Chapter 3
The Mediastinum and Hilar Regions

The mediastinum is divided into anterior, middle, and posterior regions, subdivided into superior and inferior regions (Fig. 3.1). We see the outline of the mediastinum because structures are adjacent to other structures of differing radiodensity. This is generally soft tissue against air.

While the hilar area are not strictly part of the mediastinum they are intimately related to it and will be covered in this chapter.

When assessing the mediastinum, remember what the normal contour should look like and assess whether this can be seen. For example, if the posterior and anterior structures are still well defined, the lesion must be in the middle. Similarly if the middle and posterior structures are well defined, the lesion must lie in the anterior mediastinum, and so on. By using this principle, it can be established whether abnormalities are within the anterior, middle, or posterior regions.

Examples of common abnormalities are given to demonstrate the principles of interpretation of the mediastinum (Table 3.1).
Figure 3.1. Diagram to show the anterior, middle, and posterior compartments of the mediastinum. (1) Anterior mediastinum; (2) middle mediastinum; (3) posterior mediastinum.