

How far do you agree? (essays)

‘How far do you agree?’ means to reach a judgement about the topic by saying how much you agree or disagree with something. You should consider **both** sides of the argument and give detailed reasons for your judgement to make sure it is supported by an explanation.

In order to consider how far you agree with something you need to **evaluate**: this means to ‘weigh up’ the points which support the argument vs the points against the argument and decide which side has more ‘weight’. It might help to think of a set of scales and place evidence on either side to help reach a judgment.



‘There was little progress in medicine in Britain during the Renaissance period (c1500–c1700).’ **How far do you agree?** **Explain** your answer.

This question is asking for a judgement about whether or not you agree that there was little progress in medicine during the Renaissance period...

... The extra command word asks you to **explain** your answer, by giving reasons.

Useful words for judging:

- In conclusion...
- Overall...
- I agree to some degree...
- However,...
- A more convincing view is that...
- A more important reason was...

You could strongly agree, strongly disagree, or be somewhere in-between, but always try to pick a side

Strong answers do not sit on the fence

How far do you agree? (essays)

When making a judgement about how far you agree with a statement, you will need to decide which **criteria** you will apply to justify your judgment.

Criteria are standards by which something may be judged or decided.



We apply **criteria** when making decisions [judgments] in everyday life – to buy clothes (fit, fashion, price) or prefer certain films (artists, special effects, storyline).



In History the criteria we use will depend on the question, e.g., how will you measure impact or change?

Why did you buy those trousers?

“I chose this pair of trousers. They are the best.”

“I chose this pair of trousers because they suited me best.”

“I chose this pair of trousers because, although others were a better fit or price [+ comparative details], this pair was the combination of the better quality and price so more likely to last longer and they were a good fit and the right length.”

A judgement is given but it is **asserted**

Judgement has **some justification** but no evidence of valid criteria being applied

This answer exemplifies the use of **criteria being clearly applied** for the overall judgement

How far do you agree? (essays)

Even if you totally agree with the statement in the question, you still need to **consider the alternative side** of the argument and explain why you disagree with it. This will ensure your overall judgement has been reached after applying valid criteria.

What does a good response look like?

- The best answers have a sense of judgement running throughout them.
- Some students leave their judgement to the very end of the essay, which means they have a brief judgement, appear to change the judgement or don't link their judgement to criteria or to the evidence being given in the answer.
- Better answers have a clear sense of the overall judgement from the start and include phrases like 'this was very significant', 'this had a big impact', 'this only affected a small group of people', 'this was not very important because'.

'The main reason William I was able to keep control of England in the years 1066–75 was the building of castles.'
How far do you agree? **Explain** your answer.

This question is asking for a judgement about what you think was William's main way of keeping control – was it castles or something else?

In conclusion, I agree to some degree that castles were an important way of William keeping control because they showed his power. However, a far more important method was dealing harshly with rebels. When the Normans executed rebels and carried out the Harrying of the North, it terrified Anglo-Saxons so that they would not rebel again. Castles helped to keep control, but harsh methods prevented rebellions from starting.

The student makes a clear decision that whilst they agree to a degree, there is a more important way of keeping control...

...then they support the judgement with a reason...

...this judgment is backed up using valid criteria.