

# The Language of Abortion

As storytellers, we understand the impact of language—but with hot-button topics like abortion it's hard to tell sometimes whether the language we're using is helping or hurting. Anti-abortion politicians and activists use emotionally loaded, medically inaccurate language to convince Americans that abortions are violent, dangerous and immoral. Stories that use neutral, medically backed language can help reduce the stigma around abortion.



## Instead of Pro-Life, Use Anti-Choice or Anti-Abortion

The term “pro-life” is politically and emotionally loaded—and while “pro-life” advocates might be for the life of a fetus, they tend not to be that concerned about the life of the pregnant person carrying that fetus. Those who identify as “pro-life” also often oppose welfare legislation that would ensure a parent without access to abortion is able to feed and house a child they didn't plan for. [\[ LINK \]](#)

## Instead of Mother or Parent, Use Pregnant Woman or Pregnant Person

A person doesn't become a parent when they get pregnant—and many people with unintended pregnancies would prefer not to be referred to as such. By avoiding calling a pregnant person a mother or parent, you grant them dignity and personhood independent of the embryo or fetus they are carrying. [\[ LINK \]](#)



## Instead of Baby or Unborn Child, Use Embryo or Fetus

Calling an embryo or fetus a baby or unborn child is medically inaccurate and refers to a future state of pregnancy rather than the present. These terms are often used intentionally to provoke emotion and shift focus away from the person carrying the embryo or fetus. [\[ LINK \]](#)

## Instead of Abortionists, Use Physicians or Clinicians Who Provide Abortion Care

Physicians and highly trained clinicians can be trained to provide abortion care in addition to the many other healthcare services they provide. These providers have undergone many years of medical training and are experts in their fields. Calling them “abortionists” infers that abortion is the extent of their

medical expertise and ignores all they do to provide patient-centered care. [\[ LINK \]](#)

## Instead of Surgical Abortion, Use Abortion Procedure

Abortion is not a surgical procedure, and calling it one makes it sound more dangerous than it is. When referring to an abortion that isn't self-managed, it's more accurate to call it an in-clinic abortion or abortion procedure. [\[ LINK \]](#)



## Instead of Chemical Abortion, Use Medication Abortion

The word “chemical” makes medication abortion sound much scarier than it actually is. Medication abortion is safe and effective, and many pregnant people who want to end their pregnancies choose this route since it's less invasive than the abortion procedure and can be self-managed at home. [\[ LINK \]](#)

## Instead of Late-Term Abortion, Use Abortion Later in Pregnancy, or Refer to Weeks of Gestation

The phrase “late term abortion” has no medical backing. “Term” refers to the period three weeks before and two weeks after a person's due date, and abortions are not performed during this stage of pregnancy. [\[ LINK \]](#)



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## Instead of Heartbeat Bill, Use Gestational Age Bans

The chambers of the heart of a fetus don't develop until around 17-20 weeks of gestation. The sounds pregnant people hear when they receive an ultrasound before this point are fetal cardiac activity translated to the sound we interpret as a heartbeat. Calling bills that ban abortion past six weeks "heartbeat bills" personifies the fetus to evoke emotion without scientific backing. [ [LINK](#) ]

## Instead of Dismemberment Ban, Use Dilation & Evacuation Ban

When abortion takes place after 12 weeks of gestation, the procedure often involves dilation and evacuation, a process in which clinicians dilate the pregnant person's cervix and remove the fetus using vacuum aspiration and forceps. Using the term "dismemberment" is intentionally inflammatory and pulls focus away from the pregnant person receiving the procedure. [ [LINK](#) ]



### Elective Abortion

The word "elective" is subjective and is an unnecessary descriptor for the abortion procedure. An external party can't accurately judge a pregnant person's decision-making process or the necessity of their abortion. [ [LINK](#) ]

### Abortion-On-Demand

Abortion is a medical procedure provided to patients who need it, just like any other medical procedure. [ [LINK](#) ]

*Clinicians Who Provide Abortion Care*

ELECTIVE ABORTION

Abortion on Demand

Pregnant Woman

DILATION & EVACUATION BAN

### Abortion Tourism

As restrictions around abortion become more and more common around the country, some pregnant people have to travel to another state to receive the medical care they need. Anti-abortion politicians and activists call this "abortion tourism" to suggest to their audiences that pregnant people frivolously travel to get abortions because they are bored or because abortion is in vogue. Pregnant people who cross state lines to get an abortion undergo significant stress and spend lots of time and money to receive healthcare they've been barred from in their home state. [ [LINK](#) ]



*One of several likely destinations for women needing an abortion*

**300 MILES**

**Average distance to an abortion clinic—a sharp jump since 2014 when it was less than 25 miles.**



### Abortion Pill Vs. Morning-After Pill

*Same thing? No, medication abortion (often referred to as the "abortion pill") and the morning-after pill are not the same medication. They work differently and end or prevent pregnancy at different stages after unprotected sex.*

#### Abortion Pill

Medication abortion is prescribed by a healthcare professional and can be taken to end a pregnancy up to 11 weeks of gestation. Usually it involves two medicines—mifepristone and misoprostol. Mifepristone stops the pregnancy from progressing, and misoprostol induces bleeding and cramping to empty the uterus. Pregnancy tissue is then passed through the vagina. [ [LINK](#) ]

#### Morning-After Pill

There are two types of medication commonly referred to as the morning-after pill: ulipristal acetate, which is sold under the brand name "ella" and must be prescribed by a healthcare professional, and levonorgestrel, which is sold over the counter under different brand names, the most well-known of which is Plan B. Both varieties work the same way and can be taken up to five days after unprotected sex to prevent pregnancy but should be taken as soon as possible. They prevent pregnancy by delaying ovulation, so sperm die out before fertilization occurs. [ [LINK](#) ]