

Why was the United Kingdom able to stand alone in Western Europe?

KEY

Very Important

Quite Important

Less Important

<p>German fighters only had enough fuel to fly over Britain for 30 minutes at a time.</p>	<p>It only took five minutes for German planes to cross the English Channel. It took British planes fifteen minutes to take off from their airfields and reach the necessary height to intercept them.</p>
<p>German Luftwaffe pilots received better training than their RAF counterparts. German pilots were being trained in greater numbers (800 new pilots a month compared to 200 in Britain) and often had experience of flying in other battles in the Spanish Civil War and the German invasion of Poland.</p>	<p>The British had an invention that the Germans did not have, RADAR (radio detection and ranging). RADAR used radio waves to detect the position and speed of enemy planes, enabling the British to know exactly where the Germans would strike. Britain had a system of 51 RADAR stations.</p>
<p>The Germans outnumbered the RAF. At the beginning of the Battle of Britain Germany had 824 fighters and 1,017 bombers. Britain only had 591 fighters.</p>	<p>German fighters had to fly close together to escort the bombers. They could only fly at the maximum speed of the slower bombers. The RAF fighters had no such constraints.</p>
<p>British factories produced planes at a faster rate than Germany (550 per month compared to 150), so were better able to replace losses.</p>	<p>In September 1940, the Luftwaffe stopped bombing British airfields and switched to bombing cities instead (the 'Blitz'), slowing the destruction of British planes.</p>
<p>Any pilot whose plane was shot and bailed out would land in Britain, so RAF pilots would be able to eventually re-join the war. A German pilot would be made into a Prisoner of War (POW).</p>	<p>The main fighter aircraft of the Luftwaffe was the Messerschmitt Bf 109. It was faster than the British fighters but had a larger turning circle than British Hurricanes and Spitfires, meaning it was not as manoeuvrable.</p>