

Make or break presidential debates



◀ **1960:** First TV debate pits Republican Vice President **Richard Nixon** against Democratic nominee **John F. Kennedy**. Nixon can be seen sweating profusely, his eyes darting nervously. JFK is charismatic, setting forth his vision of equal rights for all
Kennedy wins election

Viewers

70m



▶ **1976:** Democrat **Jimmy Carter** faces off against President **Gerald Ford**. Ford's gaffe – that there is no **“Soviet domination”** in Eastern Europe – suggests he has little grasp of foreign affairs
Carter wins election



69.9

1980: President **Jimmy Carter** is plagued with economic problems and hostage crisis at U.S. Embassy in Tehran. Republican **Ronald Reagan's** impressive performance prompts audience laughter at one point with witty one liner to Carter – **“There you go again”**
Reagan wins election



80.6



▶ **1992:** President **George H.W. Bush**, Democrat **Bill Clinton** and independent **Ross Perot**. Bush responds testily to question about recession and is caught looking at his wristwatch
Clinton wins election



69.9

2000: Vice President **Al Gore** holds advantage going up against against Republican contender **George W. Bush**. Gore comes across as lecturing and condescending, sighing loudly while Bush is speaking
Bush wins election



46.6



▶ **2008:** Sparring match between **Barack Obama** and **John McCain** is overshadowed by running mates' debate – Democrat **Joe Biden** and Republican **Sarah Palin**
Obama wins election
Obama-McCain, Palin-Biden

52.4

69.9

2012: After a lacklustre first debate in which President Obama underestimates Republican challenger **Mitt Romney**, Obama triggers explosive exchanges over foreign affairs, winning final debate
Obama wins election



67.2