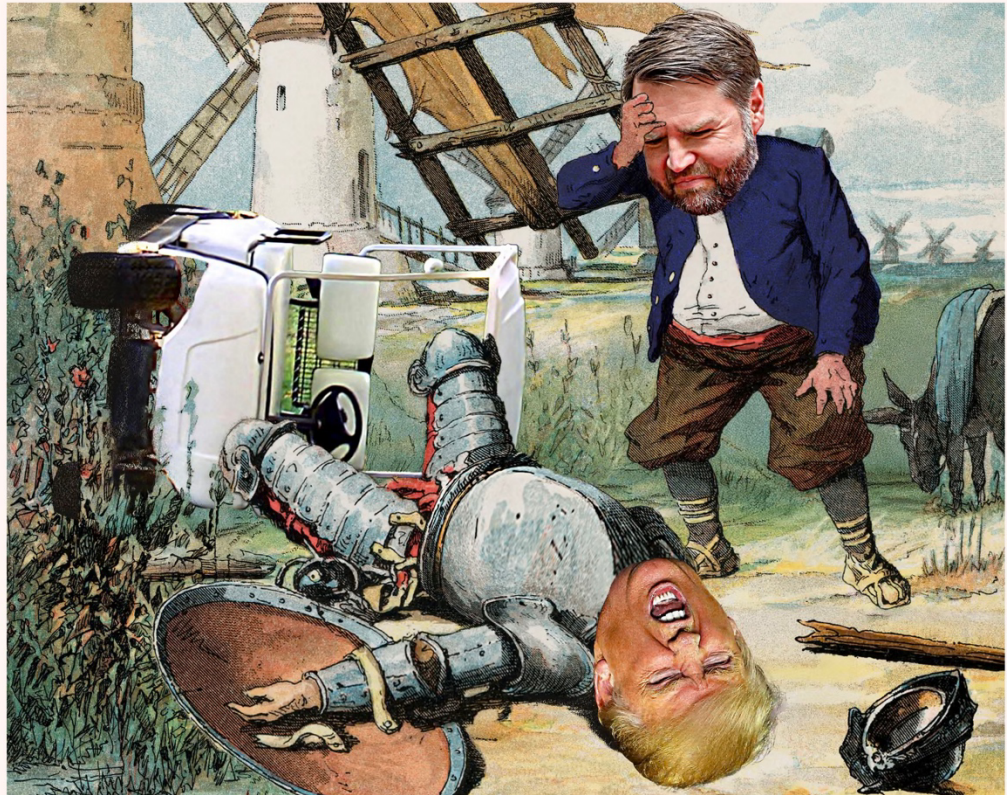


'He has trouble completing a thought': bizarre public appearances again cast doubt on Trump's mental acuity

Adam Gabbatt

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Joe Biden was hounded for his age-related gaffes, but Trump's increasingly strange behavior has largely been ignored

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[Donald Trump](#)'s frequently bizarre public appearances, which this month have seen the president claim, wrongly, that his uncle knew the Unabomber and rant unprompted about windmills on his recent trip to the UK, have once again raised questions about his mental acuity, experts say.

For more than a year Trump, 79, has exhibited odd behavior at campaign events, in interviews, in his spontaneous remarks and at press conferences. The president repeatedly drifts off topic, including during a cabinet meeting this month when he spent 15 minutes talking about decorating, and appears to misremember simple facts about his government and his life.

During his presidency, [Joe Biden](#) was subjected to intense speculation over his mental acuity – including from Trump. After Biden's disastrous [debate performance](#) in June

2024, when he repeatedly struggled to maintain his train of thought, scrutiny over Biden's fitness eventually led to him not running for re-election.

Trump, however, has largely been saved the same examination, despite examples of confusion and unusual behavior that have continued throughout his second term and were on full display on his recent trip to the UK.

[Trump's Truth Social posts make no sense – what do they say about his mentality?](#)
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Over the weekend Trump, during a meeting with the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, abruptly switched from discussing immigration to saying this: “The other thing I say to Europe: we’ve – we will not allow a windmill to be built in the United States. They’re killing us. They’re killing the beauty of our scenery.”

Trump proceeded to speak, non-stop and unprompted, [for two minutes](#) about windmills, claiming without evidence that they drive whales “loco” and that wind energy “kills the birds” (the proportion of birds killed by turbines [is tiny](#) compared with the amount killed by domestic cats and from flying into power lines).

The abrupt changes in conversation are an example of Trump “digressing without thinking – he’ll just switch topics without self-regulation, without having a coherent narrative”, said Harry Segal, a senior lecturer in the psychology department at Cornell University and in the psychiatry department at Weill Cornell Medicine.

For years, Trump has batted away questions about his mental acuity, describing himself as a “stable genius” and bragging about “acing” exams – later revealed to be [very simple tests](#) – which check for early signs of dementia.

But Democrats have begun to more aggressively question the president's fitness, [including](#) Jasmine Crockett, the representative from Texas, [and](#) California's governor, Gavin Newsom, and this week alone offered multiple examples of Trump exhibiting odd conduct.

Asked about the famine in Gaza [on Sunday](#), Trump seemed unable to remember the aid the US has given to Gaza, and forget that others had also contributed.

Trump claimed the US gave \$60m “two weeks ago”. He added: “You really at least want to have somebody say thank you. No other country gave anything.”

“Nobody acknowledged it, nobody talks about it and it makes you feel a little bad when you do that and you know you have other countries not giving anything, none of the European countries by the way gave – I mean nobody gave but us.”

Trump seemed to not realize or remember that other countries have given money to Gaza – the UK [announced](#) a £60m (\$80m) package in July, and the European Union [has allocated](#) €170m (\$195m) in aid. And the Guardian could not find any record of the US giving \$60m to Gaza two weeks ago. In June, the US state department approved a \$30m grant to the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, a group backed by Israeli and US interests which has been criticized by Democrats as “connected to deadly violence against starving people seeking food in Gaza”.

The White House did not respond to questions about Trump’s claimed \$60m donation.

Segal said another characteristic of Trump’s questionable mental acuity is confabulation. “It’s where he takes an idea or something that’s happened and he adds to it things that have not happened.”



Donald Trump launched into a monologue about windmills when he met European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen on 27 July 2025. Photograph: Evelyn Hockstein/Reuters

A high-profile example came in mid-July, when [Trump claimed](#) his uncle, the late professor John Trump, had taught Ted Kaczynski, better known as the Unabomber, at MIT.

Trump recalled: “I said: ‘What kind of a student was he, Uncle John? Dr John Trump.’ I said: ‘What kind of a student?’ And then he said: ‘Seriously, good.’ He said: ‘He’d correct – he’d go around correcting everybody.’ But it didn’t work out too well for him.”

The problem is: that cannot possibly be true. First, Trump’s uncle died in 1985, and Kaczynski was only publicly identified as the Unabomber in 1996. Second, Kaczynski did not study at MIT.

“The story makes no sense whatsoever, but it’s told in a very warm, reflective way, as if he’s remembering it,” Segal said. “This level of thinking really has been deteriorating.”

Aside from the confabulation, there have been times when Trump seems unable to focus. During the 2024 campaign there was the bizarre sight of Trump spending 40 minutes [swaying to music onstage](#) after a medical emergency at one of his campaign rallies. Trump’s rambling speeches during his campaign – he would frequently drift between topics in a technique he described as “the weave” – also drew scrutiny.

The White House removed official transcripts of Trump’s remarks from its website in May, claiming it was part of an effort to “maintain consistency”. It is worth reading Trump’s remarks in full, however, to get a sense of how the president speaks on a day-to-day basis.

At the beginning of July, Trump was asked, “What is the next campaign promise that you plan to fulfill to the American people?” He then rambled about meeting foreign leaders and removing regulations, [adding](#):

after newsletter promotion

I got rid of – just one I got rid of the other night, you buy a house, they have a faucet in the house, Joe, and the faucet the water doesn’t come out. They have a restrictor. You can’t – in areas where you have so much water they don’t know what to do with it. Uh, you have a shower head the shower doesn’t uh, the shower doesn’t, you think it’s not working. It is working. The water’s dripping out and that’s no good for me. I like this hair lace and [sic] – I like that hair nice and wet. Takes you – you have to stand in the shower for 20 minutes before you get the soap out of your hair. And I put a, a thing – and it sounds funny but it’s really not. It’s horrible. And uh, when you wash your hands, you turn on the faucet, no water comes out. You’re washing whole – water barely comes out it’s ridi – this was done by crazy people. And I wor – wrote it all off and got it approved in Congress so that they can’t just change it.”

“Any fair-minded mental-health expert would be very worried about Donald Trump’s performance,” Richard A Friedman, a professor of clinical psychiatry and the director of the psychopharmacology clinic at Weill Cornell Medical College, [wrote](#) in the Atlantic, after a stumbling performance from Trump in his debate against Kamala Harris last September.

He added: “If a patient presented to me with the verbal incoherence, tangential thinking, and repetitive speech that Trump now regularly demonstrates, I would almost certainly refer them for a rigorous neuropsychiatric evaluation to rule out a cognitive illness.”

At [a recent cabinet meeting](#) called to discuss the flooding tragedy in Texas, the war in Ukraine and Gaza, the bombing of Iran, and global tariffs, Trump went on a 13-minute monologue about how he had decorated the cabinet meeting room.

After talking about paintings which he said he had personally selected from “the vaults”, Trump said. “Look at those frames, you know, I’m a frame person, sometimes I like frames more than I like the pictures,” and added he had overseen the cleaning of some china.

As department heads, including the defense secretary, Pete Hegseth, and the secretary of state, Marco Rubio, waited to be dismissed so they could go and do their jobs, Trump continued:

Here we put out – you know these, these lamps have been very important actually, whether people love them or not but they’re if you see pictures like Pearl Harbor or Tora! Tora! Tora!, you see movies about the White House where wars are being discussed, oftentimes they’ll show those lamps or something like those lamps, something that looks like them. Probably not the reals, because I don’t think they’re allowed to – this is a very important room, this is a sacred room, and I don’t think they made movies from here. You never know what they do. But they were missing, er, medallions. See the medallions on top? They had a chain going into the ceiling. And I said: ‘You can’t do that. You have to have a medallion.’ They said, ‘What’s a medallion?’ I said: ‘I’ll show you.’ And then we got some beautiful medallions, and you see them, they were put up there, makes the lamps look [inaudible] so we did these changes. And when you think of it, the cost was almost nothing. We also painted the room a nice color, beige color, and it’s been really something. The only question is, will I gold-leaf the corners? You could maybe tell me. My cabinet could take a vote. You see the top-line moldings, and the only question is do you go and leaf it? Because you can’t paint it, if you paint it it won’t look good because they’ve never found a paint that looks like gold. You see that in the Oval Office. Er, they’ve tried for years and years. Somebody could become very wealthy, but they’ve never found a paint that looks like gold. So painting is easy but it won’t look right.”

The White House pushes back aggressively on the issue of Trump's mental fitness.

"The Guardian is a left-wing mouthpiece that should be embarrassed to pass off deranged resistance leftists as 'experts'. Anyone pathetic enough to defend Biden's mental state – while being labeled as unethical by their peers – has zero credibility. President Trump's mental sharpness is second to none and he is working around the clock to secure amazing deals for the American people," said White House spokesperson Liz Huston.

So do his political allies. "As President Trump's former personal physician, former physician to the president, and White House physician for 14 years across three administrations, I can tell you unequivocally: President Donald J Trump is the healthiest president this nation has ever seen. I continue to consult with his current physician and medical team at the White House and still spend significant time with the president. He is mentally and physically sharper than ever before," said congressman Ronny Jackson.

In April, Trump's White House physician, Dr Sean Barbabella, wrote that the president "exhibits excellent cognitive and physical health and is fully fit to execute the duties of the commander-in-chief and head of state". He said Trump was assessed for cognitive function, which was normal.

That report hasn't stopped people from questioning Trump's mental acuity.

"What we see are the classic signs of dementia, which is gross deterioration from someone's baseline and function," John Gartner, a psychologist and author who spent 28 years as an assistant professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University Medical School, said [in June](#).

"If you go back and look at film from the 1980s, [Trump] actually was extremely articulate. He was still a jerk, but he was able to express himself in polished paragraphs, and now he really has trouble completing a thought and that is a huge deterioration."

Gartner, who during Trump's first term [co-founded Duty to Warn](#), a group of mental health professionals who believed Trump had the personality disorder malignant narcissism, warned: "I predicted before the election that he would probably fall off the cliff before the end of his term. And at the rate he is deteriorating, you know ... we'll see.

https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/aug/03/donald-trump-mental-fitness?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other