

To gish: the act of talking drivel with the intention o...

Published: January 13, 2026, 6:20 am

Heather Cox Richardson used a term in her '[Letter from an American](#)' on 27 June to describe the rhetorical technique Trump used against Biden in their 'debate' last week. As she put it:

This was not a debate. It was Trump using a technique that actually has a formal name, the Gish gallop, although I suspect he comes by it naturally. It's a rhetorical technique in which someone throws out a fast string of lies, non-sequiturs, and specious arguments, so many that it is impossible to fact-check or rebut them in the amount of time it took to say them. Trying to figure out how to respond makes the opponent look confused, because they don't know where to start grappling with the flood that has just hit them.

As she explained, this is a form of gaslighting. There is no aim to tell the truth, or engage, or have any form of dialogue when gish galloping. The only aim is to swamp the other person with garbage, nonsense and outright lies that leaves them, as a rational person, unable to reply to what is being said, so overwhelmed are they by the meaningless drivel being sent their way.

It's a technique familiar to many trolls on this blog. Those trolls never make a substantial comment; they just make unsupported and meaningless accusations, many of which reveal no research having been done on their part.

I have only one problem with the term 'gish gallop'. I do not know why the term 'gishing' would not do just as well. Make it a verb, not a noun, because it describes an action, not a phenomenon.

How to deal with it?

I think there is only one possible response, given that no rational one is available. The reality is that no one can reasonably engage with irrational lies peddled with the deliberate intention to confuse, obfuscate, deny and close down debate. In that case the response has to be to call it out by saying 'you're gishing'.

But which you mean that the speaker is making no sense.

Or that they're talking drivel, deliberately.

That they are wasting everyone's time.

And, please do not abuse us with this nonsense, saying which, when they have something useful to say they might try again, but until then, might they leave the debate to those who want to seek solutions?

I can see no other way to deal with this.

I think such a term 'gishing' might be of use. We have to call out this attempt to kill democracy, because that is what it is.

Thoughts?