Anatomical Terminology

When referring to the body, three planes are used as reference; the coronal, sagittal (or median) and transverse planes:

Fig. 1 Anatomical Planes.
The anatomical position refers to the body placed in the position illustrated to the left below:

Fig.2 The Anatomical Position.
The planes are absolute terms. When referring to a part of the body, it can be referred to *relative* to another part of the body.

The terms *Lateral* and *Medial* are relative to the Median (the *Saggital Plane*).

The terms *Superior* and *Medial* are relative to the *Transverse Plane*.
The terms *Anterior* and *Posterior* are relative to the *Coronal Plane*

For example: the chest is inferior to the head, but superior to the abdomen and lower limb.
Movement

The following terms are used when referring to movement in the limbs:

Abduction

Abduction refers to movement in the coronal plane away from the body. A limb further away from the median is regarded as abducted.

Adduction

Adduction refers to movement in the coronal plane towards the body. A limb in the anatomical position is regarded as abducted.

Proximal

Proximal is a relative term describing the position of one part of a limb relative to the body. If a part of the limb is proximal, it is regarded as being nearer the body, i.e. the elbow is proximal to the wrist.

Distal

Distal is a relative term describing the position of one part of a limb relative to the body. If a part of the limb is distal, it is regarded as being further from body, i.e. the elbow is distal to the shoulder.
Fig. 3 Movement of the limbs.
Bending and stretching are known as flexion and extension respectively:

Fig. 4 Hip, knee and neck.

Fig. 5 Trunk, shoulder and elbow.