

# Take the STONE Out of the Shoe

A Must-Have Guide to Understanding, Supporting, and  
Correcting Dyslexia, Learning, and Attention Challenges



**Jill Stowell**

**#1 Bestselling Author:** *At Wit's End: A Parent's Guide to Ending  
the Struggle, Tears, and Turmoil of Learning Disabilities*

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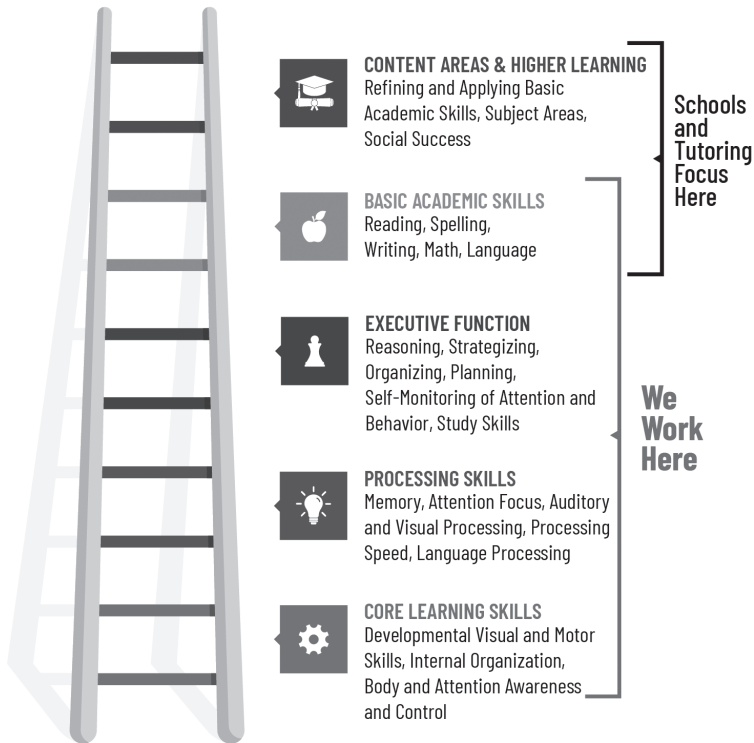
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Here is a diagram of the Learning Skills Continuum, followed by a list of some of the skills in each area:



## The Learning Skills Continuum

Having a learning challenge is like doing a job at the top of a ladder when some of rungs underneath are unstable. This diverts attention and causes everything to be harder and take longer. By strengthening underlying skills (the rungs), attention, confidence, and success at the top of the ladder improve!



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 <b>CORE LEARNING SKILLS</b>	 <b>PROCESSING SKILLS</b>	 <b>EXECUTIVE FUNCTION</b>	 <b>BASIC LANGUAGE &amp; ACADEMIC SKILLS</b>	 <b>CONTENT AREA &amp; HIGHER ACADEMIC</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Good sensory input</li> <li>▶ Postural security</li> <li>▶ Body Awareness and control</li> <li>▶ Reflex integration</li> <li>▶ Interpret tactile, proprioceptive, and motor input</li> <li>▶ Balance</li> <li>▶ Motor planning</li> <li>▶ Bilateral integration</li> <li>▶ Cross Lateral Integration</li> <li>▶ Eye-hand coordination</li> <li>▶ Ocular-motor control</li> <li>▶ Listening skills</li> <li>▶ Visual-Spatial perception</li> <li>▶ Attention awareness and control</li> <li>▶ Sensorimotor integration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Attention</li> <li>▶ Memory</li> <li>▶ Processing speed</li> <li>▶ Auditory processing</li> <li>▶ Phonological Awareness</li> <li>▶ Language processing</li> <li>▶ Visual processing</li> <li>▶ Sensorimotor integration</li> <li>▶ Sequential processing</li> <li>▶ Simultaneous processing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Visual Inner Language</li> <li>▶ Verbal Inner Language</li> <li>▶ Working memory</li> <li>▶ Organization</li> <li>▶ Time Orientation</li> <li>▶ Patterns and relationships</li> <li>▶ Problem solving</li> <li>▶ Reasoning</li> <li>▶ Strategizing</li> <li>▶ Using information</li> <li>▶ Making connections</li> <li>▶ Logic and Reasoning</li> <li>▶ Relevance vs. Non-Relevance</li> <li>▶ Planning</li> <li>▶ Study Skills</li> <li>▶ Test Taking</li> <li>▶ Strategies</li> <li>▶ Self-monitoring and management of attention and behavior</li> <li>▶ Social awareness / tact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Language <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Receptive</li> <li>- Expressive</li> <li>- Articulation</li> <li>- Vocabulary</li> <li>- Comprehension</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sound-symbol</li> <li>- Phonics</li> <li>- Sight recognition</li> <li>- Morphology</li> <li>- Vocabulary</li> <li>- Comprehension</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Printing / Cursive</li> <li>- Spelling</li> <li>- Sentence structure</li> <li>- Grammar</li> <li>- Organization</li> <li>- Composition</li> <li>- Edit / Proof</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Math <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concepts: Numeration, Time, Measurement, Change, Amount</li> <li>- Computation</li> <li>- Problem solving</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Subject areas</li> <li>▶ Refining and applying basic academic skills</li> <li>▶ Study Skills</li> <li>▶ Life-long learning of new skills</li> </ul>

Motor, Visual, Auditory, Language, Attention, Memory, and Executive Function Systems develop and are used with increasing sophistication as one moves up the continuum. Higher level success is dependent upon a solid lower level foundation.



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Students can check off each step as they go, which allows them to self-monitor their progress and feel successful every step of the way.

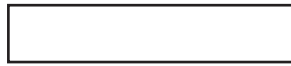
### The steps

A simple flowchart is made up of three main types of symbols:

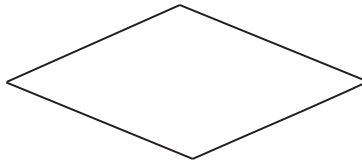
- Ovals, which signify the start or end of a process;



- Rectangles, which show instructions or actions; and



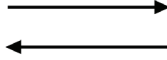
- Diamonds, which show decisions that must be made or questions to be asked.



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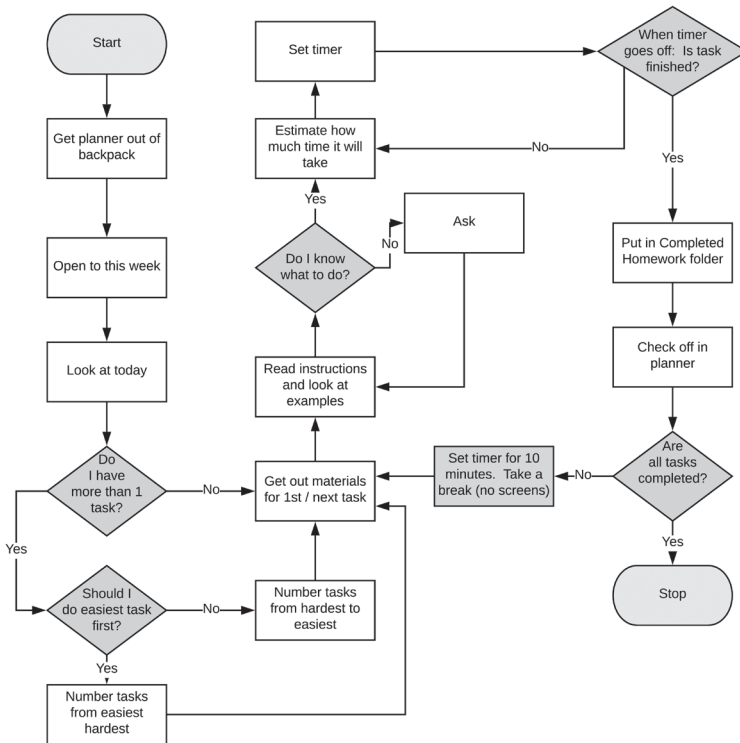
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- Symbols are connected one to the other by arrows to show the flow of the process.



Here is a sample flowchart. Notice every little step is included. Following the arrows gives students direction every step of the way, allowing them to be more independent and feel success as they complete each step.

### ORGANIZING AND COMPLETING HOMEWORK



## TAKE THE STONE OUT OF THE SHOE

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### Alphabet 8s with Weights

This activity develops flow across the vertical midline, gets both hemispheres of the brain working together for writing, and improves stability and accuracy with letter formation.



Do Alphabets 8s<sup>19</sup> daily and watch graphomotor control and legibility improve!

#### ***Here's how to do it:***

On a board or large piece of paper, draw a large, very round Lazy 8 (lying on its side like the infinity sign). Draw a line up the midline of the 8.

Using the dominant hand, the student starts in the middle of the 8 and traces it going up and to the left first.

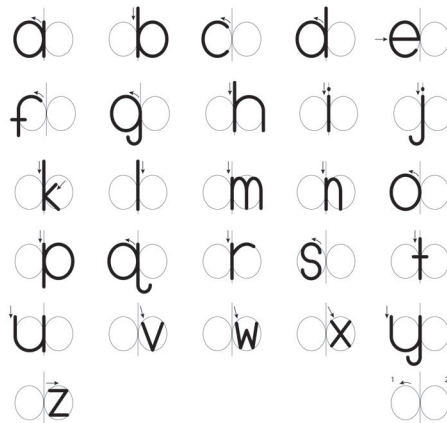
The student should put his non-dominant hand under the 8 at the midline and trace the 8 three times.

The student then writes each lowercase letter in printing, superimposed on the correct side of the 8. Each letter should be as large as the circles of the 8. Have the student say the letter name and the letter sound as he writes it.

Write each letter one time followed by tracing three full cycles of the 8 (starting in the middle and going up and to the left) before printing the next letter. Continue for the entire alphabet.

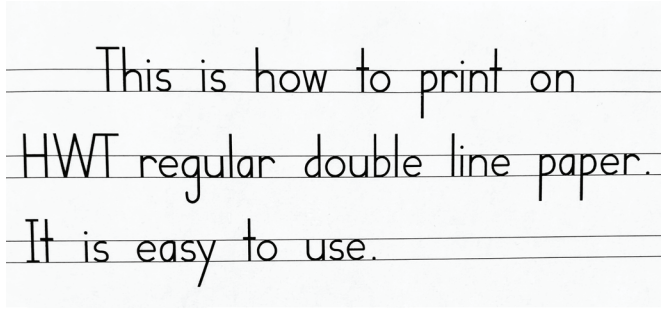
### ***Coaching:***

It may be helpful to have a written model of the alphabet for the student to check for letter formation. A chart with each letter printed on a Lazy 8 would also be helpful for some students.



Letters drawn on the left circle of the Lazy 8: *a, c, d, e, f, g, o, q, s, u, y.*





## 5-Minute Power Writing Strategy

### *Principles:*

- It is easier to write from a question than a statement.
- The faster you write, the better you write.
- This gives you a way to break writing into small manageable chunks so it doesn't drag or feel overwhelming.

### *Rules:*

- Start with three power words (nouns or verbs) about the topic.
- The first word in your first paragraph must be one of the three power words.
- The other two words must appear in the first paragraph.
- Write for five minutes without stopping. No editing erasing, or going back. No stopping to think.

### *Steps:*

- Take your main idea sentence or topic and turn it into a question.
- Visualize the answer to the question.
- Write three power words (nouns or verbs) that will help answer the question.

## TAKE THE STONE OUT OF THE SHOE

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them—as a story. You don’t just pick out the pieces you want from a story. If you do that, the story won’t make sense. The best way to really understand a story is to visualize it, turning it into a movie in your head.

### ***Word problem strategy<sup>21</sup>***

1. Read and visualize the story. (Do one sentence at a time if necessary.)
2. Have your child talk about what he/she pictured. Who was in it? What were they doing? What were they trying to find out?
3. Use the chart below to think through the information. Have your child say what he’s thinking as he goes. This helps him reason through the information and develop the language that he eventually will internalize and use on his own whenever doing word problems.

QUESTION (What do I know)?	? (What do I need to know)?	HOW (Solve the problem).
Here, write the relevant information in as few words as possible.	Write the question you have to solve for.	Do the math. Be sure to label the answer.

Here is a simple problem as an example, but this strategy works with word problems of almost any level and helps students understand what they are doing:

**Problem:** Sara and Kaitlyn were on the same swim team. On Friday morning, Sara swam 19 laps and Kaitlyn swam 23 laps. How many more laps did Kaitlin swim than Sara?

Visualize and verbalize (make a mental movie) of the story:

“I picture two girls in a swimming pool swimming laps. They both swam a lot of laps, but Sara got out after 19 laps, and Kaitlin kept going until she completed 23 laps. I have to figure out how many laps Kaitlin did after Sara got out of the pool.”

To solve this, you might have to guide your child in recognizing that until Sara got out of the pool, the two girls swam the same number of laps. The *difference* is the number of laps Kaitlin swam once Sara got out. Whenever you are finding the difference, you will subtract the smaller number from the larger number.

WHAT	?	HOW
S: 19 laps K: 23 laps	How many more laps did Kaitlin swim than Sara?	23 <u>-19</u> 4 laps

Have your child verbalize or write the full answer to the problem:

Kaitlin swam four more laps than Sara.

This takes some time at first, but the more you do it, the more independent and confident your child will get with word problems.

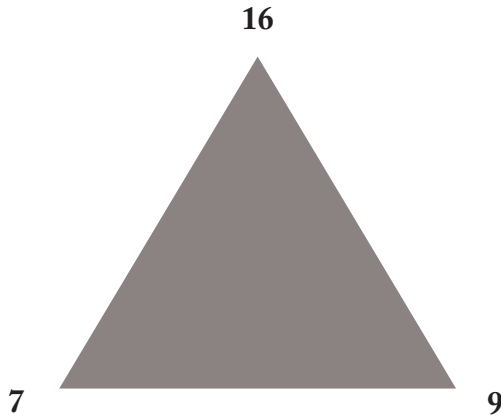
## Math Triangles (+ – x ÷ Facts)

Purpose:

- Help students associate addition and subtraction as opposite operations
- Help students associate multiplication and division as opposite operations
- Learn math facts

Procedure:

- Make flashcards of challenging math facts (those that the student doesn't know and needs to practice). Draw a triangle on the card.
- For addition and subtraction (+/-) put the answer to the addition problem (sum) at the top of the triangle. On the bottom two corners, put the addends (two numbers that are added together to make the sum).



- Have the student practice reading all possible problems as the instructor points to the numbers:

$$7 + 9 = 16$$

$$9 + 7 = 16$$

$$16 - 7 = 9$$

$$16 - 9 = 7$$

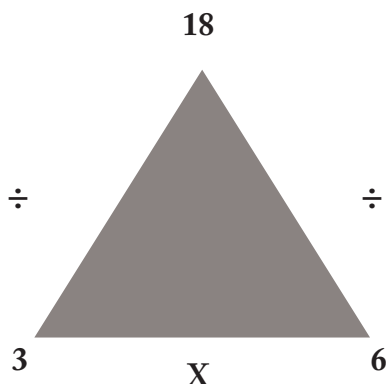
- Guide the student in noting:
  - Whichever order he adds the numbers at the bottom of the triangle, the answer is always the same.
  - The answer (sum) of an addition problem is always a bigger number than either of the two numbers he is adding.
  - When subtracting, he always starts with the biggest number (16 in the problem above).
  - The relationship between the addition and subtraction facts: that the addition and subtraction facts use the same numbers.
- Drill while looking at the numbers: The instructor points to the number. The student says the numbers and supplies the operation based on where the instructor started.
- Drill the various facts: Instructor covers one corner of the triangle and says the corresponding problem. The student says the answer.
- Drill with a visualized triangle: The instructor points to the spot where the numbers would be as the student says the numbers and supplies the operation based on where the instructor started.

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### ***For multiplication and division ( $\times \div$ )***

- The procedure and practice work the same for multiplication and division as for addition and subtraction. At the top of the triangle, put the answer to the multiplication problem (product). On the bottom two corners, put the *factors* (two numbers that are multiplied together to make the product).



Signs can be added to the triangle as needed to help the student understand and remember.

### **Memory Grid for Tough Multiplication Facts<sup>22</sup>**

Purpose:

- To remember numeric combinations
- To use visualization and visual memory to recall information

Activity:

- Create a 3 x 3 grid on a paper.
- Fill in the numbers 1 through 9 on the grid.
- Have students memorize the numbers on the grid.
- Play tic-tac-toe with the grid from memory.
- Use the grid to place the times table combinations (1 x 3, 2 x 3, 3 x 3, etc.).
- Imagine the grid with the combinations.
- Drill/play tic-tac-toe to reinforce the grid.
- Imagine and drill with answers only, then with a blank grid.
- Use the grid concept for one or two of the most difficult sets of multiplication tables. (Often the 8s are very difficult for students to recall).

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9

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$1 \times 3 = 3$	$2 \times 3 = 6$	$3 \times 3 = 9$
$4 \times 3 = 12$	$5 \times 3 = 15$	$6 \times 3 = 18$
$7 \times 3 = 21$	$8 \times 3 = 24$	$9 \times 3 = 27$

3	6	9
12	15	18
21	24	27



“Bright, creative, clever. Misunderstood and underserved. It’s time to update our approach to learning and attention challenges.”

**Jill Stowell**

*Founder of Stowell Learning Center,  
Author, Speaker, Consultant*



**How does it feel to run with a stone in your shoe?  
It’s a hindrance, it’s painful, and it’s correctable.**

Children and adults with learning or attention challenges are not broken. They don’t need to be fixed, but they do have some roadblocks to learning as easily and enjoyably as they could.

Roadblocks can be removed just as a stone can be taken out of a shoe. Neuroscience and decades of clinical evidence prove that the struggles associated with dyslexia and learning disabilities can be permanently changed. *Why isn’t everyone talking about it?*

**Take the Stone Out of the Shoe** explains why some bright children and teens struggle to learn and provides simple, practical tools for supporting them at home and in the classroom. Most importantly, it presents real solutions and the research behind them.

*Jill Stowell easily explains why some people in my life who are crazy talented struggle with simple tasks such as reading, writing and math. **Take the Stone Out of the Shoe** provides practical ideas for help AND follows up with how to apply them. Complex and confusing clinical concepts are broken down and explained with Jill’s gentle, approachable and straightforward style. I’ve already shared some of Jill’s brilliance.*

**Marna J. Meier LSSBB**

*Author of Everyday Miracles in the Classroom*