

How to Plan Scaffolds: English Language Arts (ELA)

Why use scaffolds?

Scaffolds allow all students to access grade-level content. At UnboundEd, we empower educators to address the predictability of student outcomes through evidence-informed, engaging, affirming, and meaningful grade-level — GLEAM™ instruction — so all students succeed academically. GLEAM instruction provides all students access to texts, tasks, and materials aligned with grade-appropriate college and career standards. For more information on GLEAM, see [What is GLEAM™ Instruction?](#)

What are scaffolds?

Scaffolds are evidence-based practices that provide students support for unfamiliar or challenging aspects of a lesson. Effective scaffolds:

- Help students manage cognitive load — by freeing up working memory for new learning
- Preserve grade-level rigor
- Are gradually removed as students build proficiency

To better understand how scaffolds and modifications differ, see [Supports vs. Modifications: What's the Difference?](#)

Use our How to Plan Scaffolds: English Language Arts (ELA) tool to plan just-in-time scaffolds to support individual students' access to grade-level learning.

How do you plan scaffolds?

This three-step process for planning scaffolds aligns with the characteristics of effective scaffolds.

Step 1 Determine which aspects of a task may challenge your students.

Step 2 Choose scaffolds and adapt your task.

Step 3 Review the impact of scaffolds.

Step 1 Determine which aspects of a task may challenge your students.

One way to analyze a task or text is to examine task construction and presentation. When considering task construction, think about the materials that you give students. When considering task presentation, consider how students will engage with the materials and each other. Then, look at the evidence you have from formative assessments, formal data, and your relationships with students. Look at the list below and choose one to three aspects that may challenge your students.

Task Construction	
Task construction scaffolds support students by altering the construction or structure of student tasks, texts, or materials.	<p>You can alter three elements of task construction to support student learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Abstraction: The degree of abstraction or concreteness a task entails<input type="checkbox"/> Complexity: The number of successive actions required to complete a task<input type="checkbox"/> Definition: The explicitness of the requirements or the solution process for a task

Task Presentation	
Task presentation scaffolds support students by altering how you present elements of the task, such as giving directions, grouping students, or interacting with the task on the page.	<p>You can alter three elements of task presentation to support student learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Familiarity: The amount of active background knowledge students can apply to a task<input type="checkbox"/> Independence: The amount of work students do on their own<input type="checkbox"/> Speed: The amount of time students have to complete a task

What evidence shows that these aspects will be challenging for your students?

Step 2 Choose scaffolds and adapt your task.

Based on the aspects of task construction and presentation and your understanding of student needs, determine the scaffold(s) you will use or want to have for just-in-time support.

ELA Examples of Task Construction Scaffolds

Abstraction	Complexity	Definition
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-annotate the text with a purpose for reading. <input type="checkbox"/> Draw students' attention to titles, subtitles, headings, and captions and how they connect to the meaning/purpose of the text. <input type="checkbox"/> Have students annotate signal words (first, next, however, but). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Chunk the text for reading. <input type="checkbox"/> Add line numbers to the text. <input type="checkbox"/> Chunk the text and use text-dependent questions focused on text structure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide a purpose for listening or reading focused on the text's meaning or purpose. <input type="checkbox"/> Implement common, consistent routines. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide hint cards that indicate the passage, line numbers, titles, or section headings relevant to the text's meaning or purpose.

ELA Examples of Task Presentation Scaffolds

Familiarity	Independence	Speed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Allow students to read text sets or articles and watch videos to build background on the topic before reading complex text. <input type="checkbox"/> Create a glossary for the text. <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-expose students to the text (audio, read-aloud, peer reading, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct a guided rereading with students who need more support. <input type="checkbox"/> Use peer reading strategies. <input type="checkbox"/> Allow students to listen to audio before or while reading. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Extend wait and think time. <input type="checkbox"/> Pause frequently for students to provide summaries, the gist, or big ideas.

Describe how you will use scaffolds to adapt your task.

Step 3 Review the impact of scaffolds.

Determine whether the implementation of your scaffold moved students toward grade-level standards or reduced the rigor of the task.

How did you ensure students did the majority of the thinking required of the grade-level work within the task?

What is your plan to gradually remove this scaffold?