

Although conflicting reports about its subdivisions exist in the literature, the autonomic nervous system has historically been considered a purely motor system, and has been divided into three branches: the [sympathetic nervous system](#), the [parasympathetic nervous system](#), and the [enteric nervous system](#).^{[4][5][6][7]} Some textbooks do not include the enteric nervous system as part of this system.^[8] The sympathetic nervous system is often considered the "[fight or flight](#)" system, while the parasympathetic nervous system is often considered the "rest and digest" or "feed and breed" system. In many cases, both of these systems have "opposite" actions where one system activates a physiological response and the other inhibits it. An older simplification of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems as "excitatory" and "inhibitory" was overturned due to the many exceptions found. A more modern characterization is that the sympathetic nervous system is a "quick response mobilizing system" and the parasympathetic is a "more slowly activated [dampening](#) system", but even this has exceptions, such as in [sexual arousal](#) and [orgasm](#), wherein both play a role.^[3]