

Lesson 2.2: Electrical Communication – Key Terms

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| Action Potential  | A momentary reversal in electrical potential across a plasma membrane (as of a nerve cell or muscle fiber) that occurs when a cell has been activated by a stimulus.  |
| Axon  | A long nerve cell process that usually conducts impulses away from the cell body. |
| Dendrite  | Any of the usually branching protoplasmic processes that conduct impulses toward the body of a neuron. |
| Ion  | An atom or group of atoms that carries a positive or negative electric charge as a result of having lost or gained one or more electrons. |
| Myelin sheath  | In a neuron, an insulating coat of cell membrane from Schwann cells that is interrupted by nodes of Ranvier. |
| Neurologist  | A physician skilled in the diagnosis and treatment of disease of the nervous system. |
| Neuron  | A nerve cell; the fundamental unit of the nervous system, having structure and properties that allow it to conduct signals by taking advantage of the electrical charge across its cell membrane.  |
| Neurotransmitter  | A substance (as norepinephrine or acetylcholine) that transmits nerve impulses across a synapse. |
| Reaction Time  | The time elapsing between the beginning of the application of a stimulus and the beginning of an organism's reaction to it. |
| Reflex  | An automatic and often inborn response to a stimulus that involves a nerve impulse passing inward from a receptor to the spinal cord and thence outward to an effector (as a muscle or gland) without reaching the level of consciousness and often without passing to the brain. |
| Synapse  | The place at which a nervous impulse passes from one neuron to another. |