



Memorizing Medical Terminology

Although memorizing the correct spelling and pronunciation of hundreds to thousands of medical terms may seem like no simple task, the following strategies can help:

Learn the **common root words, prefixes and suffixes**. In Medical Terminology, many word components are from Latin or Greek and interpreting each part will give you the word's meaning. Create your own lists of terms that you need to know.

For example: *Arteriosclerosis*

	<i>Prefix</i>	<i>Root</i>	<i>Suffix</i>
<i>Word component</i>	Arterio-	-scler-	-osis
<i>Meaning</i>	Relating to the arteries	Hardness	Abnormal condition

So, if you know the root words, you can put them together to deduce that *arteriosclerosis* refers to the abnormal condition of hardening arteries.

Flash cards can be effective in learning new terms, especially if you make your own. On one side, write the term (with the correct pronunciation and spelling) and on the flip side, give a brief definition. *Don't put too much information on the flashcard!* See if you can remember what information is on the other side of the card. When testing your recall, divide the cards into what you are getting right, and what you still need to work on – that way, you can easily go over the words that still need work.

CUTANEOUS
(kŪ-TĀ-nē-ŭs)

Pertaining to skin

Make an **organized list** of items. If possible, group or categorize medical terminology based on a commonality – for example, you may group anatomical terms with the respective system of the body they may be associated with (e.g. corpus callosum and hippocampus belong with the nervous system, whereas periosteum and synarthroses belong with the skeletal system).



Visualize the words as images – *the sillier and more unrealistic, the better!* Try to make connections and associations with terms. For example, you might remember subcutaneous (pertaining to under or below the skin) as a submarine with a pool cue attached to the roof, deep under your skin, gently poking the underside of the skin as it prepares to surface.



Don't cram. **Set aside consistent time on a regular basis** to learn the terms. Studies suggest you are much more likely to retain information learned in class if you review the material within 24 hours of first being exposed to the information.

Say the terms out loud - it is important to pronounce them correctly. Learning the phonetic rules and common pronunciation guidelines will help you pronounce medical terms correctly when you encounter them for the first time.

- For example, when *pn* is at the beginning of a word, the *p* is silent and only *n* is pronounced (e.g. *pneumonia*); when *pn* occurs in the middle of a word, both *p* and *n* are pronounced (e.g. *orthopnea*).
- If you have any confusion concerning pronunciation, there are many online resources where you can listen to medical professionals say the words out loud (e.g. <https://www.merckmanuals.com/en-ca/home/pronunciations#>).

Practice writing the terms with the correct spelling. Errors such as misspelled terms in medical records can have major repercussions.

Don't simply read, say and write the terms, but **apply them actively** throughout the day: discuss the definitions with others (e.g. classmates and friends), use the terms in sentences, and teach them to others.

Another way to make memorizing medical terminology easier is to play games! For example, you can play matching games with your flashcards or match drawings with the appropriate terms.

Take advantage of the many smartphone **apps for medical terminology**. Several Apple and Android apps for medical terminology are available and can help you memorize terms while you are on the go!

Practice, practice, practice!

