## The Battle of Britain

### What Was the Battle of Britain?

The Battle of Britain took place between July and October 1940. It was fought in the skies above Britain between the Royal Air Force (RAF) and Germany's air force, the Luftwaffe. Germany wanted to defeat Britain so that it could invade the country. The RAF successfully stopped this from happening.

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## The RAF

### Who Were the RAF?

The RAF stands for the Royal Air Force. RAF pilots flew fighter planes to defend Britain from German attacks.

### The Pilots

RAF pilots came from Britain and many other countries, including Poland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. They risked their lives every day to protect Britain.

### Why Were They Important?

The RAF stopped German bombers from attacking important targets and prevented Germany from gaining control of the skies.

### Fun Fact

Winston Churchill called RAF pilots "The Few" because so much depended on them.

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## RAF Planes

### Spitfire

The Supermarine Spitfire was one of Britain's most famous fighter planes.

### Spitfire Facts

- Very fast and agile.

- Excellent in dogfights against enemy aircraft.
- Became a symbol of Britain's defence.

Hurricane

The Hawker Hurricane was another important RAF fighter plane.

Hurricane Facts

- Easier and cheaper to build than the Spitfire.
- Shot down more enemy aircraft during the Battle of Britain than any other British plane.
- Strong and reliable.

German Aircraft

The Luftwaffe used:

- Messerschmitt Bf 109 fighter planes.
- Junkers Ju 87 Stuka dive bombers.

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Radar

What Is Radar?

Radar is a system that uses radio waves to detect aircraft before they can be seen.

Why Was Radar Important?

Radar allowed Britain to:

- Spot German planes early.
- Track where enemy planes were heading.
- Send RAF fighters to the correct location quickly.
- Save fuel and pilots by only scrambling aircraft when necessary.

The Radar Chain

Britain built a line of radar stations around its coastline called Chain Home. These stations gave advance warning of German attacks.

Why Radar Helped Britain Win

Without radar, the RAF would have found it much harder to defend Britain because they would not know where the enemy was coming from.

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Britain's Home Front Advantage

Fighting Over Home Territory

British pilots had several advantages because the battle took place over Britain.

Advantages for Britain

- Pilots who parachuted from damaged aircraft often landed safely in Britain and could fly again.
- Damaged aircraft could often be repaired and returned to service.
- RAF airfields were close to the fighting.
- British pilots knew the local area well.
- The British public supported the war effort.

Factories and Workers

Factories worked hard to build new planes and replace losses. Thousands of workers, including many women, helped keep aircraft production going.

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Disadvantages for Germany

Long Journeys

German aircraft had to fly across the English Channel before reaching Britain. This meant:

- Less fuel for fighting.
- Less time in the air.

- Greater risk of running out of fuel.

Lost Pilots

When German pilots were shot down over Britain:

- Many were captured.
- They could not quickly return to combat.

Radar Problems

Germany did not fully understand how effective Britain's radar system was. As a result, the RAF was often ready and waiting when German aircraft arrived.

Changing Strategy

Germany began bombing cities instead of focusing on RAF airfields. This gave the RAF time to recover and rebuild its strength.

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Why Britain Won

Britain won the Battle of Britain because:

- The RAF had skilled and determined pilots.
- Britain used radar effectively.
- Spitfires and Hurricanes were excellent fighter planes.
- Britain fought close to its own airfields and factories.
- German planes had fuel and distance problems.
- Germany failed to destroy the RAF.

The Battle of Britain became the first major defeat for Hitler and prevented a German invasion of Britain.

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Key Vocabulary

- RAF – Royal Air Force.
- Luftwaffe – German Air Force.

- Radar – Technology used to detect aircraft.
- Spitfire – Fast British fighter aircraft.
- Hurricane – British fighter aircraft used throughout the battle.
- Dogfight – An air battle between fighter planes.
- Chain Home – Britain's radar defence system.
- Luftwaffe – Germany's air force.
- Airfield – An area where aircraft take off and land.
- Squadron – A group of military aircraft and pilots.

Suggested Website Pages

1. What Was the Battle of Britain?
2. The RAF
3. Spitfires and Hurricanes
4. The Importance of Radar
5. Britain's Home Front Advantage
6. Problems for Germany
7. Why Britain Won
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