**Values and Limitations of Documents / Sources**

When asked to discuss the values and limitations of documents you must do this! The examiner needs to see you can critically evaluate a document (e.g. identify strengths and weaknesses, the reliability of a document. The reliability of sources [evaluates](https://www.historyskills.com/source-criticism/evaluation/) whether they are trustworthy. It is important that the [sources](https://www.historyskills.com/source-criticism/analysis/source-kind-and-type/) you use in your assessments are reliable so that the [quotes](https://www.historyskills.com/quoting/) you use from them can be trusted.

In history, it is rare that we are completely sure that sources are 100% reliable. Therefore, when we talk about reliability of sources, we can talk in terms of ‘degrees of reliability':

Extremely - Very – Somewhat – Rarely – Not very

For example, we can say that a source is "extremely reliable", or "not very reliable".

**Reasons to justify a source’s reliability**



**How to establish unreliability of a source**

Based upon what you discovered in your [analysis](https://www.historyskills.com/source-criticism/analysis/) of the source, you can establish its unreliability based upon any of the following:

* The [creator](https://www.historyskills.com/source-criticism/analysis/source-creator/) of the source was not present at the [time of the event.](https://www.historyskills.com/source-criticism/analysis/time-of-creation/)
* The [creator](https://www.historyskills.com/source-criticism/analysis/source-creator/) of the source does not have a sufficiently educated [perspective](https://www.historyskills.com/source-criticism/analysis/perspective/) on the topic. (e.g. they have no formal education in History)
* The source has not been fact-checked by an educated [audience](https://www.historyskills.com/source-criticism/analysis/audience/). (e.g. it is a online blog post)
* The [purpose](https://www.historyskills.com/source-criticism/analysis/purpose/) of the source was to be entertaining or to simply give an opinion, rather than focus on the facts, about the topic.