

Table of Descriptive Terms Commonly used in Charting

Factors to be Charted	Suggested Terms to Use
General Appearance	
Normal/average build	Slender/moderate build
Thin and undernourished	Emaciated, gaunt
Fat, greatly overweight	Obese
Dirty/smells bad/hair messy	Poor hygiene, unkempt, disheveled
Slouches	Posture is non-erect
Sits up straight	Posture is erect, erect
Looks sick	Acutely ill
Looks healthy	Generally healthy appearance
Neurological/Verbal Skills	
Eyes open maintains eye contact	Alert
Knows name, date, time	Oriented x 3
Answers questions good	Responds/communicates appropriately/effectively
Looks tired, not paying attention	Drowsy, lethargic
Patient does what I ask	Able to follow commands, cooperative
Smiling looks happy	Cheerful, pleasant
Can't speak correctly (slurred, garbled)	Aphasic and/or garbled speech, Inappropriate, gibberish, non-Verbal, responds to verbal stimuli.
Complains of being dizzy	Vertigo
Attitude (Mental)	
Not interested in surroundings	Indifferent
Has an "I don't care" attitude	Apathetic
No facial expression	Flat or blunted affect
Patient goes from happy to sad	Labile
Doesn't believe anything said to them	Suspicious, distrustful
Wants to argue, disagreeable	Uncooperative, belligerent
Afraid, worried	Anxious, fearful
Head & Neck	
Head looks dry	Dry flaky scalp
No bumps, lumps, etc	Smooth without lumps/lesions
Texture of hair	Thick, fine, or sparse
Head symmetry	Normocephalic, symmetrical, atraumatic
Symmetry of face	Symmetrical/asymmetrical
Description of neck	Free/with masses, lesions, pain
Carotid pulses	Carotid pulses palpable, strong/weak, present bilaterally without bruit.

Pulse descriptions

Strong, weak, diminished, absent
bounding, thready.

Heart sounds

S1 S2 noted, distant, muffled,
murmur present.

Edema description

Extremity location LE (lower
extremity), pitting, nonpitting
1-2-3+ edema

Gastrointestinal/Nutrition

Description of abdomen

large, obese, flat, distended,
protrubent. Soft and nontender,
hard, board-like, acutely tender,
rebound tenderness present.

Description of bowel sounds

BS X 4, BS present in all 4 quad.
BS hyperactive, hypoactive,
tympanic.

Stool description

Color, consistency, frequency

Genitourinary/Bladder

Complains of:

C/O urinary urgency, frequency,
or no complaints.

Description of peri-area

Urine description

Without abnormalities or excoriated
Color: amber, yellow, dilute, clear,
cloudy, tea-colored, straw colored.
Continent or incontinent, odor (if
applicable), nocturia.

Musculoskeletal/Activity/

Extremities

Gait:

Steady, unsteady, staggering,
shuffled, uncoordinated, stumbling

ROM:

Full ROM, ROM x 4, flexion,
Extension, flaccid, contracted,
Hemiplegia (R or L)

Amounts

A lot

Medium amount

Small

Profuse, copious, excessive

Moderate

Scant, slight

Areas on Back

Upper back

Small of back

End of spine

Buttock area

Hump back

Intrascapular region

Lumbar region

Sacral region

Gluteal region

Kyphosis

Bleeding

Very little bleeding
Nosebleed
Blood in vomitus
Blood in urine
Spitting/coughing up of blood

Drainage

Watery drainage from nose
Containing pus
Containing feces
Clear wound drainage
Bloody wound drainage
Light pink wound drainage
Containing mucous and pus

Skin Turgor

Recoils almost instantly (this is normal)
Poor

Miscellaneous

Burping/belching
Blister
Bad breath
Decay of teeth
Patient self-induced vomiting
Vomit ejected a few feet

Oozing

Epistaxis
Hematemesis
Hematuria
Hemoptysis

Coryza

Purulent
Fecal, fecaloid
Serous
Sanguinous
Serosanguinous
Mucopurulent

Elastic/Brisk

Tenting, Sluggish, Prolonged
Non-elastic

Eructating, eructation

Vesicle
Halitosis
Dental Caries
Induced
Projectile

Eyes, Ears, Nose
No abnormalities with eyes

Eyes yellow in color(sclera)
Eyes puffy/swollen
Drooping of eyelids
Eyes not moving, motionless
Sensitivity to light
Double vision
Squinting or cross eyed
Abnormal protrusion of eyeball
Inflamed conjunctiva
Near-sighted
Far-sighted
Can't see things clearly
Wax in ears
Ringing in ears
Abnormal shaped ears
Can't hear well

No problems with nose

Respiratory
No issues
Out of breath with activity
Out of breath while sitting
Abnormal breath sounds

Good lung sounds
Having trouble breathing
Can't breathe while lying down
Airway
Respirations

Rapid breathing
Normal breathing
Cough that has phlegm/sputum
Cough without phlegm/sputum

Cardiovascular
Description of heart rate
Fast heart rate
Slow heart rate

PERRLA, no drainage noted,
White, eyes symmetrical. No
visual aids utilized.
Jaundiced
Periorbital edema, edema
Ptosis of lids (specify which)
Eyes fixed
Photophobia/photophobic
Diplopia
Strabismus
Exophthalmus
Conjunctivitis
Myopia
Hyperopia
Blurred vision
Cerumen
Tinnitus aurium
Deformity of ears
HOH (hard of hearing)
utilizes hearing aids
Nares patent, mucosa pink/moist
No drainage noted, midline septum.

Respirations relaxed and even
DOE dyspnea upon exertion
SOB at rest
Rales, ronchi, crackles, wheezes
(where), diminished, decreased,
coarse.
CTA (clear to auscultation)
Dyspnea
Orthopnea
Patent or obstructed
Spontaneous, assisted, apnea,
labored, shallow, deep, snoring
gasping, using accessory muscles,
retractions noted.
Hyperpnea, tachypnea
Eupnea, eupnoea
Productive cough(provide description)
Nonproductive cough

Regular, irregular
Tachycardic, tachycardia
Bradycardic, bradycardia