



# coronal

synonym: frontal plane

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**vertical plane separating anterior & posterior portions of a structure; perpendicular with the sagittal plane**

**example: the coronal suture separates the frontal bone from the two parietal bones of the cranial vault**

Text adapted from: Drake RL, Vogl AW, Mitchell AWM. (2015).  
Gray's Anatomy for Students. Churchill Livingstone Elsevier.

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# sagittal

aka: median sagittal plane  
when passes through center of the body

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**vertical plane separating left and right portions of a structure; perpendicular with the coronal plane**

**example: the sagittal suture separates the left and right parietal bones of the cranial vault**

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# transverse

synonyms: horizontal, axial

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a plane separating the superior and inferior portions of a structure; parallels the ground, perpendicular to sagittal and coronal planes

example: a transverse plane through the umbilicus divides the body roughly into superior and inferior halves

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# anterior

synonym: ventral

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describes the position of a structure as being towards the “front” of the body

example: the sternum is anterior to the vertebral column

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# posterior

synonym: dorsal

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describes the position of a structure as being towards the “back” of the body

example: the gluteus maximus m. is on the posterior side of the pelvis

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# medial

antonym: lateral

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describes the position of a structure relative to the median sagittal plane; towards the midline of the body

example: the sternal end of the clavicle is medial

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# lateral

antonym: medial

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describes the position of a structure relative to the median sagittal plane; away from the midline

example: the acromial end of the clavicle is lateral

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# superior

antonym: inferior

---

describes the position of a structure relative to the vertical axis of the body; towards the “top”

example: the manubrium is superior to the body of the sternum

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# *inferior*

antonym: superior

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describes the position of a structure relative to the vertical axis of the body; towards the “bottom”

example: the mastoid process of the temporal bone points inferiorly

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# proximal

antonym: distal

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describes the position of a structure in relation to the trunk of the body (towards it) or the structure's origin

examples: the head of the femur is proximal;  
common iliac aa. are proximal to external and internal iliac branches

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# Distal

antonym: proximal

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describes the position of a structure in relation to the trunk of the body (away from it)

example: the trochlea is on the distal end of the humerus

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# cranial

antonym: caudal

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towards the head

sometimes used instead of superior

example: the cranial aspect of C2 features a superiorly-projecting dens

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# caudal

antonym: cranial

---

away from the head; towards the tail

sometimes used instead of inferior

example: the sacrum forms the caudal end of the vertebral column

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# rostral

usage: applicable in the head

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describes the position of a structure relative to the nose

example: the forebrain is rostral to the hindbrain

Text adapted from: Drake RL, Vogl AW, Mitchell AWM. (2015).  
Gray's Anatomy for Students. Churchill Livingstone Elsevier.

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# superficial

antonym: deep

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describes the relative position of a structure, in reference to it being closer to the surface

example: breast tissue is superficial to the rib cage

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# Deep

antonym: superficial

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describes the relative position of a structure, in reference to it being farther away to the surface

example: the heart and lungs are deep to the rib cage

Text adapted from: Drake RL, Vogl AW, Mitchell AWM. (2015).  
Gray's Anatomy for Students. Churchill Livingstone Elsevier.

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# flexion

antagonist: extension

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bending that decreases the angle between parts

examples:

hamstring muscles flex the knee; brachialis flexes the elbow

prevertebral mm. in the cervical region are deep neck flexors

Moore K. L., Li A. F. D., & Agur A. M. R. (2017).  
Clinically Oriented Anatomy.

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# extension

antagonist: flexion

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straightening that increases the angle between parts

examples:

triceps brachii m. extends the elbow

acting bilaterally, erector spinae mm. extend the spine

Moore K. L., Li A. F. D., & Agur A. M. R. (2017).  
Clinically Oriented Anatomy.

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