

Instructional Terminology

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ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION



This **Instructional Terminology** defines entry-level industry terms identified by the program's Technical Standards, Measurement Criteria, and Instructional Framework. This resource is designed for use in classroom and laboratory environments to ensure students are introduced to the essential occupational terminology relevant to their program. It supports the consistent use of terms and definitions in curriculum, instruction, and assessment and corresponds with the Technical Standards endorsed in May 2025.

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A

Abduction - Moving a body part away from the midline of the body

Abuse - Actions that cause physical, mental, or emotional harm to a patient

Active Range of Motion (AROM) - Exercises done by the patient without assistance to move joints

Active-Assisted Range of Motion (AAROM) - Joint exercises in which the patient receives help to complete the movement

Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) - Daily self-care tasks such as bathing, dressing, eating, and toileting

Acute illness - A sudden-onset medical condition that lasts a short time

Adduction - Moving a body part toward the midline of the body

Advance directives - Legal documents outlining a person's medical care preferences if they lose decision-making ability

Alignment - Positioning of the body in which its parts are maintained in proper anatomical position

Ambulation - The act of walking or moving around from place to place

Angina - Chest pain or discomfort caused by reduced blood flow to the heart muscle

Anorexia - Loss of appetite for food

Anus - The opening at the end of the digestive tract where stool leaves the body

Anuria - Absence or lack of urine production

Aphasia - Loss of ability to understand or express speech caused by brain damage

Apical pulse - Heartbeat measured by placing a stethoscope over the apex of the heart

Apnea - The temporary absence or cessation of breathing

Asepsis - The state of being free from disease-causing microorganisms

Asphyxia - Suffocation or a severe deficiency of oxygen to the body

Aspiration - Inhaling food, fluid, or foreign objects into the lungs

Assault - A threat to harm a person that creates a reasonable fear of injury

Axilla - The armpit area of the human body

B

Bacteria - Single-celled microorganisms that can cause infection or disease

Battery - Intentional physical contact with a person without consent that causes harm or offense

Bed bath - Cleaning a patient in bed who cannot get out to bathe independently

Bed cradle - A frame placed over a bed to keep covers off a patient's feet and legs

Bed mobility - Ability to move around, turn, or reposition while lying in bed

Bedpan - Device used for toileting by patients who cannot leave the bed

Biohazard - Biological material that poses a threat to human health or safety

Blood pressure - Force exerted by circulating blood against the walls of blood vessels

Body language - Nonverbal communication using gestures, posture, and facial expressions

Body mechanics - Proper use of posture and movement to prevent injury

Body temperature - Degree of heat maintained by the human body

Brachial artery - A major blood vessel located on the inside of the elbow and used to measure blood pressure

Bradycardia - Abnormally slow heart rate below sixty beats per minute

Bradypnea - Abnormally slow breathing rate below twelve breaths per minute

Burnout - State of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged stress

C

Cane - Supportive walking aid used on the strong side of the body

Cannula - Flexible plastic tube inserted into the nostrils to deliver oxygen

Cardiac arrest - Sudden loss of heart function and circulation

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) - Emergency procedure combining chest compressions and artificial ventilation

Care plan - A task-specific document based on the plan of care that outlines the activities of daily living (ADLs) and other nonmedical tasks assigned to a home health aide

Carotid artery - Major blood vessel located in the neck that supplies blood to the brain

Catheter - Flexible tube inserted into the body to add or remove fluids

Catheter care - Cleaning procedures to keep a urinary catheter site clean and free of infection

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) - Federal agency that works to protect public health and safety

Chain of infection - Series of events required for an infectious disease to spread from one person or source to another

Charting - Documenting observations, care provided, and patient responses in a record

Chronic illness - Long-term medical condition that persists over an extended period

Clean - Free from dirt, stains, or impurities but not completely sterile

Clear liquid diet - A diet consisting only of transparent liquids that are easy to digest

Clostridium difficile (C. diff) - Bacterial infection causing severe diarrhea and bowel inflammation

Code of ethics - Rules and principles guiding professional behavior and moral conduct

Cognition - The mental processes of knowing, thinking, understanding, and remembering

Colostomy - Surgical creation of an opening from the colon through the abdominal wall for waste removal

Communicable disease - Infection that can spread directly or indirectly from one person to another

Communication - Exchange of information, thoughts, ideas, and feelings between people

Compassion - Deep awareness of and sympathy for another person's suffering

Confidentiality - Keeping private patient information secure and unshared without permission

Constipation - Infrequent or difficult passage of hard, dry stool

Contamination - Presence of harmful microorganisms or toxic substances on surfaces or objects

Contracture - Permanent shortening and tightening of a muscle or joint

Cyanosis - Bluish discoloration of skin or mucous membranes caused by lack of oxygen

D

Decubitus ulcer - Damage to skin and underlying tissue caused by prolonged pressure

Defecation - Discharge of solid waste or feces from the digestive tract

Dehydration - Dangerous lack of adequate fluids in the human body

Dementia - Decline in memory, thinking, and reasoning skills that interferes with daily life

Dentures - Removable artificial teeth replacing natural missing teeth

Diabetes mellitus - A metabolic disorder in which the body cannot properly produce or use insulin

Diastolic pressure - Lower number in blood pressure reading representing pressure when the heart rests between beats

Dietitian - A healthcare professional who plans nutritional programs and dietary needs

Dignity - Sense of self-worth and respect that every patient deserves

Disinfection - Process of killing most harmful microorganisms on non-living objects

Distal - A position located farther away from the point of origin or center of the body

Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) - Medical order stating CPR should not be performed if breathing stops or the heart stops

Documentation - Written or electronic record keeping of patient care and status

Dorsiflexion - Bending the foot upward toward the shin

Draw sheet - A small sheet placed under a patient to assist with turning and repositioning

Durable power of attorney - A legal document, also called a medical power of attorney or healthcare proxy, that allows an individual to name a trusted person to make medical decisions if the individual becomes unable to communicate or make those decisions

Dysphagia - Difficulty or discomfort in swallowing food or liquids

Dyspnea - Shortness of breath or difficult, labored breathing

Dysuria - Painful or difficult urination

E

Edema - Swelling caused by excess fluid trapped in body tissues

Elimination - Process of removing metabolic waste products from the body

Emesis - Act of vomiting or the material expelled from the stomach during vomiting

Emesis basin - A kidney-shaped dish used to collect fluids or vomit

Emotional support - Providing care, comfort, and encouragement to reduce psychological distress

Empathy - Capacity to understand and share the feelings of another person

Ergonomics - The science of designing equipment and tasks to fit workers' physical capabilities

Expiration - The act of exhaling air from the lungs

Extension - Movement that increases the angle between two body parts or straightens a joint

Extremity - Limb of the human body such as an arm or leg

F

Fecal impaction - Large, hard mass of immovable stool lodged in the rectum

Feces - Solid waste matter eliminated from the intestines

Flatus - Gas that builds up in the stomach or intestines

Flexion - Movement that decreases the angle between two body parts or bends a joint

Fluid intake - Total amount of fluids consumed by mouth or tube

Fluid output - Total amount of fluids eliminated from the body through urine, vomit, or drainage

Foley catheter - A thin tube inserted into the bladder that remains in place to drain urine continuously

Fowler's position - A semi-sitting posture in which the head of the bed is elevated between forty-five and sixty degrees

Fracture - Complete or partial break in the continuity of a bone

G

Gait belt - A sturdy strap placed around a patient's waist to assist with walking and transfers, also known as a transfer belt

Gastrostomy tube (G-tube) - Tube surgically inserted into the stomach to deliver nutrition directly

Geriatrics - Branch of medicine focusing on the health and care of older adults

Germicide - Substance or agent that destroys disease-causing microorganisms

Glucose - Simple sugar that serves as a primary energy source for body cells

Grievance - A formal complaint regarding a perceived wrong, injustice, or violation of a rule

Grooming - Caring for physical appearance including hair care, nail care, shaving, and personal hygiene

H

Hand hygiene - Washing the hands with soap and water or using an alcohol-based rub

Healthcare proxy - A legal document that names a trusted person to make healthcare decisions for an individual who is unable to make or communicate those decisions, or the person named in that document, also called an agent or surrogate

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) - Federal law protecting privacy and security of health information

Hemiplegia - Complete paralysis of one side of the body

Hemorrhage - Excessive or severe bleeding from broken blood vessels

Hepatitis B - A serious bloodborne liver infection that poses an occupational risk to healthcare workers but is preventable through vaccination

Home care - Healthcare or supportive services provided directly in an individual's home

Home Health Aide (HHA) - A trained professional who provides personal care and basic health services in a patient's home

Hospice care - Compassionate care provided to individuals approaching the end of life or living with a terminal illness

Hydration - Process of supplying adequate fluids to the body

Hygiene - Practices that promote health and cleanliness

Hypertension - Abnormally high blood pressure consistently above normal limits

Hypotension - Abnormally low blood pressure consistently below normal limits

Hypoxia - Medical condition in which the body's tissues and organs do not receive enough oxygen to function normally

I

Incontinence - Inability to control bladder or bowel functions

Infection - Invasion and growth of harmful germs or microorganisms in the body

Infection control - Policies and procedures used to prevent the spread of infections and diseases

Inhalation - Act of breathing air into the lungs

Input and Output (I&O) - The measurement and documentation of all fluids that enter a patient's body (intake) and all fluids that leave it (output) during a specific time period, usually 24 hours

Insomnia - Chronic inability to sleep or fall asleep naturally

Insulin - Hormone produced by the pancreas that regulates blood sugar levels

Integumentary system - The body's largest organ system, consisting of the skin, hair, nails, and glands, which protects the body

Isolation - Separation of infected individuals to prevent the transmission of germs to others

J

Jaundice - Yellowish staining of the skin and eyes caused by excess bilirubin in the blood

Joint - Point where two or more bones connect to allow movement

K

Keypad access - A security system requiring a code to enter care facilities or client homes

Kussmaul breathing - A deep, labored breathing pattern often associated with severe metabolic conditions

L

Lateral position - A side-lying position used for resting and repositioning a patient

Licensable event - Event or infraction that must be reported to state licensing agencies

Living will - A written legal document that states which medical treatments a patient wants or does not want if the patient becomes unable to communicate or make decisions

Logrolling - A technique used to turn a patient's body as a single unit without twisting the spine

Low-sodium diet - An eating plan restricting dietary salt intake to manage blood pressure or fluid retention

M

Mandated reporter - A healthcare worker legally required to immediately report any suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation to a supervisor or Adult Protective Services

Mechanical lift - Hydraulic or electrical equipment used to support a patient's weight and safely transfer a patient who cannot bear weight or requires substantial assistance

Medical asepsis - Practices used to reduce and prevent the spread of microorganisms, also known as clean technique

Medical terminology - Specialized vocabulary used by healthcare professionals to describe body systems, care, and conditions

Microorganism - Tiny living organism invisible to the naked eye, such as bacteria or viruses

Midline - Imaginary vertical line dividing the body into equal right and left halves

Mucous membrane - Moist lining covering body cavities and passages that open to the exterior

N

Neglect - Failure to provide necessary care, food, shelter, or medical attention to a vulnerable person

Nonverbal communication - Transmission of messages or feelings without using spoken words, also known as body language

Noncommunicable disease - Medical condition that cannot be transmitted from person to person

Nosocomial infection - An infection acquired within a healthcare setting or facility

Nutrition - Process of taking in and using nutrients for growth, repair, and health maintenance

O

Objective observation - Factual information gathered using the senses that can be measured, seen, heard, felt, or smelled

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) - Federal agency regulating workplace safety and health standards

Occupational Therapy (OT) - Therapy aimed at helping patients regain independence in daily activities and skills

Ombudsman - Designated advocate who protects rights and investigates complaints on behalf of care facility residents

Oral hygiene - Cleaning and care procedures for the mouth, teeth, gums, and tongue

Oxygen concentrator - Medical device that concentrates oxygen from room air to deliver to a patient

P

Palliative care - Care focused on relieving the pain, symptoms, and stress of a serious illness rather than curing the illness

Passive Range of Motion (PROM) - Joint exercises performed for a patient entirely by a caregiver without patient effort

Pathogen - A disease-producing microorganism or agent

Perineal care - Cleaning a patient's genital and anal areas

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - Specialized clothing or equipment worn to protect against hazards and infectious germs; OSHA requires employers to provide appropriate PPE

Physical Therapy (PT) - Treatment using physical methods like exercise and massage to restore movement and strength

Plan of care - A customized set of guidelines outlining specific tasks, goals, and care required for a patient

Postural hypotension - Sudden drop in blood pressure when standing up from a sitting or lying position

Pressure ulcer - A localized injury to the skin or underlying tissue over a bony prominence caused by sustained pressure

Pronation - Act of turning the palm or foot downward

Prone position - Lying flat on the stomach with the face turned to one side

Prosthesis - An artificial replacement part for a missing body organ or limb

Proximal - Position located closer to the point of attachment or trunk of the body

Pulse oximeter - A noninvasive device that measures the oxygen saturation level in the blood

Pulse - Number of heartbeats felt or counted per minute, also known as heart rate

Q

Quadrant - One of four equal sections into which the abdomen is divided for medical evaluation

Quadriplegia - Paralysis affecting all four limbs and the torso

R

Radial pulse - Heartbeat measured at the wrist on the thumb side

Range of Motion (ROM) - Full movement potential of a joint through its normal movement angles

Rash - Noticeable change in the color or texture of the skin

Respiration - Process of breathing air in and out of the lungs

Respiratory rate - Number of breaths taken per minute

Restraint - Physical or chemical device used to restrict a patient's voluntary body movement

Rigor mortis - Temporary stiffening of body muscles that occurs several hours after death

Rotation - Act of turning a joint around its central axis

S

Safety Data Sheet (SDS) - Document providing safety details regarding hazardous chemicals and products

Scope of practice - The legal limits and defined responsibilities associated with a healthcare worker's duties

Seizure - Sudden burst of abnormal electrical activity in the brain causing involuntary movements or loss of consciousness

Sharps container - A puncture-resistant container designed for safe disposal of needles, blades, and sharp items

Shearing - Force created when skin remains in place while underlying bone and tissue slide

Sims' position - A left side-lying position with the upper knee bent, used for enemas or rectal examinations

Specimen - A sample of body fluid or tissue collected for medical laboratory testing

Sputum - Mucus coughed up from the lungs and respiratory tract

Standard precautions - Basic infection control practices used for all patient care regardless of diagnosis

Stethoscope - An instrument used to listen to sounds produced by the heart, lungs, and other internal body structures

Stoma - A surgically created opening that connects an internal organ or body cavity to the outside of the body

Stress - Physical, mental, or emotional strain resulting from challenging situations

Subjective observation - Information reported by a patient based on personal feelings or perceptions that cannot be directly verified

Sundowning - Increased confusion, agitation, and behavioral changes occurring in late afternoon or evening

Supination - Act of turning the palm or foot upward

Supine position - Lying flat on the back facing upward

T

Tachycardia - Abnormally fast heart rate over one hundred beats per minute

Tachypnea - Abnormally fast breathing rate over twenty breaths per minute

Temperature - Level of body heat regulated by the brain

Terminal illness - An incurable disease expected to result in death within a short time frame

Toileting - Assistance provided to help a patient use the bathroom, bedpan, or commode

Transfer - Moving a patient from one surface or location to another

Transfer belt - A padded device placed around a patient's waist to assist with safe transfers and walking

Tympanic temperature - Body temperature taken inside the ear canal

U

Ulcer - An open sore on the skin or mucous membrane caused by tissue breakdown

Urinary catheter - A tube inserted into the bladder to drain urine from the body

Urinary incontinence - Inability to control the release of urine from the bladder

Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) - An infection involving any part of the urinary system including the bladder or kidneys

V

Verification - The process of confirming identity, orders, or care procedures before performing care

Vital signs - Key measurements of essential body functions including temperature, pulse, respiration, and blood pressure

Void - The process of emptying the bladder by passing urine

W

Walker - A four-legged supportive device used to assist patients with balance and walking

Wandering - Purposefully or aimlessly walking around, often exhibited in individuals living with dementia

Weight - Measurement of total body mass used to evaluate health and nutritional status

Wheelchair - A wheeled mobility chair used by individuals who cannot walk independently

Workstation - Designated area where documentation, equipment preparation, and administrative care tasks occur

X

Xerostomia - Dryness of the mouth caused by reduced salivary flow

Y

Yeast infection - Fungal infection caused by overgrowth of yeast in moist areas of the body

Z

Zipper assist - An assistive device designed to aid patients with limited fine motor skills in dressing