

# [***Online swagger makes presidential debates sound like prize fights***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6C1N-TM01-DY7V-G03H-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; Joe Biden sounded more like a professional wrestler than a president when he issued a vertical video social media [*debate challenge*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/05/15/politics/joe-biden-debate/index.html) to his rival Wednesday morning.

"Donald Trump lost two debates to me in 2020!" Biden said at the outset of the 14-second video, during which he also found time to:

ding Trump for failing to debate his GOP primary rivals (he didn't mention that Democrats didn't allow any debates for their own primary this cycle);suggest Trump wasn't serious about his "anytime, anywhere" promise to debate Biden;invoke Dirty Harry with the line "Make my day!" (Biden inserted "pal" instead of Clint Eastwood's "punk");make it sound like debating twice was more than expected (the presidential debate commission, which Biden is abandoning, had actually suggested three debates, as they have since 2000);end with a burn on Trump's criminal trial schedule, in which there are no arguments midweek. "I hear you're free on Wednesdays," Biden said.

"Let's get ready to Rumble!!!" Trump said, accepting the challenge on his social media platform with a nod to words that typically open boxing matches.

The debates are set for June 27 on CNN and September 10 on ABC News. While Biden proposed two meetings and a vice presidential in late July, Trump's campaign suggested debates in July and August - the months when the Republican and Democratic nominating conventions are taking place - as well.

"I think we should go two hours," Trump said during an interview with the conservative radio host [*Hugh Hewitt*](https://am870theanswer.com/national-news/trump-accepts-bidens-debate-challenge-on-the-hugh-hewitt-show), an attempt to criticize Biden's endurance. Trump added that the debaters should be required to stand at a podium rather than sit. "I think a debate should be standing up," he said.

Both men, well into their Social Security and Medicare years, would like to appear as forceful as possible.

CNN invited the presumptive nominees to debate on the network on June 27 at CNN's studio in Atlanta. It'll be on cable, so not exactly pay-per-view, but certainly not the aired-everywhere style that has become typical of presidential debate since the Commission on Presidential Debates started sponsoring them in 1988.

Those commission-sponsored debates were broadcast on every network with the same sets reused every four years and conducted usually at colleges and universities with live audiences. A town hall version allowed select voters to ask questions of both candidates.

The commission said its debates are planned and it will carry forward with planning.

The CNN debate, on the other hand, will be conducted in a TV studio with no audience, which means no applause or cheering. While the specific format for the ABC News debate has not been announced, a debate at ABC News studios in New York would harken back to the first televised presidential debates in 1960, when John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon debated four times.

While he has accepted both invitations, Trump was already criticizing the idea of an in-studio debate. In a social media post that included an insult for Biden, Trump said he preferred, "for excitement purposes, a very large venue, although Biden is supposedly afraid of crowds."

Still, Biden's challenge and Trump's response were not entirely spontaneous.

From CNN's report:

Informal conversations between the Biden and Trump campaigns about debates have taken place in recent weeks and were largely focused on a mutual disdain for the Commission on Presidential Debates and potential scenarios to work around the commission, three sources familiar with the discussions told CNN. [*The Washington Post was first*](https://t.co/v2uoMwwr3q) to report on those conversations.

June is already shaping up to be an exceptionally busy month in US ***politics***. The Supreme Court could rule then on whether Trump should enjoy any sort of absolute immunity from prosecution. Biden's son Hunter faces two separate criminal trials, one for tax evasion in Los Angeles and the other for a rarely prosecuted gun charge in Delaware.

CNN's debate that month will come before either party conducts its nominating convention, presumably before Trump picks a running mate, and much earlier than the commission's planned debates, the first of which had been scheduled for September. After grumbling from both campaigns, the Commission on Presidential Debates [*issued a statement*](https://debates.org/2024/05/01/cpd-statement/index.html) arguing that beginning in September would still allow for early voters to watch before making a decision. The campaigns clearly disagreed; Trump and Biden have both argued that earlier debates are warranted since many Americans are likely to vote early in the months before Election Day on November 5.

Biden, for his part, may be looking for a quicker opportunity to reset the narrative of the campaign, in which his arguments about the strength of the economy or the threat Trump poses to democracy have not yet helped him gain traction in battleground states. Trump, meanwhile, could benefit from turning the conversation away from his criminal trials and work to harden perceptions of Biden as soon as possible.

One person who has already indicated he is not thrilled with the debate plans: independent candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. In order to qualify for CNN's debate, a candidate must be polling at or above 15% in four national polls of registered or likely voters between March 13 and June 20 and be on the ballot in enough states to conceivably win 270 electoral votes, according to a news release from CNN. ABC News outlined similar criteria. For now, that would exclude Kennedy. In a post on X, he accused the campaigns of "colluding" to keep him off the stage.

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