# Innovative phonetic map launched for London's Underground



The London Underground map, widely lauded as a design classic since its creation in 1931, serves as an essential guide for navigating the extensive transit network across the city. Its vibrant colours and straightforward layout enable passengers to traverse the Tube efficiently. However, the map's reliance on geographical station names often leads to confusion, particularly for foreign visitors who may struggle with the intricacies of English pronunciation.

Arcangelo Martiello, a 48-year-old Italian expatriate, has identified the challenges faced by non-native English speakers in decoding the station names of the London Underground. With a vision to create a resource that fosters better navigation for tourists, he has developed a phonetic map, allowing individuals to navigate London's transit system with confidence.

Martiello's journey began when he moved to London in 2015 to enhance his English skills. Despite several years of study, he found himself grappling with the inconsistencies in English pronunciation, particularly concerning the unique characteristics of geographical names. Speaking to MyLondon, Arcangelo explained the complexities of these pronunciations: "Geographical names are always quite unpredictable. The London Underground is full of unpredictable pronunciations either because there are dropped consonants or because there are letters that are very unusual in pronunciation."

He provided specific examples to illustrate his point, noting the different pronunciations of the word 'Ham' in various contexts. For instance, he elaborated, "When 'HAM' is at the beginning or is a separate word, it is produced 'HAM' with the H making a 'HA' sound, so like Hampstead or West Ham. When 'HAM' is at the end of the word or merged into one single word, then the 'H' is dropped and then the 'A' is pronounced." This insight underscores the difficulties faced by those unfamiliar with these nuances.

The inspiration for Martiello's innovative map struck during the Covid-19 pandemic while he participated in online courses that prompted him to note words phonetically. His vision solidified in June 2022 after viewing a video highlighting the challenges of pronouncing Tube stops, which propelled him towards creating his own phonetic representation of the map, affectionately dubbed the "Chuûb map."

In the initial stages, Martiello painstakingly crafted a hand-drawn draft, as copyright limitations prevented him from using the official map. His first iteration was formed from various cut and pasted paper pieces. Following this, he transitioned to a digital format that better displayed the phonetic details of each station.

The project consumed 15 months of intermittent labour before reaching completion. Martiello's phonetic map has since been made accessible online, accompanied by the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) used to formulate the station names' pronunciations. This resource proves beneficial not only for tourists but also for those acquiring the English language, enabling them to align the written names with their spoken counterparts.

The emergence of Martiello's phonetic map promises to ease navigation for individuals navigating London's intricate underground system, providing an inclusive tool for both locals and visitors alike.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/collections/stories/design/mapping-london-iconic-tube-map> - This URL supports the claim that the London Underground map is a design classic and provides historical context about the map's creation by Harry Beck. It also highlights the map's evolution into a widely recognized guide for navigating London.
* <https://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/collections/stories/design/transforming-tube-map-harry-becks-iconic-design> - This URL corroborates the significance of Harry Beck's design and explains how the map has continued to evolve while maintaining its core principles, even after Beck's involvement ended.
* <https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/about-tfl/culture-and-heritage/art-and-design/harry-becks-tube-map> - This URL from Transport for London further details Harry Beck's original design and its revolutionary impact on transport maps worldwide. It also notes the map's initial rejection due to its radical simplicity.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Phonetic_Alphabet> - While not directly mentioned in the search results, the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is a crucial element in Martiello's phonetic map. The IPA is widely recognized as a standardized system for phonetically transcribing words, which would support Martiello's use of it in his map.
* <https://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/wells/ipa-unicode.htm> - Similar to the previous one, this URL is not mentioned in the search results but is relevant as it provides resources related to the International Phonetic Alphabet used by Martiello for formulating the pronunciations of station names.