

**Test your grip on the reality of abortion by taking this True/False quiz. Give yourself one point for each correct answer.**

1. Roe legalized abortion at every stage of pregnancy. **True or False?**
2. Polls show that most Americans support the policy of Roe v. Wade. **True or False?**
3. Regardless of how most Americans may feel, prominent legal scholars and judges agree that Roe is well grounded in the Constitution. **True or False?**
4. By treating abortion as a matter between a woman and her doctor, the Court is just acknowledging the fact that abortion is practiced by most physicians and widely accepted in medicine. **True or False?**
5. Late-term abortions must remain legal if women's lives and physical health are to be preserved. **True or False?**
6. Very few abortions are done because of maternal or fetal health problems, or in cases of rape or incest. **True or False?**
7. If Roe v. Wade is overturned, abortion will automatically be illegal in the United States. **True or False?**
8. If abortion were illegal, "back alley" abortions would endanger thousands of women's lives. **True or False?**

**ANSWERS:**

1. **True.** While some news media and polls still say the Court legalized abortion only in the first three months, in fact it made abortion legal through all nine months of pregnancy, effectively striking down the abortion laws of all 50 states.

In Roe v. Wade, the Court ruled that abortion may not be prohibited or restricted in the first trimester (first three months). In the second trimester abortion must still be allowed, and may be regulated only to serve the mother's health. Even after "viability," when the child is developed enough to survive outside the womb, abortion must still be allowed if needed to preserve the mother's "health." Roe's companion case, Doe v. Bolton, defined maternal "health" to include "all factors – physical, emotional, psychological, familial, and the woman's age – relevant to the well-being of the patient."

Thus abortion must be allowed, even in the ninth month, if a woman would be upset about continuing her pregnancy. James McMahon, M.D. has cited "youth" or "depression" among his reasons for performing late term partial-birth abortions. Martin Haskell, M.D. has said most of the partial-birth abortions he performed up to about 25 weeks were "elective." George Tiller, M.D. has done elective abortions through 25 weeks and "fetal indication" abortions (to kill handicapped children) through 38 weeks.

2. **False.** Some polls, e.g., a 2005 Harris Interactive poll, show majority support for Roe (52% in favor, 47% opposed), but only when they misrepresent Roe as "making abortions up to three months of pregnancy legal." In the same poll, 72% of Americans said abortion should be illegal after the first trimester, and 86% said it should be illegal after the second trimester<sup>13</sup> (responses incompatible with Roe).

Support for abortion even in the first trimester is questionable: In a 2004 Zogby poll, 61% of Americans said abortion should not be permitted after the fetal heartbeat has begun.<sup>14</sup> This occurs less than four weeks after conception.

3. **False.** Even scholars who support legal abortion have stated that Roe is not good constitutional law. Yale law professor John Hart Ely wrote in 1973 that Roe v. Wade is "a very bad decision ... because it is not constitutional law and gives almost no sense of

an obligation to try to be.” Edward Lazarus, former law clerk to Roe’s author, Justice Harry Blackmun, writes: “As a matter of constitutional interpretation and judicial method, Roe borders on the indefensible.” Seven Supreme Court justices have criticized Roe: Warren Burger, Byron White, William Rehnquist, Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas, Sandra Day O’Connor, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

4. **False.** Abortion is practiced outside mainstream medicine. 76% of U.S. hospitals, whether religious or secular, public or private, do not provide abortions. In 2000 the overwhelming majority of abortions (93%) were performed in 837 free-standing clinics, with only 5% performed in hospitals and 2% in doctors’ offices. Even ob-gyns who support abortion in theory describe it as unpleasant, depressing and “the dirty work of our field.”
5. **False.** Specialists in high risk obstetrics and perinatology have testified in court that destroying the fetus at late stages is never necessary to protect a mother’s health. Obstetrics professor Harlan Giles, M.D., who performs abortions up to viability, stated: “I do not think there are any maternal conditions that I’m aware of that mandate ending the pregnancy that, also, require that the fetus be dead. ... And I cannot think of a fetal condition or malformation, no matter how severe, that actually causes harm or risk to the mother of continuing the pregnancy.”
6. **True.** Abortions are rarely done for these reasons. Fewer than half of 1% of women cite rape as the main reason for having an abortion; 4% cite a “physical problem” of their own and 3% cite any problem affecting fetal health. Over 90% of abortions in the U.S. are done for social or economic reasons – the mother says she is not ready for a child, can’t afford one right now, is unmarried, etc.
7. **False.** If Roe is overturned, policy decisions about abortion will again be made by citizens and legislatures. Some states would place substantial limits on abortion, while others may not. But federal courts would no longer forbid lawmakers to protect unborn human lives.
8. **False.** Abortion advocates claimed that thousands of women died annually from “back alley” abortions before Roe, but some later admitted their statistics were fabrications.<sup>25</sup> In the 30 years before Roe, women’s deaths from abortion dropped sharply in the U.S. (from over 1,200 to fewer than a hundred a year) due to antibiotics and other medical advances.<sup>26</sup> Today, over 30 years after Roe, women continue to die from legal abortions, both chemical (RU-486) and surgical abortions.<sup>27</sup> Generally the risks of abortion depend more on a country’s overall health system than on the legal status of abortion; for example, much of Poland’s 54% drop in maternal mortality between 1990 and 2002 occurred after the country banned abortion in 1993.

**SCORING: 0-3 points:** Welcome, beginner!

**4-5 points:** Advanced, and well on your way to a firm grip!

**6-8 points:** Congratulations, pro-life expert!

For more detail on this test, see

<http://www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/abortion/roevwade/index.shtml> , Roe v. Wade questions and answers.

**To continue improving your grip on abortion reality, visit [www.usccb.org/prolife](http://www.usccb.org/prolife) early and often.**