

LEARNING MADE EASY



3rd Edition

Medical Terminology

for
dummies[®]
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Identify prefix, root,
and suffix origins

Communicate like a
healthcare professional

Understand word
foundations

Beverley Henderson, CMT-R, HRT
Jennifer L. Dorsey, PhD



Medical Terminology

3rd Edition

**by Beverley Henderson, CMT-R, HRT
and Jennifer L. Dorsey, PhD**

**for
dummies[®]**
A Wiley Brand

Medical Terminology For Dummies®, 3rd Edition

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Contents at a Glance

Introduction	1
Part 1: Living for Linguistics	5
CHAPTER 1: Scrubbing In to Master Medical Terminology	7
CHAPTER 2: Medical Terminology: The How and Why	15
CHAPTER 3: Introducing the Big Three: Prefixes, Roots, and Suffixes	23
CHAPTER 4: Acronyms, Eponyms, Homonyms, Multiples, and Plurals — Oh My!	37
CHAPTER 5: Say What? Pronunciation and Usage	53
Part 2: Mapping Words and Bodies	63
CHAPTER 6: As It Was in the Beginning: Prefixes	65
CHAPTER 7: So It Shall Be in the End: Suffixes	79
CHAPTER 8: Hey, I Know You: Word Recognition	87
CHAPTER 9: Deconstruction Junction: Breaking Down Words	95
CHAPTER 10: An Org Chart to Live By: Organization of the Body	105
CHAPTER 11: All Systems Go: When Systems Combine	119
Part 3: In Terms of Anatomy	129
CHAPTER 12: Boning Up on the Skeletal System	131
CHAPTER 13: Getting Ripped: The Muscular System	149
CHAPTER 14: Skin Deep: Skin, Glands, Nails, and Hair	163
CHAPTER 15: It Depends on Your Perception: The Sensory Systems	179
Part 4: Let's Get Some Physiology Terminology	197
CHAPTER 16: The Heart of the Matter: The Cardiovascular and Lymphatic Systems	199
CHAPTER 17: Just Breathe: The Respiratory System	223
CHAPTER 18: Feeding Time: The Gastrointestinal System	241
CHAPTER 19: Gatekeepers of Health: The Endocrine System	261
CHAPTER 20: Calming Down: The Nervous System	279
Part 5: Name That Plumbing	295
CHAPTER 21: When You Gotta Go: The Urinary System	297
CHAPTER 22: Check the Plumbing: The Male Reproductive System	311
CHAPTER 23: A Life Force: The Female Reproductive System	325

Part 6: The Part of Tens	347
CHAPTER 24: Ten Essential Medical Terminology References	349
CHAPTER 25: Ten or So Useful Mnemonic Devices.....	353
CHAPTER 26: Ten Sets of Terminology Tongue-Twisting Diseases.....	357
CHAPTER 27: Top Ten Crazy-Hard-to-Spell Medical Terms	363
Appendix: Handy Study Guide	365
Index	375

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
About This Book	1
Foolish Assumptions	2
Icons Used in This Book	3
Beyond the Book	4
Where to Go from Here	4
PART 1: LIVING FOR LINGUISTICS	5
CHAPTER 1: Scrubbing In to Master Medical Terminology	7
The Tale behind the Terms	7
Making Terminology Work for You	8
Building a Foundation of Vocabulary	9
In Terms of Anatomy	9
All Systems Go	10
Down-Under Details	12
The Ultimate Resource: You	13
CHAPTER 2: Medical Terminology: The How and Why	15
Defining Medical Terminology.....	15
Medical Terminology in the Real World	16
In theory and practice.....	16
Writing it down.....	17
Changes in Medical Terminology	18
It's Greek and Latin to Me	19
Modernizing Medicine	19
CHAPTER 3: Introducing the Big Three: Prefixes, Roots, and Suffixes	23
Rooting Around for Answers	24
Exterior root words	24
Interior root words	27
Prefix as Precursor	33
Common Prefixes	33
Suffixes: Final Thoughts	34

CHAPTER 4:	Acronyms, Eponyms, Homonyms, Multiples, and Plurals — Oh My!	37
	Acronyms	38
	Eponyms	40
	Homonyms.....	42
	Deriving a Plural the Medical Way	43
	Medical rules for forming plurals	43
	English rules of forming plurals.....	46
	Welcome to the Peanut Gallery: More Exceptions to the Plural Rules	48
CHAPTER 5:	Say What? Pronunciation and Usage	53
	Hooked on Phonics.....	53
	Pronouncing Common Prefixes and Beginning Sounds	54
	The sound of silence.....	54
	From your ear to the dictionary	55
	Pronouncing Common Suffixes and Endings	56
	Pronouncing Common Combinations	57
	Putting It All Together	58
	What Condition Your Condition Is In	60
	Suffering Suffixes.....	60
	PART 2: MAPPING WORDS AND BODIES	63
CHAPTER 6:	As It Was in the Beginning: Prefixes	65
	Common Prefixes	65
	A–E prefixes	66
	F–J prefixes	67
	K–O prefixes	68
	P–Z prefixes	69
	Matching Prefixes to Situations.....	69
	In your body.....	70
	In the doctor’s office and hospital.....	71
	In the pharmacy and research lab	72
	Retro Root Rewind A–M	72
	Retro Root Rewind N–Z.....	76
CHAPTER 7:	So It Shall Be in the End: Suffixes	79
	Common Suffixes	79
	-itis	80
	-oma	80
	-pathy	80
	And lots more suffixes	81

	Matching Suffixes to Situations	83
	In your body	83
	In the doctor's office and hospital.	84
	In the pharmacy and research lab	85
CHAPTER 8:	Hey, I Know You: Word Recognition	87
	The Inside Story: Terms for Your Interior	87
	Terms for the Outside of Your Body.	92
	Pathological Conditions	93
CHAPTER 9:	Deconstruction Junction: Breaking Down Words	95
	Finding Parts of Words	96
	Identifying word elements	96
	Defining the prefix.	96
	Defining the root word	97
	Identifying the combining vowel.	98
	Defining the suffix	98
	Going Deeper into Suffixes	99
	Adding Up Individual Word Meanings	101
CHAPTER 10:	An Org Chart to Live By: Organization of the Body	105
	Looking at the Big Picture	105
	Cells	106
	Tissues.	107
	Organs and Systems.	108
	Cavities of the Body.	109
	Directional Terms and Anatomical Planes.	110
	Regions of the Body	113
CHAPTER 11:	All Systems Go: When Systems Combine	119
	Anatomical Systems Working Together	119
	The musculoskeletal system	120
	The integumentary system	120
	The sensory system.	121
	Physiology Systems Working Together	121
	The cardiovascular and lymphatic systems.	121
	The respiratory system.	123
	The gastrointestinal system.	124
	The endocrine system.	125
	The nervous system	126
	The urinary and reproductive systems	127

PART 3: IN TERMS OF ANATOMY	129
CHAPTER 12: Boning Up on the Skeletal System	131
How the Skeletal System Works	132
Bones and osteology	132
Axial skeleton	134
Appendicular skeleton	137
Joints	138
Skeletal Root Words	139
More Anatomical Terms	141
Common Skeletal Conditions	143
Finding the Culprit: Skeletal Diseases and Pathology	145
Testing, Testing: Skeletal Radiology and Diagnostic Tests	146
Paging Dr. Terminology: Skeletal Surgeries and Procedures	147
CHAPTER 13: Getting Ripped: The Muscular System	149
How the Muscular System Works	149
Classes of muscles	150
Types of muscles	151
Muscles and tendons	151
Roundup of the superficial muscles	152
Muscular Roots and Suffixes	156
Action Item: The Movement of Your Muscles	157
Common Muscular Conditions	158
Finding the Culprit: Muscular Diseases and Pathology	159
Testing, Testing: Muscular Radiology and Diagnostic Tests	160
Paging Dr. Terminology: Muscular Surgeries and Procedures	161
It's All Related: More Muscular Terms	161
CHAPTER 14: Skin Deep: Skin, Glands, Nails, and Hair	163
Layers of Skin	163
Epidermis	165
Dermis	166
Subcutaneous layer	166
Glands, Both Sebaceous and Sudoriferous	166
Hair and Nails	168
Integumentary Root Words	169
Common Integumentary Conditions	171
Finding the Culprit: Integumentary Diseases and Pathology	172
Testing, Testing: Integumentary Radiology and Diagnostic Tests	175
Paging Dr. Terminology: Integumentary Surgeries and Procedures	175
More Integumentary Terms	177

CHAPTER 15: It Depends on Your Perception: The Sensory Systems	179
The Eye	179
Inner eye	180
Outer eye	182
The Ear	182
Outer ear	184
Middle ear	184
Inner ear	184
The Nose	185
The Mouth	186
The Touch Receptor	186
Sensory Root Words	186
It's All Related: More Anatomical Terms	190
Common Sensory Conditions	192
Finding the Culprit: Sensory Diseases and Pathology	193
Testing, Testing: Sensory Radiology and Diagnostic Tests	194
Paging Dr. Terminology: Surgeries and Procedures	195
Terminology RX: Sensory Pharmacology	196

**PART 4: LET'S GET SOME PHYSIOLOGY
TERMINOLOGY**..... 197

CHAPTER 16: The Heart of the Matter: The Cardiovascular and Lymphatic Systems	199
How the Cardiovascular System Works	200
The heart	201
Blood vessels	202
Blood	203
How the Lymphatic System Works	206
Cardiovascular and Lymphatic Root Words	207
Common Cardiovascular and Lymphatic Conditions	212
Finding the Culprit: Cardiovascular and Lymphatic Diseases and Pathology	213
Testing, Testing: Cardiovascular and Lymphatic Radiology and Diagnostic Tests	217
Paging Dr. Terminology: Cardiovascular and Lymphatic Surgeries and Procedures	219
Terminology Rx: Cardiovascular and Lymphatic Pharmacology ...	221

CHAPTER 17: Just Breathe: The Respiratory System	223
How the Respiratory System Works	223
Nose	225
Pharynx and larynx	225
Trachea	225
Bronchi	226
Lungs	226
Respiratory Root Words	228
It's All Related: More Anatomical Terms	230
Common Respiratory Conditions	233
Finding the Culprit: Respiratory Diseases and Pathology	235
Testing, Testing: Respiratory Radiology and Diagnostic Tests	236
Paging Dr. Terminology: Respiratory Surgeries and Procedures	238
Terminology RX: Respiratory Pharmacology	239
CHAPTER 18: Feeding Time: The Gastrointestinal System	241
How the Gastrointestinal System Works	242
Mouth and pharynx	242
Esophagus	244
Stomach	244
Liver	245
Pancreas	245
Gallbladder	245
Intestines	245
Gastrointestinal Root Words	246
Common Gastrointestinal Conditions	250
Finding the Culprit: Gastrointestinal Diseases and Pathology	253
Testing, Testing: Gastrointestinal Radiology and Diagnostic Tests	254
Gastrointestinal Surgeries and Procedures	257
Terminology RX: Gastrointestinal Pharmacology	258
CHAPTER 19: Gatekeepers of Health: The Endocrine System	261
How the Endocrine System Works	262
Hormones	263
Pituitary and hypothalamus	263
Thyroid	265
Pancreas	266
Adrenals	266
Gonads	267
Endocrine Root Words	268
It's All Related: More Endocrine Anatomical Terms	270
Common Endocrine Conditions	271

	Finding the Culprit: Endocrine Diseases and Pathology	274
	Testing, Testing: Endocrine Radiology and Diagnostic Tests	275
	Paging Dr. Terminology: Endocrine Surgeries and Procedures	276
	Terminology RX: Endocrine Pharmacology	277
CHAPTER 20:	Calming Down: The Nervous System	279
	How the Nervous System Works	279
	The Central Nervous System	280
	Brain	280
	Spinal cord	283
	Peripheral Nervous System	284
	Nervous Root Words	285
	It's All Related: More Nerve-Wracking Terms	287
	Common Nervous Conditions	288
	Finding the Culprit: Nervous Diseases and Pathology	290
	Testing, Testing: Nervous Radiology and Diagnostic Tests	292
	Paging Dr. Terminology: Nervous Surgeries and Procedures	293
	Terminology RX: Nervous Pharmacology	294
	PART 5: NAME THAT PLUMBING	295
CHAPTER 21:	When You Gotta Go: The Urinary System	297
	How the Urinary System Works	298
	Kidneys	299
	Ureters	300
	Urinary bladder	300
	Urethra	300
	Urinary Root Words	302
	Common Urinary Conditions	304
	Finding the Culprit: Urinary Diseases and Pathology	304
	Testing, Testing: Urinary Radiology and Diagnostic Tests	306
	Paging Dr. Terminology: Urinary Surgeries and Procedures	308
	Terminology RX: Urinary Pharmacology	309
CHAPTER 22:	Check the Plumbing: The Male Reproductive System	311
	How the Male Reproductive System Works	312
	Testes	313
	Ducts	313
	Urethra	314
	Prostate	314
	Penis	314

Male Reproductive Root Words	315
Pathological Male Reproductive Conditions	316
Finding the Culprit: Male Reproductive Diseases and Pathology	318
Testing, Testing: Male Reproductive Radiology and Diagnostic Tests	319
Paging Dr. Terminology: Male Reproductive Surgeries and Procedures	321
Terminology RX: Male Reproductive Pharmacology	322
Say What? Male Terminology Tongue Twisters	323
CHAPTER 23: A Life Force: The Female Reproductive System	325
How the Female Reproductive System Works	325
Ovaries	326
Fallopian tubes	327
Uterus	327
Vagina	328
Female Reproductive Root Words	330
It's All Related: More Female Reproductive Anatomical Terms	334
Common Female Reproductive Conditions	337
Finding the Culprit: Female Reproductive Diseases and Pathology	339
Testing, Testing: Female Reproductive Radiology and Diagnostic Tests	341
Paging Dr. Terminology: Female Reproductive Surgeries and Procedures	341
Terminology RX: Female Reproductive Pharmacology	346
PART 6: THE PART OF TENS	347
CHAPTER 24: Ten Essential Medical Terminology References	349
Medterms.com	349
Medilexicon.com	350
webMD.com	350
Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary, 32nd Edition	350
Mosby's Medical Dictionary, 10th Edition	350
Stedman's Medical Dictionary and Flashcards for Health Professionals and Nursing Illustrated, 7th Edition	351
Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary, 23rd Edition	351
Sloane's Medical Word Book, 5th Edition	351
Medicalmnemonics.com	352
Medical Terminology Systems Quick Study Guide	352

CHAPTER 25: Ten or So Useful Mnemonic Devices	353
Cranial Nerves	353
Lung Lobe Numbers	354
The Size of a Thyroid	354
Scalp Layers	354
Muscles of the Rotator Cuff	354
Radial Nerve	355
Face Nerves	355
Perineal versus Peroneal	355
Sperm Path through Male Reproductive Tract	355
Carpal Bone Locations	356
Cranial Bones	356
CHAPTER 26: Ten Sets of Terminology Tongue-Twisting Diseases	357
Skeletal	357
Muscular	358
Integumentary	358
Sensory	359
Cardiovascular and Lymphatic	359
Respiratory	359
Gastrointestinal	360
Endocrine	360
Nervous	360
Urinary and Reproductive	361
CHAPTER 27: Top Ten Crazy-Hard-to-Spell Medical Terms	363
Crazy-Hard-to-Spell Terms	363
APPENDIX: HANDY STUDY GUIDE	365
INDEX	375

Introduction

Welcome to *Medical Terminology For Dummies!* Consider this your personal, private course in the study of the medical terms used every day in doctor's offices, hospitals, clinics, billing and insurance companies, labs, and even pharmacies. This is a personal grand tour through not only the world of medical terminology, but also through your own body.

You'll find as you read this book that learning medical terms is a two-part proposition. First, you've got to master the landscape of language itself. Don't worry, though — there will be no quiz. We just want you to better understand how to both create and break down words. Once you get to know more about prefixes, suffixes, and root words, you can do darn near anything with the terminology. For example, you can go inside the body to discover the terms that match up with different systems, diseases, procedures, and pharmaceutical products.

Mastering medical terminology involves more than just memorizing. Exploring these terms and how they can be created will unlock not only medical mysteries for you, but great opportunities as well.

About This Book

Getting to know the world of medical terminology can get a bit repetitive at times. That's why we decided to break the book down into several parts about all kinds of different things. You start by getting the backstory of terminology — the history and the players involved with bringing this “language” to the masses. Then you get into the nitty-gritty of how words are formed and all about word parts, usage, pronunciation, and recognition. Finally, you take a gander at all the different body systems and the words associated with them. We even throw in some bonus top ten lists at the end that we hope you find useful.

There's a lot to learn about medical terminology, we admit, but we'll be right there with you for the whole wild, crazy ride. Keep in mind that you don't have to read this book cover to cover, nor do you have to remember all the details from

chapter to chapter. Read out of order, skip what you don't need. It will all be there for you should you choose to revisit the sections, tips, or sidebars at another time.

Keep in mind that this is not a giant textbook of terms, nor is it a dictionary. Those are both great resources, and we recommend you pick up both if you are a medical professional. This is a friendly take on the topic, and our main goal is to show you the basics of how these words are made so that you can go out in the big, bad world and master the creation and use of medical terms on your own terms. We're not giving you a fish; we're teaching you to fish.

We do rely on some conventions within this book that you may not see elsewhere in an attempt to keep the tone fun and conversational. So, please be prepared to see a lot of the following:

We have included chapters about language and medical terminology's place in it. You will notice we also make extensive use of lists in this book. We do this for your sanity. Be honest: Wouldn't you rather be able to study these terms in organized, easy-to-find lists and tables rather than picking through long, boring paragraphs trying to find the words you need to learn? We thought so.

Major chapters are divided by systems of the body. Each system chapter tells you a bit about how that particular body system works, to give you some context for its words.

We aren't doctors, so we try our best to explain things using simple language. That means you might see words like *pee* and *poo* from time to time. We figure you're knee-deep in official-sounding terms here, so it doesn't hurt to lighten up once in a while.

New terms are in italics to make them easier to spot.

Many of the body system chapters include artistic renderings. Don't be alarmed by those little pictures you see peppering the pages of this book. Feel free to be distracted, however — that's the point. We want you to stop and look at these great kernels of knowledge as you go through the book.

Foolish Assumptions

We are assuming you fall into one of these categories:

- » A medical student hoping to get a jump-start on general terminology before that first big quiz.

- » A medical professional looking to brush up on terms if you're a bit out of practice or just want to know more about how these terms are made.
- » A curious adult interested in speaking your doctor's language and learning more about the terms that describe how your body functions.

No matter what possessed you to pick up this book, we hope it gives you the terminology boost you need for your particular circumstances. The human body has hundreds and hundreds of working parts, and they all have names. Moreover, there are names for all kinds of associated terms relating to functions, conditions, diseases, pathology, and even pharmacology. It's a whole lot, we grant you. But you are eager, right? And no amount of 50-cent words frighten you away from your goal: to become a medical terminology Zen master. You can do it, Grasshopper.

Icons Used in This Book

This book makes extensive use of icons — those little pictures that denote an important tidbit of information. Be on the lookout for these, as they provide even more tools for your terminology toolbox:



TIP

Points out concrete tips and tricks that you can put to use as you are studying medical terminology.



REMEMBER

Highlights passages that are good to keep in mind when mastering medical terminology.



WARNING

Alerts you to common mistakes that can trip you up in your medical terminology studies.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

This icon indicates something cool and perhaps a little offbeat from the discussion at hand.

Beyond the Book

In addition to the material in the print or e-book you're reading right now, this product also comes with some access-anywhere goodies on the web. No matter how hard you study for your medical terminology exams, you'll likely come across a few questions where you don't have a clue. To check out the free Cheat Sheet, go to www.dummies.com and type "Medical Terminology For Dummies Cheat Sheet" in the search box. The Cheat Sheet gives you more helpful medical terminology roots, prefixes, suffixes, and tongue-twisting terms.

Where to Go from Here

By all means, if you're feeling spunky you can jump right into this book at any point and start working on your terminology savvy. Mastering the how and why of medical terms is sometimes as important as learning the terms themselves, which is why we put those chapters first. But by all means, feel free to hunt and peck the sections that are most useful to you.

Be bold. Be brave. And, most importantly, proceed through this book with confidence. Once you get the hang of how these words are made, you'll have no problem committing them to memory and to your daily life.

1

**Living for
Linguistics**

IN THIS PART . . .

An overview of the basic building blocks of learning terminology

A background dossier on terminology and its history

An introduction to root words

A trip through the world of multiples and plurals

Tips and tricks on pronunciation and usage

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Getting to know the history of medical terminology
- » Mastering the basics of word building and pronunciation
- » Familiarizing yourself with basic parts of your anatomy
- » Discovering the wide range of systems in the body

Chapter **1**

Scrubbing In to Master Medical Terminology

Did you realize that when you picked up this book, you were beginning a journey into a whole new language? Don't worry — you haven't grabbed *Greek For Dummies* by mistake — it's all English, or at least "English." But once you get deep into the world of medical terms, you will find that it is a whole new way of speaking. Your journey will indeed take you to ancient Greece as well as to Rome. You will meet some of the pioneers of the medical world. You will gain entrance into a whole new world: the body.

The Tale behind the Terms

Medical terminology is made up of the terms that describe human anatomy and physiology (body organs, systems, and their functions), body locations, diseases, clinical, diagnostic imaging, and laboratory testing, together with clinical procedures, surgeries, and diagnoses.

It's important for every one of these things to have a specific name — just as it's important that you have your own unique name — because otherwise how would

medical professionals be able to communicate clearly with one another? You might be able to visit your doctor and say, “I have a pain in my shoulder,” and have him solve the mystery of what is causing that pain. But when your doc communicates that information to, say, a surgeon, it’s crucial to be more specific.

The beauty of medical terminology is that it makes such vital communication more succinct and to the point. A medical term usually describes in one word a disease or condition that, under normal circumstances, would take several words to describe. *Appendectomy* is a one-word medical term to describe “surgical removal of the appendix.” Now that saves you plenty of breath for more important things, like singing an aria or rooting for the your favorite sports team.

The foundation of medical terminology is based in both Greek and Latin origin. The Greeks were the founders of modern medicine, but Latin is the basic source of medical terms. With origins in ancient Rome, Latin quickly made its way through the world, solidifying its rep as the language of choice for medicine and science. Building on guidance from the Greek and Latin origins, medical terms began to be professionalized in the mid-1800s. The first medical dictionary appeared in the 1830s shortly after the first edition of *Webster’s American Dictionary of the English Language*.

Making Terminology Work for You

Thankfully, there are ways to wade through the quagmire of medical terms and figure out how to pronounce and use them like a champ. But you have to start at the beginning by breaking down the parts of each word and then deciphering its meaning. Or, to put it in a fancy-schmancy way, you should use etymology. *Etymology* helps you find the origin and historical development of a term. You can use etymology to decipher words with Latin and Greek origins, eponyms (words named after people), and acronyms (modern language terms that stand for longer phrases).

Back to those word parts that you’ll break down. There are three you need to know: roots/combining forms, prefixes, and suffixes.

Roots are the glue that holds all medical terms together. They are the basic form around which the final word is formed. A *combining form* is a combining vowel (usually *o* or *i*) plus the root word, usually with a prefix or suffix added. *Prefixes* appear at the beginning of a word and tell the how, why, where, when, how much, how many, position, direction, time, or status. The *suffix*, always at the end of a word, usually indicates a procedure, a condition, or a disease. While the prefix gives you a clue into what to expect in a word’s meaning, the suffix tells you what

is happening with a specific body part or system. And, usually, it either entails what is wrong with you or the procedure used to diagnose or fix it.

The breaking down of words that you will learn in this book also helps you with pronunciation. With medical terminology, sounds are not always pronounced the same as in English, and there are no steadfast rules that a combination of specific letters will always be pronounced in the same way. One thing that helps in both the standard English and medical worlds, though, is to learn how to pronounce phonetically, by breaking up the word into smaller parts.

Building a Foundation of Vocabulary

Getting the basics of word formation and pronunciation down pat is the hard part. Once you can do that, you can move on to building your word vocabulary. Even though medical professionals like to joke that terminology is like a foreign language (sometimes, yes), don't throw this book out the window just yet. The good news is that you probably already know a lot of medical terms and you can use those to build up the rest of your new-found vocabulary.

Remember your grade school days when you used all kinds of little tricks to remember things like multiplication tables and the state capitals? The same principle applies to new medical terms. You can make lists of word parts, list words by similar sound, map words, or memorize terms by body system. And those are just a few ideas. Do whatever works for you, even if it's singing terms to the tune of "Sunrise, Sunset" in the shower. We promise not to tell.

In Terms of Anatomy

For our purposes in the land of medical terms, we can compare anatomy to the infrastructure of a building. The walls, floors, bricks, plaster, electrical system, plumbing, and so forth all help keep the building working for the people who inhabit it. Your body's anatomy is no different, which is why you are going to read about these particular terms first. Once you get the basics of what holds your body together, you can go on to find out about the physiological systems that make your body react to both internal and external circumstances.

First on our anatomy checklist is the skeletal system. This is your body's frame, much like the frame of a building. This system, along with its joints, works together with the muscles to give you the support and movement you need every day. The bony skeleton provides the jointed framework for the body, giving it

shape, protecting vital organs from external injury, and providing attachment points for muscles, ligaments, and tendons.

Working together with the skeleton is the muscular system, in which several different major muscle groups work together. Made up of over 600 muscles and joints, this system is responsible for movement.

Covering all this infrastructure is the integumentary system. Your skin, glands, nails, and hair work like the façade, or outside covering, of a building. They are the things people see when they look at you. The outside of your “building” often shows the world how healthy the rest of your body is. Healthy skin, along with accessory organs glands, hair, and nails, are the hallmarks of healthy insides, so care for them accordingly.

Your sensory system is all the “fun stuff” in your building. The windows, amenities, sound system, and dining facility all bring aesthetic delight to the building’s inhabitants, and your senses work in a similar fashion.

It may be hard to imagine that words can describe all the amazing things your anatomy can do, but believe us when we say that it’s all possible through terminology. And who knows? Perhaps there’s a word out there that hasn’t been created yet — until you came along.

All Systems Go

Once you get those basic working parts ingrained in your brain, you will move on to the physiology terminology. Physiology deals with the remaining body systems that help your fabulous body do its day-to-day work.

First up is the thing that keeps your blood pumping and your life moving forward each day: your heart. More specifically, the cardiovascular system. Your heart does not work in a vacuum. It has supporting players, namely your blood cells and vessels. These parts all work together to supply your body with fresh, clean, oxygenated blood.

Then there is the separate but complementary lymphatic system that works to flush your body of impurities. Most directly associated with immunity, the lymphatic system works in the same context as the cardiovascular system due to the similar makeup of the system and the fact that, once cleaned by the lymph nodes, lymphatic fluid is released directly into the bloodstream. Lymph vessels are arranged in a similar pattern as the blood vessels.

Speaking of oxygenating your blood, think about how that oxygen finds its way into your body. You may not consciously think about it every day, but breathing makes it all possible. The body's trillions of cells need oxygen and must get rid of carbon monoxide, and this exchange of gases is accomplished by the respiratory system. External respiration is the repetitive, unconscious exchange of air between the lungs and the external environment.

You have to breathe, but you also have to eat, and eating is way more fun. Your good buddy the gastrointestinal system helps turn those tasty meals and treats into usable energy for your body. Also called the alimentary or digestive tract, this system provides a tubelike passage through a maze of organs and body cavities, beginning at the mouth, the food entrance into the body, and ending at the anus, where solid waste material exits the body and your delicious Chinese takeout magically turns into . . . well, you know.

Moving on, the complicated endocrine system maintains the chemical balance of the body. It does this by sending chemical messengers called hormones throughout the body via the bloodstream. Hormones regulate and control activity of specific cells or organs. Slowly released hormones control organs from a distance. Endocrine glands are located in different parts of the body. They are said to be ductless, because they have no duct system to transport their secretions. Instead, hormones are released directly into the bloodstream to regulate a variety of functions of body organs. One can stimulate growth, another matures sex organs, and yet another controls metabolism. Your body has both central and peripheral glands.

Even more complicated (are we having fun yet?) is the nervous system. Working like the body's built-in computer system, it is far more complex than your laptop. Messages from the brain are relayed via the spinal cord through nerve fibers that provide connections for incoming and outgoing data. The body has more than *ten billion* nerve cells whose function is to coordinate activities of the body. This system controls our voluntary activities as well as involuntary activities. We speak, hear, taste, see, think, move muscles, and have glands that secrete hormones. We respond to pain, danger, temperature, and touch. We have memory, association, and discrimination. These functions are only a small part of what the nervous system controls.

The nervous system is made up of the central nervous system (CNS), which includes the brain and spinal cord. The peripheral nervous system (PNS) is composed of cranial nerves (that extend from the brain) and spinal nerves (that extend from the spinal cord). The autonomic nervous system (ANS) controls and coordinates the functions of the body's vital organs, such as heartbeat and rate of breathing — functions we don't even think about.

Down-Under Details

Speaking of things you don't usually think about, the urinary system is made up of the kidneys (two), ureters (also two), bladder, and urethra. This system's main function is to remove urea (the nitrogenous waste products of metabolism) from the bloodstream, and excrete it in urine from the body.

Urea is formed in the liver from ammonia. The bloodstream carries it (in the same manner as hormones and lymph) to the kidneys, where it passes with water, salts, and acids out of the bloodstream into the kidneys. The kidneys produce the urine that travels through each ureter into the bladder to be excreted via the urethra. Now that's a whole lot of information to impress your friends with at a dinner party. On second thought, maybe not.

When food and oxygen combine in cells to produce energy, the process is known as *catabolism*. In the process, food and oxygen are not destroyed, but small particles making up the food and oxygen are rearranged in a new combination, and the results are waste products. Waste in the form of gas (carbon dioxide) is removed from the body by exhaling through the lungs.

Think about how you were made. No, you weren't discovered under a cabbage leaf. Your mom and dad made you (see *Sex For Dummies* if you don't get our drift here) using their reproductive systems. In the male, it has two main functions: to produce spermatozoa, the male reproductive cell, and to secrete testosterone, the male hormone. The reproductive organs, or gonads, are the testes. They are supported by accessory organs, ducts, glands, and supportive structures. The ducts include the epididymides (epididymis-singular) vas deferens, ejaculatory ducts, and the urethra. Glands include seminal vesicles, prostate, and bulbourethral glands (or Cowper's glands). The supporting structures include the penis, scrotum, and spermatic cords.

The female reproductive system produces the female reproductive cell, or sex cell, secretes the hormones estrogen and progesterone, and provides the conditions to establish a pregnancy, together with providing a safe place for the pregnancy to develop and grow. The gonads (ovaries in the female), together with the internal accessory organs consisting of the fallopian (uterine) tubes, uterus, vagina, external genitalia, and breasts (mammary glands) make up the reproductive system in the female. Reproduction is achieved by the union of the female reproductive cell, an ovum, and the male reproductive cell, a spermatozoon (sperm for short), resulting in fertilization.

This is just a quick glance at the kinds of stuff you're going to learn about your body. Of course, the appropriate terms are discussed in detail along with the simple biology background.

The Ultimate Resource: You

A listing of well-known term references, recall devices, and word-building activities will help you apply terminology to your own personal real-world situation. The references mentioned in this book are some of the most well respected in the field, and ones we highly recommend. Of course, there are thousands of online and print resources, most of which are decent, if not downright reputable. Use your own good judgment when it comes to choosing one as your go-to source.

As you go on this journey, remember that ultimately you are your own best source of tips and tricks. Maybe you're a flash card aficionado. Perhaps you do best when you can visualize the term with the appropriate body system. Does your smart-phone rule your world? Then you know there's an app (or two, or ten) for learning medical terms on the fly. Or maybe you like a good old mnemonic device like "*i* before *e* except after *c*." No matter how you choose to learn and recall these terms, do what is most comfortable and useful for you. You're the captain of this boat. Now, hoist the sail!

