdomen viewed?
5. Explain the difference between the sagittal and frontal planes.
6. What kind of section does the oblique plane produce?

Answer Key — Review Questions

Model answers for the review questions in each topic. Use these to check your understanding; where a question asks for explanation, your wording may differ so long as the meaning is correct.

Topic 1 — The Anatomical Position

1. The body is standing upright and facing forward; the feet are flat and slightly apart; the arms are at the sides with the palms facing forward; the head is level with the eyes looking straight ahead.
2. Forward (anteriorly).
3. So that directional terms always mean the same thing regardless of the client's actual posture, which removes ambiguity and keeps communication and documentation consistent.

Topic 2 — Directional Terms

1. Superior = toward the head/above (opposite inferior); anterior = toward the front (opposite posterior); medial = toward the midline (opposite lateral); proximal = closer to the trunk/point of attachment (opposite distal); superficial = toward the surface (opposite deep).
2. Farther from the point of attachment. (Distal does not mean closer to attachment.)
3. Proximal is closer to the trunk or point of attachment; distal is farther from it. For example, the elbow is proximal to the wrist, and the wrist is distal to the elbow.
4. Away from the midline. (Medial means toward the midline.)
5. distal; medial; superior.
6. Because a structure is always described in relation to another structure — the same structure can be proximal to one point and distal to another depending on the reference chosen.

Topic 3 — Body Planes

1. Sagittal divides the body into left and right portions; frontal (coronal) divides it into anterior (front) and posterior (back) portions; transverse (horizontal) divides it into superior (upper) and inferior (lower) portions.
2. Sagittal (left/right); frontal or coronal (front/back); transverse or horizontal (upper/lower).
3. A horizontal plane that divides the body into upper (superior) and lower (inferior) portions; it is also called the horizontal or axial plane.
4. The transverse (horizontal) plane.
5. The sagittal plane divides the body into left and right; the frontal (coronal) plane divides it into front (anterior) and back (posterior). The sagittal plane does not divide front from back.
6. A section cut at a diagonal angle, rather than straight left/right, front/back, or upper/lower.