

When Does Human Life Begin?

life [laɪf] - *n*, the state or quality that distinguishes living beings or organisms from dead ones and from inorganic matter, characterized chiefly by metabolism, growth, and the ability to reproduce and respond to stimuli (World English Dictionary)
human [hju:men] - *adj*, of, characterizing, or relating to man and mankind (World English Dictionary)

Quotes from respected embryology textbooks and scientists

"[F]ertilization ... is a critical landmark because, under ordinary circumstances, **a new, genetically distinct human organism is formed** when the chromosomes of the male and female pronuclei blend in the oocyte." (Ronan O'Rahilly and Fabiola Muller, *Human Embryology & Teratology*, 3rd ed., New York: Wiley-Liss, 2001, p. 8)

"Zygote. This cell results from the union of an oocyte and a sperm during fertilization. A zygote is **the beginning of a new human being** (i.e., an embryo)." ... "[The zygote] marked the **beginning of each of us as a unique individual**." (Keith L. Moore and T.V.N. Persaud, *The Developing Human: Clinically Oriented Embryology*, 7th ed., Phila.: Saunders, 2003, pp. 2,16)

"The zygote ... represents **the beginning of a new life**." (J.P. Greenhill and E.A. Friedman, *Biological Principles and Modern Practice of Obstetrics*, Philadelphia: W.B. Sanders, 1974, p. 17)

"[T]he penetration of the ovum by a spermatozoan and resultant mingling of the nuclear material ... constitutes **the culmination of the process of fertilization and marks the initiation of the life of a new individual**." (Bradley M. Patten, *Human Embryology*, 3rd ed., New York: McGraw Hill, 1968, p. 43)

"We of today know that **man ... starts life as an embryo** within the body of the female; and that the embryo is formed from the fusion of ... the ovum and the sperm. **This all seems so simple and evident to us that it is difficult to picture a time when it was not part of the common knowledge**." (Alan F. Guttmacher, *Life in the Making: The Story of Human Procreation*, New York: Viking Press, 1933, p. 3)

"**When fertilization is complete, a unique genetic human entity exists**." (C. Christopher Hook, MD, Mayo Clinic, as quoted by Richard Ostling in an AP news story, 9/24/99)

Testimony before a US Senate subcommittee (Subcommittee on Separation of Powers to Senate Judiciary Committee S-158, Report, 97th Congress, 1st Session, 1981)

"It is incorrect to say that biological data cannot be decisive...**It is scientifically correct to say that an individual human life begins at conception**." (Professor Micheline Matthews-Roth, Harvard University Medical School)

"I have learned from my earliest medical education that **human life begins at the time of conception**." (Dr. Alfred M. Bongioanni, Prof. Pediatrics and Obstetrics, U of Pennsylvania)

"By all the criteria of modern molecular biology, **life is present from the moment of conception**." (Professor Hymie Gordon, Mayo Clinic)

"After fertilization has taken place a new human being has come into being. [It] is no longer a matter of taste or opinion...it is plain experimental evidence. **Each individual has a very neat beginning, at conception**." (Dr. Jerome LeJeune, Professor of Genetics, University of Descartes)

"The beginning of a single human life is from a biological point of view a simple and straightforward matter—**the beginning is conception**." (Dr. Watson A. Bowes, University of Colorado Medical School)

The official Senate report

"Physicians, biologists, and other scientists agree that **conception marks the beginning of the life of a human being**—a being that is alive and is a member of the human species. There is overwhelming agreement on this point in countless medical, biological, and scientific writings." (Subcommittee on Separation of Powers to Senate Judiciary Committee S-158, Report, 97th Congress, 1st Session, 1981)

Quotes from leading abortion advocates

"Perhaps the most straightforward relation between you and me on the one hand and every human fetus from conception onward on the other is this: All are living members of the same species, homo sapiens. **A human fetus, after all, is simply a human being at a very early stage in his or her development**." (David Boonin, *A Defense of Abortion*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 20)

"Whether a being is a member of a given species is something that can be determined scientifically, by an examination of the nature of the chromosomes in the cells of living organisms. In this sense **there is no doubt that from the first moments of its existence an embryo conceived from human sperm and eggs is a human being**." (Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, 2nd Edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 85-86)

"A human fetus is not a nonhuman animal; it is **a stage of human being**." (Wayne Sumner, *Abortion and Moral Theory*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, p. 10)

"**Life begins with fertilization and abortion is legalized destruction of life**." (Dr. Arthur Morris, Jr., Abortionist, as reported in the *Asheville Citizen-Times*, April 4, 1976)

"We tell her exactly like it is ... **when they abort, they'll be aborting a small baby**." (Dr. Arthur Morris, Jr., Abortionist, as reported in the *Asheville Citizen-Times*, April 4, 1976)

Summary: If you want to argue that life doesn't begin at fertilization, your argument is not with us; your argument is with science textbooks and pro-choice advocates.