

The Scaffold Test

Check whether a scaffold enables independent performance.

5 min preparation | Science, Maths and Humanities

Before the lesson

Choose an existing scaffold and identify the independent performance it is meant to enable.

Teach it in four steps

1. State the intended learning, separate from completing the scaffold.
2. Use the support with one example and check its value.
3. Try a fresh example with one part of the support removed.
4. Restore only the support needed, or fade it further if independence holds.

Worked classroom example

Science: after a cause-and-effect frame, give a new result and retain only because. Then check whether the explanation still names the mechanism.

Teacher prompt: "Which detail supports your explanation? Show me how you know."

Check understanding

Compare supported and less-supported responses for meaning, not just fluency.

Fade the support

Remove one component at a time and judge from a new response.

Adapt it across subjects

Maths: remove worked steps while retaining the problem representation.

Humanities: remove argument headings after checking paragraph structure.

Adjust the language support

A1-A2 access: keep the subject goal; use visuals, a small word bank, pointing or drawing and partner rehearsal. Use a home language to establish meaning where helpful.

B1-B2 extension: ask for fuller explanations, precise subject vocabulary and qualifications. Reduce sentence openings when learners can organise the response independently.

These are starting points, not placement rules. Judge support from the learner's response to this task; proficiency can differ across skills.