

# The Battle of Hastings

The Battle of Hastings is one of the most famous battles in English history.

## What Caused the Battle?

In 1066, three men were fighting to be King of England: William of Normandy, Harold Godwinson and Harald Hardrada.

Harold Godwinson was crowned king on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1066. William and Harald were not happy. They both prepared to invade England in order to kill King Harold and become king themselves.

Harald Hardrada attacked from the north of England on 25<sup>th</sup> September. However, he was killed in battle and his army was defeated by King Harold's army. King Harold was then told that William of Normandy had landed in the south and was attacking the surrounding countryside. King Harold was furious and marched his tired troops 300 kilometres to meet them.

Eight days later, Harold and his men reached London. William sent a messenger to London. The message tried to get Harold to accept William as the true King of England. Harold refused and was angered by William's request.

Harold was advised to wait before attacking William and his army. His troops were very tired and they needed time to prepare for the battle. However, Harold ignored this advice and on 13<sup>th</sup> October, his troops arrived in Hastings ready to fight. They captured a hill (now known as Battle Hill) and set up a fortress surrounded with sharp stakes stuck in a deep ditch. Harold ordered his forces to stay in their positions no matter what happened.



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On 14<sup>th</sup> October, the battle began. William's troops raced up the hill on foot to attack Harold's army. It was hard running up hill and they could not break Harold's shield wall. The battle lasted for around thirty minutes and William's forces suffered heavy losses.

Next, William ordered his troops to race up the hill on horses. They too were unsuccessful and did not break Harold's wall.

Many hours later, William's troops managed to break through Harold's shield wall. The two sides fought hand to hand. William sent his best knights to find Harold and kill him. Once they achieved this, the battle was over and William had won.



After the battle, William became the new King of England.

1. When was Harold Godwinson crowned King of England? Tick **one**.

- 6<sup>th</sup> January 1006
- 6<sup>th</sup> January 1600
- 6<sup>th</sup> January 1066
- 6<sup>th</sup> January 1006

2. Which two other people wanted to be King of England?

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3. Who attacked England on the 25th September? Tick **one**.

- William of Normandy
- Harald Hardrada
- Harold Godwinson
- The Saxons

4. From where did William of Normandy attack England? Tick **one**.

- the south
- the north
- the east
- the west

5. Explain why King Harold's troops were not ready to fight William and his army.

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6. When did the Battle of Hastings begin? Tick **one**.

- 13<sup>th</sup> October
- 25<sup>th</sup> October
- 16<sup>th</sup> October
- 14<sup>th</sup> October

7. Who did William send to kill King Harold?

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# Answers

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2. Which two other people wanted to be King of England?

**William of Normandy and Harald Hardrada**

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5. Explain why King Harold's troops were not ready to fight William and his army.

**Pupil's own response, such as: King Harold's troops were not ready to fight because they were tired. They had just fought a battle against Harald Hardrada's army and then they marched 300km to meet William's army in the south. They needed time to rest and to prepare for the battle.**

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- 25<sup>th</sup> October
- 16<sup>th</sup> October
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7. Who did William send to kill King Harold?

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