

STATION NAMING

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Different metro systems have taken different approaches to naming their stations over time, and this article looks briefly at how they have gone about this.

LONDON

Historically, London was centred on the City, and outside this were a number of villages. Since mediæval times, as London grew the villages were absorbed, but for many of them their names lived on as districts of London. When stations were built they often took the name of the district that they served. Example of this include **Westminster**, **Hammersmith**, **Paddington**, **Knightsbridge**.

In the more densely-packed centre of London that developed around the West End, the City, and the region in between, there were insufficient districts for the names to be obvious as to where the station was located, and so street names were chosen.

These were generally perpendicular to the railway line – fine for a station that only served one line, such as **Baker Street**, but caused problems when a second railway was built that followed the street that had given its name to the first. An example of this is when the Central London Railway built a station at **Tottenham Court Road**, and the Hampstead Tube then added interchange platforms but called their station **Oxford Street**. Although both companies were following the same practice, it was highly confusing for passengers, and within a year the Hampstead renamed their platforms to match those of the CLR. (This meant that they had to rename their station to the north, which they had confusingly opened as Tottenham Court Road – it became Goodge Street, which was a more logical name, although less well known).

Stations located in squares and circuses had less of a problem, as they could just take the name of the place, regardless of the direction of the line. The most well-known example of this are **Oxford Circus**, **Piccadilly Circus** and **Leicester Square**.

Some stations, situated near to well-known places or features acquired these names. **Marble Arch**, **Monument** and **Bank** are good examples. **Mansion House** is another example, although the station is not the closest to that building.

Finally, stations that provided interchange with main-line stations generally took the same name. **Paddington** and **Marylebone** are district names; **Cannon Street** and **Liverpool Street** are named for the adjacent roads; **King's Cross** and **Charing Cross** take their names from monuments and **Waterloo** from the adjacent bridge (itself named for the battle); and **Victoria** was named in honour of the Queen.

Some stations have compass directions as either prefixes or suffixes. As a prefix, such as **South Kensington**, it implies that the district is known by this name (Kensington is a large area, and has several stations, one of which was opened in the area known already as South Kensington). As a suffix (e.g., **Clapham North** and **Clapham South**), it is indicating the location of the station within the district. When these stations opened, Clapham was known as such, and so the stations were labelled as being the north station and the south station within it.

Outside London, stations were generally given the name of the locality. A few stations were situated at some distance from any conurbation, and so following typical British railway practice, had 'Road' appended to their names, such as **Preston Road**. This remains, despite housing now surrounding the station on almost every side.

PARIS

Paris officially occupies the area within the old city walls, now defined by the Boulevard Périphérique, and as such is rather smaller than London. For many years the Métro remained within this area, but with a higher density of stations than London. There were no historic village names to take for the majority of the stations, and so stations took the names of the street that they crossed. For the most part, only the name-part of the street name is used (as if we had stations called 'Tottenham Court', or 'Baker') – such as at **Belleville** (line 2), found on the Rue de Belleville. There are a handful of exceptions, such as **Rue de la Pompe** (line 9). The only major class of exception is for the stations at the city limits (usually the original termini), which retain the full name of the old city gates. Examples include **Porte Maillot** (line 1), **Porte de Clignancourt** (line 4), and **Porte d'Italie** (line 7).

When two lines crossed at right-angles, often both street names were combined. For example, **Réaumur – Sébastopol** (lines 3 and 4) is at the intersection of the Rue Réaumur and the Boulevard Sébastopol, and **La Motte-Picquet – Grenelle** (lines 6, 8, and 10) can be found where the Avenue de la Motte-Picquet meets the Boulevard de Grenelle.

Double-barrelled station names can also be found if a line crosses a street which changes its name. **Richelieu-Drouot** station (on the parallel lines 8 and 9) is where the Rue de Richelieu becomes the Rue Drouot.

There are some stations that are named after squares and parks, such as (Parc de) **Monceau** (on line 2), and (Place de la) **Bastille** (lines 1, 5, and 8), although there is inconsistency here too – for example, **Place d'Italie** (lines 5, 6, and 7) retains the 'Place'.

A few stations are named for famous buildings or monuments nearby. Examples include **Invalides** (lines 8 and 13), **Madeleine** (lines 8, 12, and 14), **Hôtel de Ville** (lines 1 and 11), **Bourse** (line 3), and **Arts et Métiers** (lines 3 and 11).

Many of the Métro lines have been extended beyond the Paris boundary. The road naming principle is followed for some of the stations on these lines, but slightly further out district names start to be used, although often in conjunction with a road name. At the end of line 7, in the district of La Courneuve, is the station of **La Courneuve – 8 Mai 1945**, the latter part of the name deriving from the square where the station is located. The station of **Mairie d'Issy** (line 12) is in the Issy-les-Moulineaux district, next to the town hall (la mairie).

NEW YORK

The subway in New York takes a very logical approach to the naming of almost all of its stations, which does have the side effect of confusing those who are not used to it. Stations are mostly named after the roads that they cross. On Manhattan, south of 14th Street, there is less of a regular grid pattern, but the principle still holds – hence stations such as **Bleeker Street** (line 6) and **Spring Street** (lines C and E). Further north, in the numbered streets, these are used in the same way, such as **79th St** (lines 1 and 2). The problem arises because many streets (which run east-west) have completely separate stations on different lines, but all with the same name. The most extreme example is **Canal Street**, a name used at no fewer than six stations (on the 1/2, the A/C/E, the N/R, the 4/6, the N/Q, and the J/Z lines, from west to east). Almost as bad is **23rd St.**, used by five stations (on the A/C/E, the 1/2, the PATH, the N/Q/R, and the 4/6 lines). At least one of these stations (N/Q R) is known as **E 23rd St – Broadway**.

As in Paris, there are some double-barrelled names. These are sometimes for roads at right angles, like **5th Av./53rd St** (lines E and M), but are often for a street and a place, such as **42nd Street/Port Authority Bus Terminal** (lines A/C/E), **Times Square/42nd St**, **42nd St/Bryant Park**, and **Grand Central/42nd St**. This style of name makes more sense than the Canal Street stations.

There are also a handful of stations named solely after buildings or places, such as **World Trade Centre** (line E), **City Hall** (lines N and R), and **Bowling Green** (lines 4 and 5).

BERLIN

The Berlin U-Bahn uses the names of streets and squares for many of its stations in the centre. For example, **Französische Straße** (U6) and **Alexanderplatz** (U2, U5, and U8). A number of stations are named after roads parallel to the line, such as **Mohrenstraße** (U2) and **Kurfürstenstraße** (U1), which makes it slightly harder for passengers to know precisely where the station is located.

There are some stations named for important buildings or places. **Bundestag** (U55) is adjacent to the Parliament building, **Märkisches Museum** (U2) is close to the museum of the same name, and **Olympia-Stadion** (U2) is the station for the main stadium built for the 1936 Olympic Games.

As with Paris and London, stations that are further from the centre often take the name of the district that they serve, such as **Rathaus Spandau** (Spandau Town Hall, on U7), and **Hönower Ufer** (U5).

Possibly the most unusually named station is at **Gleisdreieck** (U1 and U2), which is located on a viaduct and on a junction, and is on one of the first lines opened on the U-Bahn. Its name literally translates as 'three-cornered platform', and is thus named after the station configuration.