

How to Pronounce London Place Names--the Cockney Way

[CLICK TO WATCH VIDEO:](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkOrfUWHbM8>

By Jade Joddle

Hey guys! Today we're looking at how to pronounce place names in London. And I'm going to pronounce these places in the Cockney/Estuary kind of way. It's not the way that everybody in the whole country would say these place names. But these are familiar ways of pronouncing those place names in London by the people from London who speak with Cockney or Estuary accents. And I've grouped each of the pronunciations together, so you can see patterns in how we pronounce the words.

And what you can also do is compare: How would you say this word, if you just saw it for the first time on the Tube map, and you were like, "Oh, where's that place? I need to go there." How would you say it? Because quite often the way a Cockney or an Estuary person pronounces it doesn't sound the same as how you would imagine the word is said.

So let's start with places with '-ham' in the name, at the end of the name. There are many places that end in '-ham.' Originally, 'ham' meant *farm*, so before

London grew so big, and grew all together into one sprawling city, it was a collection of small areas, not always touching each other, and in the case of 'ham' places, they were farms, back in the day.

So here's a list of place with '-ham' in the end. Tottenham, Streatham, Peckham, Sydenham, Fulham, Lewisham, Balham. 'Ham' becomes 'hum.' Now what also happens in some of these place names is that you drop a syllable. So we don't say, "Tot-ten-um" or "Tot-ten-ham." We say, "Tot'num." And many people also say, "Lewshum" rather than "Lewish-ham."

OK, moving on: We have places that end in '-den' or '-don.' And, originally, the meaning was *valley*. So have you ever been to Camden, where the famous market is, and it's all funky, alternative, punky kind of stuff. We don't say "Cam-DEN," we say "Camdun." Croydun, Hendun, Wimbledun.

Moving on, let's look at how we say places with the word '-ton' as the last syllable. Many, many places in London have this as the last syllable. Originally, that '-ton' meant *estate*, which is like a big farm. Paddington, Euston, Clapton, Dalston, Haggerston, Hoxton, Stoke Newington, Islington, Brixton. So the '-ton' becomes '-tun.' Padding-tun, not Padding-TON, OK?

Next thing is something called “th-fronting” in Cockney English, not in all Estuary speakers, but it does often happen and in particular in some words, where the *th* sound instead turns to *v*, or the *th* sound turns to an *f*. And it depends on the word, which way it changes. But here are some examples. We’ve got “Suvahk,” not “South-wark.” “Suvahk” with a *v*: “Suvahk.” “Souf London” with an *f*. “Norf London” with an *f*. “Blackheaf,” “Heafrow,” our famous airport in London: “Heafrow” with an *f*. “Befnal Green,” with an *f*.

We’ve also got something called “the dark L” in the Cockney accent, which is where the L sound gets thicker: you could call it thicker, you could say it’s more extended, or you could say it’s closer to a *w*. That L sound really just sticks out when it’s at the end of a word. So here are some examples. Millwa-uwI, Forest Hill: Hi-uwI. Russell Square: Russ-uwI. Russ-uwI Square. Cryst-uwI, The Cryst-uwI Palace. But not when the L is at the first position in the word, in the place name. So we’ve: London Bridge, Leyton and Turnpike Lane. We don’t have a dark L on any of those place names, because the L sound is not in the last position.

Next we have the place names with glottal sounds. And you probably know already about the glottal T, which is where people from London, Londoners,

Cockneys, Estuary people, in many words don't pronounce the Tuh (T). Some people describe it as an absence of sound; or I would prefer to say: you say it in the back of the throat, in the part called the glottis. And instead of saying "water," you say "wa-uh." But did you also know that glottal stop can also be with a P, and a K, in words as well? And Londoners often will use glottal stop in these other sounds. So we've got: "Too-in," "Wa-uh-loo," "Cla-um," "Ga-wick," "Ga-wick Airport," "Strea-um." I...that...OK, I think we're going a bit more Cockney there, because when I'm saying it in the glottal, I'm forcing it a bit.

And last but not least, we have H-dropping. And H-dropping is a...definitely a more Cockney side of the thing. So in all these words, the H sound we don't hear so much. 'Ackney Wick, 'Ackney, Ya live in 'Ackney? 'Ighbry. 'Igh Barnet. 'Igh Barnet's at the end of the Northern Line. 'Ampstead 'Eaf. 'Eafrow. We're goin to 'Eafrow Airport. How much to go to 'Eafrow Airport? Imagine you're in the taxi. So H-dropping at the beginning of the word is not natural in how I pronounce words, but again it's a common feature you will hear around London sometimes, so just be aware that that H sound sometimes goes away.

So thank you for watching. If you're interested in London accents, I have made a booklet with loads of information about different kinds of accents you can hear in

London, and this booklet also has links to example videos where you can hear the different accents. I'm really proud of that work that I did on that accent booklet, and if you're interested in accents, I really hope that you will like it, too. And you can get it by clicking the link in the description box under this video, you can get the link, it's a completely free PDF booklet. So thank you for watching, and join me again soon. Bye!

Check out my introvert speaking skills course → [CLICK HERE](#)

<http://jadejoddle.com/introvert-course/>