



THE SCAFFOLD TEST

Remove the supports to reveal real understanding.



THE IDEA

Scaffolds help EAL learners access learning, but the real goal is independence.

The scaffold test means gradually removing support to check what students can do on their own.

It helps you find the right balance – enough support to build confidence, but not so much that you hide what students really know.

It's a practical way to plan, teach and assess more fairly for all learners.



IN THE CLASSROOM

Start with high support (e.g. word bank, sentence frames, model).

Gradually remove support step by step.

Check at each stage how confidently students can complete the task.

Use the process for classwork, homework and assessments.

Adjust the level of support based on individual needs.

THE 3 STEPS

1



SCAFFOLD

Provide supported practice.

Use useful scaffolds (e.g. word bank, sentence frames, prompts, model answers, visuals). Make the task clear and accessible.

Check students understand what to do.

"I can start with ..."

"These words can help me ..."

"Here is an example ..."

2



REMOVE

Reduce the support.

Remove one scaffold at a time.

Encourage students to rely more on their own knowledge and language.

Give time to think, talk and try.

"Now I can try without ..."

"What else can I use?"

"I'm becoming more independent ..."

3



CHECK

Assess real understanding.

Ask students to complete the task with minimal or no scaffolds.

Look at what they can do independently.

Use the results to plan next steps.

"I can do this on my own."

"I know what to do."

"I can use the language I've learnt."



WHY IT WORKS

- Builds confidence and independence.
- Shows what students really know.
- Helps you plan the right level of support.
- Encourages progress over time.
- Works for all learners, not just EAL students.



EAL UPGRADE

- Use a scaffold ladder for key tasks.
- Provide models and worked examples.
- Gradually remove support over time.
- Encourage self-assessment at each stage.
- Use scaffold testing for essays, reports, problem-solving and exams.



TRY IT TOMORROW

- Choose a task you already use.
- Create three versions: high, medium and low support.
- Ask students to complete each version.
- Compare the results.
- Use what you learn to adjust support next time.



TEACHER LANGUAGE

"Let's try this with some support first."
"Now let's see what you can do without the word bank."
"Which parts were easy?"
"Which were harder?"
"You're getting more independent."
"What do you still need help with?"