

In London, a long-awaited high-speed train is ready to roll (906 words)

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Speaking practice

These three exercises will offer you an easy way to use and improve your speaking skills.

This worksheet and the article are written in American English.

1. Warm-up exercise: Go find me in London!

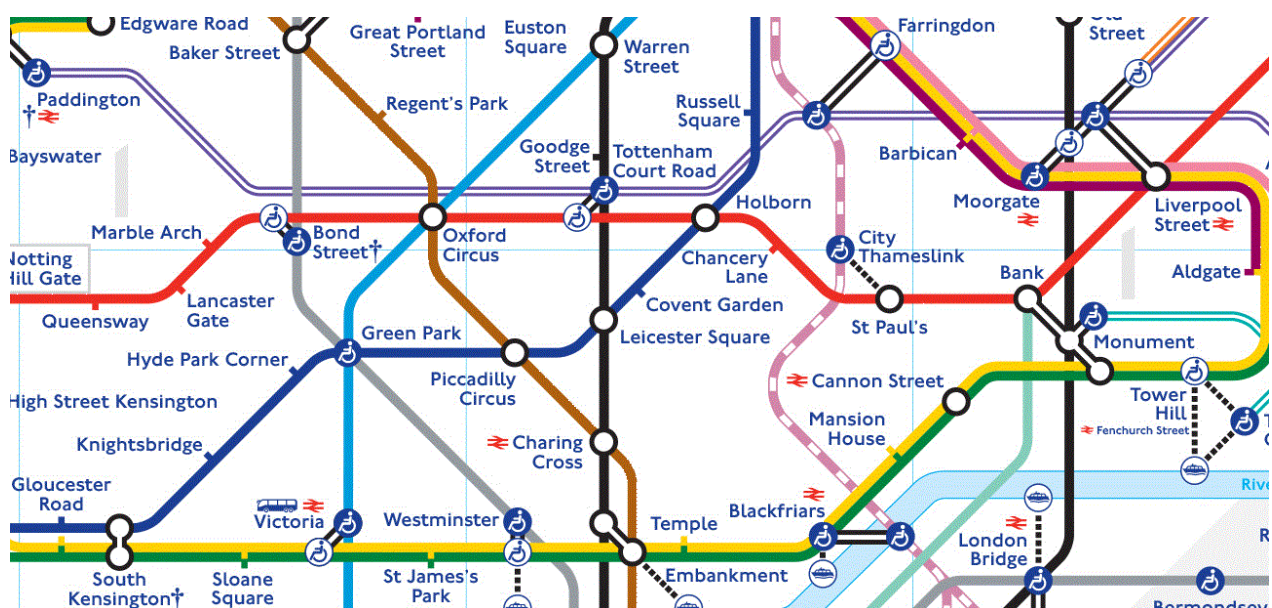
This is a cut-out from London's Tube map. The new Elizabeth line discussed in the article has two thin purple lines with white in between. Use the map for an easy warm-up exercise.

Directions

- Work in groups of three and do as many rounds of this game as you want.
- The starting point is Paddington station on the Elizabeth line. Pick a Tube station but don't let the others know where you're hiding.
- Tell the others how to get from Paddington to your station of choice without saying its name. Make sure to use the names of the Tube lines and stops along the way so they can find you.

Key to lines

	Bakerloo		Metropolitan
	Central		Northern
	Circle		Piccadilly
	District		Victoria
	Hammersmith & City		Waterloo & City
	Jubilee		DLR
			Elizabeth line



2. Class survey: Public transport

Fill out this questionnaire and discuss your choices in pairs or in class.

Questionnaire: Public transport

1. Which form of public transport do you use most often?
☐ subway ☐ trams ☐ buses ☐ regional trains ☐ other
2. How often do you use public transport?
☐ every day ☐ several days a week ☐ once or twice a week ☐ less
3. Have you used public transport more since the €9 travel pass was introduced?
☐ yes ☐ no ☐ I don't know
If yes, what has changed? _____
4. What would need to change for you to use public transport more often?
☐ price ☐ reliability ☐ more connections ☐ higher frequency
5. Do you think people would use cars less often if public transport was free?
☐ yes ☐ no ☐ I don't know

3. Discussion and decision-making: Should public transport be free?

Imagine you are one of the Chief Officers of Transport for London (TfL), the local government body that is responsible for public transport in London. You want to get Londoners back on the Tube after pandemic lockdowns and are considering introducing free public transport.

You call a meeting and discuss the following question:

Should public transport be free?

Directions

- Work in groups of four. Debate the pros and cons of the question before you make a decision.
- Think about aspects like tax costs, revenue through fares / ticket sales, maintenance and repair costs, quality of service (reliability, frequency, connections, etc.).
- You can use conclusions drawn from discussing the questionnaire (Task 2) and from initiatives that have introduced free or cheap public transport (e.g., Germany's €9 travel pass).

Tip! Some answers are provided on page 4 of this worksheet.

Tip for teachers! The question can also be discussed in a speed dating debate (see next page).

Speed dating debate

Question: Should public transport be free?

Directions

- Each student thinks about the pros and cons of free public transport. What are the benefits, and what are the drawbacks?
- Pair up with another student. You have five minutes to exchange your ideas.
- Your teacher will give a signal when the five minutes are over. Now move to a new partner. You can adjust your original response. This process is repeated over several rounds.
- At the end, summarize the different arguments in class. Have a class vote on the question of whether or not public transport should be free.

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Answers: Free public transport

The students will probably mention some of the following points and elaborate on them:

Pros

- good for the environment (people use cars less)
- increase of ridership
- greater mobility
- greater equality; people (regardless of their socioeconomic background) can be mobile and have more opportunities when it is easier to get to certain places for education, work, etc.
- revival of regional travel destinations
- trams, buses, trains operate faster (time saved because drivers don't sell or check tickets)

Cons

- main counterargument: too expensive
 - how to fund it? (public money, meaning tax money?)
 - transport systems depend on revenue from ticket sales for funding
- higher maintenance costs due to increased use
- people only use cars less often if public transport gives them better options
- connections, frequency, reliability, etc., need to improve first (not worth the investment if the system can't handle increase or if people still uses cars because public transport hasn't been improved)

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