

How to Plan Scaffolds: **Task Construction**

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 with 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 the differences between scaffolds and modifications, see [Supports vs. Modifications: What's the Difference?](#)

How Do You Plan Scaffolds?

This three-step process 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, consider the materials you provide to students. When considering task presentation, consider how students will engage with the materials and with one another. Then, look at the evidence you have from formative assessments, formal data, and your relationships with students. Review the list below and select one to three aspects that may pose challenges for your students.

Task Construction

Task construction scaffolds support students by modifying the construction or structure of student tasks, texts, or materials.

You can alter three elements of task construction to support student learning.

- Abstraction:** The degree of abstraction or concreteness a task entails
- Complexity:** The number of successive actions required to complete a task
- 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.

Learn more about elements of task presentation in our [full UnboundEd Planning Process programs](#).



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.

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).<input type="checkbox"/> Provide manipulatives alongside mathematical notation<input type="checkbox"/> Use visual organizers.<input type="checkbox"/> Use maps or illustrations alongside written sources.<input type="checkbox"/> Provide hands-on modeling before reading about abstract concepts.<input type="checkbox"/> Offer data collection templates.	<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.<input type="checkbox"/> Chunk multi-step math problems.<input type="checkbox"/> Provide guiding questions for document or textual analysis.<input type="checkbox"/> Break complex historical events into cause-and-effect chains.<input type="checkbox"/> Provide experimental observation guides.	<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.<input type="checkbox"/> Provide vocabulary banks.<input type="checkbox"/> Provide rubrics for open tasks.<input type="checkbox"/> Create lab procedure checklists.<input type="checkbox"/> Offer sentence starters.



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?