

What are Directional Terms?

Worksheet

Directional terms are standardized word pairs - such as superior/inferior, anterior/posterior, and medial/lateral - that describe the relative position of body structures based on the anatomical position.

Questions

- The heart is _____ to the sternum (i.e., behind it).
 - Anterior
 - Posterior
 - Superior
 - Lateral
- Which term describes the skin relative to the muscles beneath it?
 - Deep
 - Superficial
 - Distal
 - Medial
- The shoulder is _____ to the hand.
 - Distal
 - Proximal
 - Inferior
 - Posterior
- Which pair best describes 'toward vs away from the body's midline'?
 - Superior/inferior
 - Proximal/distal
 - Medial/lateral
 - Superficial/deep
- The stomach is closer to the body's surface than the aorta. Describe their relationship.
- The knee is closer to the hip than the ankle is. Describe the knee's position relative to the ankle.
- The nose sits between the two eyes, closer to the body's midline. Describe its position relative to the eyes.
- Define: Superior vs inferior?
- Define: Anterior vs posterior?
- Define: Medial vs lateral?

Answer Key

1. B) Posterior - Posterior means toward the back, so the heart lies posterior to the sternum.
2. B) Superficial - Skin is closer to the surface, making it superficial to muscles.
3. B) Proximal - The shoulder is closer to the trunk than the hand, so it is proximal.
4. C) Medial/lateral - Medial/lateral specifically describe closeness to or distance from the midline.
5. The stomach is nearer the skin; the aorta is deeper inside. Superficial means closer to the surface; deep means farther in. Therefore the stomach is superficial to the aorta, and the aorta is deep to the stomach.
6. The hip is the point of attachment to the trunk. Proximal means closer to that point; distal means farther. Therefore the knee is proximal to the ankle.
7. The midline runs down the center of the face. Medial means closer to the midline; lateral means farther. Therefore the nose is medial to the eyes.
8. Superior = toward the head; inferior = toward the feet.
9. Anterior = toward the front; posterior = toward the back.
10. Medial = toward the midline; lateral = away from the midline.

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