



## WORDS AND THEIR STORIES

# 'Stepping-Stone' Is a Way Up and Out

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And now, welcome to *Words and Their Stories*, from VOA Learning English. On this program we explore words and expressions in the English language.

Today we begin our story in nature.

Imagine you are walking in the woods, and you come to a little **creek**. You look over the water and spy some fat, ripe blackberries, wild grown, and ready for harvesting.

You can't believe your good luck to find your favorite fruit, free for the taking, just a few meters across the creek. But then you look down and realize you're wearing your favorite shoes. A walk through the water will ruin them! But you are also very, very, berry-hungry.

**Stepping-stones** are what you need. In a creek or river, stepping-stones are rocks with flat tops that sit above the water line. You can cross a creek by stepping from one rock top to another.

However, the term 'stepping-stone' is not only for creek-crossings. It is often used **figuratively**. A worker, for example, can use stepping-stones to reach a higher level or position in their company.

Let's say it is your dream is to become the chief financial officer of a profitable and powerful investment firm. Your first stepping-stone on that path might be admission to a respected university. After completing your studies, you step to another stone, maybe it's a job as a **teller** at a small bank. Some time later, the bank offers you a supervisory position. That **promotion** is a third stepping-stone. All of them are helping to make your dream come true.

Stepping-stones can be used to reach any kind of goal. But not every stepping-stone is a good place to land.

For example, some goal-seekers treat people as stepping-stones. And let's face it, most people do not enjoy being stepped on. They may be happy to provide a stepping-stone but usually do not want to serve as one.

Using someone as a stepping-stone could be seen as stealing help.

There is another way we use the term 'stepping-stone.' Stepping-stones can be parts of a process within a larger operation. For example, learning how to write **code** is a stepping-stone for many app developers.

Now, if your goal is to **master** the English Language, feel free to use any VOA Learning English stepping-stones on your path.

And that's all the time we have for this *Words and Their Stories*.

Until next time ... I'm Anna Matteo.

*Anna Matteo wrote this story for VOA Learning English. Katy Weaver was the editor.*

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## Words in This Story

**creek** – *n.* a small stream

**figuratively** – *adv.* in a figurative way : with a meaning that is different from the basic or literal meaning and that expresses an idea by using language that usually describes something else

**teller** – *n.* a member of a bank's staff concerned with the direct handling of money received or paid out

**promotion** – *n.* the act of moving someone to a higher or more important position or rank in an organization

**code** – *n.* to change (information) into a set of letters, numbers, or symbols that can be read by a computer

**master** – *v.* to learn (something) completely : to get the knowledge and skill that allows you to do, use, or understand (something) very well

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