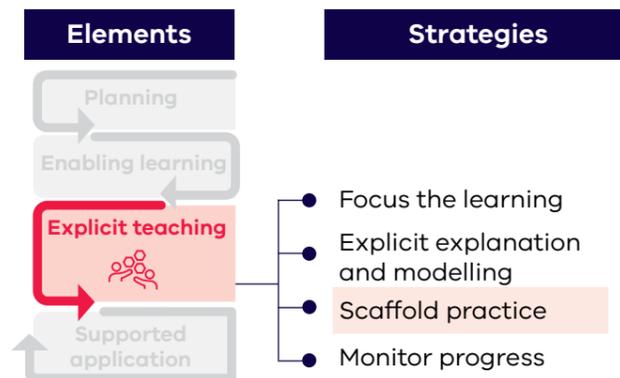# Scaffold practice

Scaffolding involves providing temporary supports to help students approach novel tasks. These supports can take the form of direct guidance from the teacher, or tools and resources that aid the learning process.

Teachers will plan scaffolds to support classroom instruction (I do, we do) and will also be prepared to provide additional scaffolds in response to student needs during the lesson. When teachers assess that learners are capable of managing independently (you do), they can gradually withdraw scaffolds. Through scaffolding, teachers create pathways for students to engage meaningfully with the learning.

Elements
- Planning
- Enabling learning
- Explicit teaching
- Supported application

Strategies
- Focus the learning
- Explicit explanation and modelling
- Scaffold practice
- Monitor progress

Key links to other guides
- **Collaboratively develop quality curriculum materials**
- **Prepare to teach students in your classroom**
- **Positive classroom management strategies**
- **Apply learning and build mastery**

Links to departmental initiatives
- **Diverse Learners Hub**
- **Phonics Plus**
- **Professional Learning Communities**
- **Student Excellence Program**
- **Victorian Lesson Plans**

References and further reading

arc.educationapps.vic.gov.au/learning/resource/77140

Practice 1 — **Identify, provide and fade supports**

Anticipate scaffolds to support learning

When teachers anticipate scaffolds, they consider the support students need to learn new concepts and skills, and to manage cognitive overload (Sweller et al. 2011). Tailoring scaffolds helps students to maintain a high level of success as they move towards independence (Rosenshine 2012; Archer and Hughes 2011).

HOW?
- Plan and develop scaffolds to model and explain new learning and to guide, monitor and extend practice.
- In developing scaffolds consider common misconceptions or difficulties that the whole class or groups of students may encounter.
- Identify scaffolds required to make the learning accessible to all students, including those with learning difficulties. E.g. providing some students with a printed copy of the worked example on the board.
- Be prepared to adjust scaffolds, or provide additional scaffolds, for students who need more support during the lesson. E.g. providing students with a counter to help them keep track of where they are up to on a number chart.

Use planned and responsive scaffolds

Planned

Point of need

All students can be supported to make progress in their learning and achieve success. Scaffolds can be planned or provided in response to student needs identified during a lesson. With scaffolds and adjustments to activity sequence, choice and task difficulty, students can work towards common learning objectives.

HOW?
- Use scaffolds during instruction, as well as guided and independent practice.
- Respond to evidence of student learning during guided or independent practice and be ready to use scaffolds to re-explain new learning or guide and monitor practice. E.g. add paragraph topics or topic sentences in an essay planner for students who require additional support.
- Consider students' different levels of readiness and capacity for new learning, and if further adjustments to scaffolds or task difficulty is required.
- Extend students who demonstrate early proficiency. E.g. when skip counting, direct students to begin from a non-zero starting point.

Reduce or remove scaffolds as students build proficiency

Reducing scaffolds involves the smooth transition from full teacher support to minimal guidance. This allows students to gain fluency and practise independently as they build proficiency.

HOW?
- Monitor student progress regularly to assess scaffold effectiveness.
- Adapt frequency, intensity and duration of scaffolds to support students progressing at different rates.
- Reduce or remove scaffolds as students build proficiency in the new learning.
- Provide increased opportunities for independent practice, problem-solving and decision making. E.g. in English, extend students who show readiness by asking them to plan their essay without the aid of the provided planner.

Practice 2 — **Use a range of scaffolds to help model and explain new learning**

Using scaffolds to model and explain new concepts helps to manage cognitive load and assists in making complex ideas accessible to students (Sweller et al. 2011).

HOW?

Techniques* to model and explain new learning include:
- worked examples
- example-problem pairs
- exemplars (high-quality work samples)
- concrete materials
- questions and dialogue
- writing scaffolds (e.g. sentence stems, sentence starters, visual prompts)
- graphic organisers
- vocabulary lists
- checklists.

Practice 3 — **Use a range of scaffolds to guide, monitor and extend student practice**

Teachers can adjust tasks by responsively introducing or removing scaffolds, and by making adjustments to task difficulty, sequence and choice. This supports students to work towards mastery and offers opportunities for support and extension.

HOW?

Techniques* to guide and monitor student practice include:
- discussion frames
- guided notes
- templates
- process worksheets
- adjustments to task sequence, choice and difficulty
- procedural prompts
- self-review prompts
- paired and collaborative tasks
- extending prompts to increase challenge.

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*Access additional information about these techniques at:
arc.educationapps.vic.gov.au/learning/sites/vtlmresources/2176/VTLM-20-Scaffold-Practice-Techniques