

SCAFFOLDS THAT CAN GRADUALLY BE REMOVED

Temporary support that builds visible independence

RESOURCE	08 - Differentiation and inclusion
SUBJECTS	Fine Art, Photography and Graphic Communication
LEVELS	GCSE and A Level
INCLUDES	Five-level framework, fade planner, process scaffolds, subject pathways and review record
FORMATS	Editable Microsoft Word and print-ready A4 PDF
PRINT	White background; suitable for colour or greyscale printing

Purpose

Give students enough visual, verbal or written support to enter a demanding Art & Design task, then remove that support in planned steps as they show that they can select, act, monitor and reflect for themselves.

KEY PRINCIPLE Remove the scaffold, not the challenge. The student's intention, choices and creative decisions must remain their own.

Temporary support with a planned exit

A scaffold is useful when it helps a student do something they cannot yet do independently. It becomes unhelpful when it stays in place by habit, completes the thinking for the learner or quietly lowers expectations.

A practical classroom cycle

- Identify the precise barrier: knowledge, language, memory, organisation, technique, confidence or self-monitoring.
- Choose the smallest support that makes the next successful action possible.
- Tell the student what the scaffold is helping them learn to do independently.
- Watch for visible evidence across more than one attempt or context.
- Remove one feature, check what happens and restore or adapt support if the demand changes.

Keep expectations high

Support access to the process without selecting the student's theme, artist, image, material, composition or final answer. A shorter prompt or visual model can reduce avoidable load while the conceptual and creative demand remains ambitious.

NOT A FIXED LADDER Students may need different levels of support for different processes. Movement may pause, reverse or restart after absence, a new technique or a more complex task.

Diagnose before you support

Use observation and a brief conversation. The same behaviour - such as not starting - can have different causes and therefore needs different support.

KNOWLEDGE	Reteach or model the missing idea or process; do not rely on a prompt alone.
LANGUAGE	Pair key words with images, examples or spoken rehearsal; retain the subject thinking.
MEMORY	Reduce what must be held in mind with one visible step, sequence or checklist.
ORGANISATION	Show the next action, required materials and a clear finish point.
TECHNIQUE	Demonstrate, narrate the decision points, then provide guided practice.
IDEA GENERATION	Offer a method or constraint, not a teacher-selected solution.
SELF-MONITORING	Use a short review question and a planned check point.

Three checks

- Can the student explain the task in their own words?
- Can they begin the first meaningful action without an adult deciding it?
- Can they recognise or show what successful progress looks like?

START LIGHT Invite self-scaffolding first. Increase support only when the student cannot proceed successfully.

Model - Guide - Prompt - Check - Independent

This continuum supports planning; it is not a label for the learner. Remove one feature at a time and judge readiness from evidence, not speed or confidence alone.

LEVEL	TEACHER PROVIDES	STUDENT DOES	MOVE ON WHEN
1 MODEL	Demonstrate and think aloud. Show the sequence and criteria.	Watches, notices decisions and explains what happened.	Can identify the key decisions and repeat part with guidance.
2 GUIDE	Provide steps, choices or a partly completed example. Ask questions.	Completes a similar task while making bounded choices.	Can continue after the teacher withdraws from the task.
3 PROMPT	Offer a short cue, visual reminder, word bank or one question.	Selects and applies a known strategy with the cue.	Begins to use the strategy before or without the cue.
4 CHECK	Agree a goal and review point; avoid intervening between them.	Plans, acts and brings evidence for a brief check.	Can notice a problem, adjust and explain the decision.
5 INDEPENDENT	Make normal teaching resources available; respond to purposeful requests.	Chooses tools, monitors progress and evaluates the result.	Transfers the strategy to a new task or context.

The rule for moving

FADE ONE THING Reduce the prompt, example, number of choices, frequency of checks or adult proximity - not all of them at once.

Record what the student could do, what was removed and what happened next. If performance drops because the task has changed, add only the support now required.

Define the independent behaviour

A vague aim such as 'be more independent' is difficult to observe. Describe a specific behaviour in a specific Art & Design context.

PROCESS OR TASK	<i>For example: annotate a material test; plan a shoot; compare two layouts.</i> _____
WHAT THE STUDENT CAN DO NOW	<i>Record what happens without extra prompting. Include strengths.</i> _____
PRECISE BARRIER	<i>What prevents the next successful action? Avoid fixed ability labels.</i> _____
INDEPENDENT BEHAVIOUR	<i>What will the student select, do, monitor or explain for themselves?</i> _____
VISIBLE EVIDENCE	<i>What page, image, test, explanation or repeated behaviour will show this?</i> _____
CURRENT SUPPORT	<i>What visual, verbal or written scaffold is already being used?</i> _____

Readiness test

The student demonstrates the behaviour on more than one occasion, can explain the strategy used and can begin to transfer it to a similar task.

AVOID Do not remove an accessibility adjustment that remains necessary. Fade the instructional scaffold that is no longer needed.

Plan the support and its exit together

Complete this briefly before a sequence of lessons. The editable Word version can be duplicated for individuals, groups or a whole-class routine.

LEARNING GOAL	<i>What demanding subject knowledge, skill or habit is being developed?</i> _____
SMALLEST USEFUL SCAFFOLD	<i>What exact support will enable successful participation?</i> _____
STUDENT CHOICES PROTECTED	<i>Which creative and conceptual decisions remain entirely with the student?</i> _____
FIRST FEATURE TO REMOVE	<i>Prompt wording, visual example, choice list, check frequency or adult proximity?</i> _____
EVIDENCE FOR REMOVAL	<i>What will I see, hear or collect before fading?</i> _____
REVIEW POINT	<i>When will support be reduced, retained, adapted or restored?</i> _____
TRANSFER OPPORTUNITY	<i>Where will the student try the same strategy in a new context?</i> _____

ASK THE STUDENT Which part of this support still helps you, and which part are you ready to try without?

From modelled test to independent decision

Example task: compare ways of creating contrast, then select and refine the approach that best serves an intention. Keep the intention open so the scaffold does not prescribe the artwork.

1 MODEL Teacher makes one sample and narrates: variable changed, effect noticed, evidence recorded.	2 COMPLETE Student finishes a partly prepared comparison and chooses the second variable to test.	3 PROMPT Card reads: change one thing; keep one thing; compare; decide; explain.	4 INDEPENDENT Student defines the question, controls variables, records evidence and selects the next refinement.
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What is removed each time?

- Remove the teacher's worked material, but retain the comparison structure.
- Remove the partly completed layout, but retain the short process prompt.
- Remove the prompt, but retain an agreed review point.
- At independence, ask for the student's own success criteria and next question.

EVIDENCE OF A DECISION	HOW THE STRATEGY TRANSFERRED
IF THE STUDENT STALLS Diagnose the new barrier. Reintroduce only the missing support rather than returning automatically to the full model.	

Annotation: fade from frame to self-questioning

Support the thinking and language needed to explain visible evidence. Do not require lengthy writing when a concise, precise annotation, recorded discussion or labelled image better shows understanding.

LEVEL	TEACHER PROVIDES	STUDENT DOES	MOVE ON WHEN
1 MODEL	Think aloud beside a real test: notice, effect, reason, next action.	Identifies the evidence used in the model.	Can say what each part of the annotation does.
2 GUIDE	Provide four labelled boxes and a small vocabulary bank.	Completes the boxes using their own work and decisions.	Selects relevant words and avoids copying the model.
3 PROMPT	Provide: What? So what? Why? Next?	Writes, speaks or records a connected response.	Uses evidence and reaches a purposeful next action.
4 CHECK	Agree one annotation target and return later.	Chooses what needs explaining and completes it unaided.	Can identify weak or repetitive annotation.
5 INDEPENDENT	Make reference sheets optional.	Selects when, where and how annotation adds value.	Annotation consistently informs development.

Prompt that remains useful

STUDENT SELF-PROMPT What is the evidence, what does it show, and what will I do because of it?

Evidence before fading

Look for precise reference to the student's image, material, process or decision; a reasoned interpretation; and a next action that changes the work.

EVIDENCE I SAW	SUPPORT I WILL REMOVE NEXT
_____	_____

Artist and source research: fade from model to enquiry

Help students move from biography and description towards relevant investigation, practical response and personal development.

LEVEL	TEACHER PROVIDES	STUDENT DOES	MOVE ON WHEN
1 MODEL	Compare source and detail; model one analytical observation and a practical question.	Notices how evidence leads to an interpretation.	Can distinguish description from analysis.
2 GUIDE	Provide prompts for choice, effect, context, relevance and practical test.	Selects useful evidence and links it to an intention.	Responses are specific rather than copied facts.
3 PROMPT	Provide: Why this source? Which choice? What can I test?	Creates a focused research page and practical response.	Research visibly alters a project decision.
4 CHECK	Agree the research question and evidence to bring.	Selects sources, asks questions and evaluates relevance.	Rejects weak sources and justifies selection.
5 INDEPENDENT	Offer normal access to reference material.	Sustains a personal line of enquiry across sources.	Transfers insight without imitating a solution.

Prompt that remains useful

STUDENT SELF-PROMPT Why is this source useful to my intention, and what will I test because of it?

Evidence before fading

Look for purposeful source selection, evidence-led analysis, a practical or conceptual response and a visible consequence for the student's own work.

EVIDENCE I SAW	SUPPORT I WILL REMOVE NEXT

Idea generation: fade the method, protect ownership

When students struggle to generate ideas, scaffold a repeatable method: collect, connect, vary, test and select. Avoid supplying a finished concept for them.

LEVEL	TEACHER PROVIDES	STUDENT DOES	MOVE ON WHEN
1 MODEL	Demonstrate combining two neutral inputs and changing one variable several ways.	Names the operations used, not a project answer.	Can repeat the operations with different inputs.
2 GUIDE	Offer categories or constraints: crop, scale, repeat, remove, combine, reverse.	Makes several distinct possibilities from self-selected material.	Moves beyond the first obvious option.
3 PROMPT	Provide three verbs or a small random-choice card.	Chooses a method and produces quick alternatives.	Can explain which method helped and why.
4 CHECK	Agree a quantity and criteria, not the content.	Generates, compares and selects without adult suggestions.	Can continue after an unpromising first idea.
5 INDEPENDENT	Keep methods available as optional tools.	Defines their own problem, constraints and selection criteria.	Transfers the strategy to a new starting point.

Prompt that remains useful

STUDENT SELF-PROMPT What can I collect, connect, change and test before I decide?

Evidence before fading

Look for genuinely different possibilities, ownership of source material, reasons for selection and evidence that the student can restart the process when stuck.

EVIDENCE I SAW	SUPPORT I WILL REMOVE NEXT

Experimentation: fade from recipe to purposeful test

Technique instructions may remain available for safety. Fade the instructional support around choosing variables, recording effects and using results to refine ideas.

LEVEL	TEACHER PROVIDES	STUDENT DOES	MOVE ON WHEN
1 MODEL	Demonstrate safely; narrate purpose, variable, observation and decision.	Identifies what changed and what remained constant.	Can repeat a safe core technique.
2 GUIDE	Provide a test grid with one variable already chosen.	Selects another variable and completes a comparison.	Records differences rather than just liking a result.
3 PROMPT	Provide: question - change - compare - choose - refine.	Designs and records a purposeful small test.	Uses a result to plan the next test.
4 CHECK	Agree the technical or visual question and review point.	Selects resources and evaluates evidence unaided.	Can recover productively from an unexpected result.
5 INDEPENDENT	Provide equipment, safety guidance and normal references.	Sustains iterative testing and purposeful selection.	Experiments change the direction or quality of work.

Prompt that remains useful

STUDENT SELF-PROMPT What question will this test answer, and what will I compare?

Evidence before fading

Look for safe practice, control of variables where useful, honest recording of unsuccessful results and a justified decision based on the comparison.

EVIDENCE I SAW	SUPPORT I WILL REMOVE NEXT

Review and refinement: fade from feedback to self-monitoring

The aim is not for the student to guess what the teacher prefers. Build the habit of comparing intention, evidence and criteria before choosing a purposeful change.

LEVEL	TEACHER PROVIDES	STUDENT DOES	MOVE ON WHEN
1 MODEL	Think aloud: intention, evidence, strength, problem, possible action.	Points to evidence and notices how the decision was reached.	Can identify the review sequence.
2 GUIDE	Provide two strengths, one question and two possible actions to evaluate.	Uses evidence to accept, adapt or reject a suggestion.	Can justify the selected action.
3 PROMPT	Provide: keep - change - test - check.	Chooses one purposeful refinement and records its reason.	Can distinguish refinement from restarting.
4 CHECK	Agree criteria and a review time, then step back.	Monitors progress and brings before-and-after evidence.	Notifies and responds to a problem independently.
5 INDEPENDENT	Offer critique by request or normal class routine.	Sets criteria, seeks useful feedback and makes final judgements.	Can explain what was refined and why.

Prompt that remains useful

STUDENT SELF-PROMPT What should I keep, change or test - and what evidence supports that decision?

Evidence before fading

Look for before-and-after evidence, a clear link to intention, selective use of feedback and a reasoned judgement about whether the change improved the work.

EVIDENCE I SAW	SUPPORT I WILL REMOVE NEXT

Fine Art: fade support through practice

Use the continuum with drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, mixed media, installation and related practice. Safety demonstrations and necessary access arrangements remain in place.

LEVEL	TEACHER PROVIDES	STUDENT DOES	VISIBLE EVIDENCE
1 MODEL	Demonstrate a process and narrate choices about mark, surface, form or composition.	Observes cause and effect; repeats a safe core action.	Can name the decisions, not merely the steps.
2 GUIDE	Offer a small test format and bounded material or compositional choices.	Makes related trials using self-selected subject matter.	Trials show deliberate variation.
3 PROMPT	Use visual cues: vary scale, tool, pressure, crop, layer or removal.	Chooses cues that serve their intention.	Explains why one test is more useful.
4 CHECK	Agree intention, criteria and a review point.	Plans, makes and refines without ongoing adult direction.	Brings evidence of an independent change.
5 INDEPENDENT	Maintain access to equipment, safety information and reference materials.	Sustains a personal process and resolves presentation decisions.	Transfers learning to new media or scale.

KEEP THE DECISION WITH THE STUDENT The scaffold may structure testing, but it must not prescribe the subject, composition, material meaning or final visual solution.

Short review

WHAT CAN THE STUDENT NOW DO?	WHAT IS THE NEXT LIGHTER SUPPORT?

Photography: fade support through practice

Fade support across planning, shooting, selecting, editing, sequencing and presentation. Retain safeguarding, consent, copyright and equipment guidance where required.

LEVEL	TEACHER PROVIDES	STUDENT DOES	VISIBLE EVIDENCE
1 MODEL	Demonstrate camera or editing decisions and narrate viewpoint, light, timing and selection.	Identifies how a setting or framing choice changes meaning.	Can reproduce the safe technical action.
2 GUIDE	Provide a short shot plan or contact-sheet comparison frame.	Chooses subject, setting and variables; records a sequence.	Images show purposeful rather than accidental change.
3 PROMPT	Use: viewpoint - frame - light - moment - edit - sequence.	Selects only the cues relevant to the intention.	Edits and selections are justified from evidence.
4 CHECK	Agree the photographic question and proof to review.	Plans, makes, selects and re-shoots independently.	Identifies a problem before teacher feedback.
5 INDEPENDENT	Provide normal technical and ethical references.	Sustains an enquiry and resolves format and presentation.	Transfers decisions across shoot or context.

KEEP THE DECISION WITH THE STUDENT Do not choose the image or edit for the student. Use contact-sheet evidence and real-size proofs to support their own judgement.

Short review

WHAT CAN THE STUDENT NOW DO?	WHAT IS THE NEXT LIGHTER SUPPORT?

Graphic Communication: fade support through practice

Fade support across interpreting a brief, researching audience, generating concepts, testing hierarchy and type, producing proofs and evaluating function.

LEVEL	TEACHER PROVIDES	STUDENT DOES	VISIBLE EVIDENCE
1 MODEL	Demonstrate reading a brief and narrate audience, message, hierarchy and constraint decisions.	Identifies which choice solves which part of the brief.	Can explain purpose before style.
2 GUIDE	Provide a layout grid, thumbnail frame or controlled choice set.	Creates alternatives with self-selected content and imagery.	Alternatives communicate differently.
3 PROMPT	Use: audience - message - hierarchy - type - image - proof.	Selects cues and tests at the intended scale or format.	Can justify a design decision functionally.
4 CHECK	Agree success criteria and proofing point.	Develops, tests and revises without live teacher direction.	Finds and fixes a communication problem.
5 INDEPENDENT	Maintain access to production and accessibility references.	Manages a coherent design process and presentation.	Transfers the system across applications.

KEEP THE DECISION WITH THE STUDENT A template may organise the process, but the student's concept, imagery, type and visual system must remain a personal response to the brief.

Short review

WHAT CAN THE STUDENT NOW DO?	WHAT IS THE NEXT LIGHTER SUPPORT?

Choose the least help you need

Start at the lightest level that lets you continue successfully. You can ask for more help. The aim is to learn a strategy you can use for yourself, not to struggle in silence.

TRY FIRST	Pause. Look back at your intention, evidence and previous successful strategy.
ASK FOR A PROMPT	Request one question, visual cue, key word or reminder.
ASK FOR A CLUE	Request a narrowed choice or the first part of the process.
ASK FOR A MODEL	Watch one example while the teacher explains the decisions.
TRY AGAIN	Complete a similar part using your own idea, image, material or solution.

My self-scaffolding routine

1 NAME What am I trying to do?	2 RECALL What helped on a similar task?	3 CHOOSE What is the smallest help I need?	4 REVIEW What can I now do without it?
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Today

THE HELP I CHOSE 	THE PART I DID FOR MYSELF
ACCESSIBLE OPTIONS You may read, listen, speak, point, draw, demonstrate, photograph or write when that form shows the intended learning.	

Record what changed when support was reduced

Use this as a short teacher-student review. Base the decision on visible behaviour and work, not a fixed label or a single successful attempt.

TASK AND DATE	<i>What was the student doing?</i> _____
STARTING SCAFFOLD	<i>What visual, verbal or written support was available?</i> _____
FEATURE REMOVED	<i>What one element was reduced or withdrawn?</i> _____
WHAT THE STUDENT DID	<i>Record observable action, decision, monitoring or explanation.</i> _____
EVIDENCE	<i>Identify the page, image, file, test, discussion or repeated behaviour.</i> _____
DECISION	<i>Remove further / retain / adapt / restore temporarily - and why?</i> _____
TRANSFER	<i>Where will the student try the strategy next?</i> _____

Student voice

WHAT STILL HELPS ME _____	WHAT I AM READY TO TRY ALONE _____
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REVIEW AGAIN A new task can create a new barrier. Reassessment is responsive teaching, not failure.

Use this resource with professional judgement

This independent pack translates broad evidence-informed scaffolding principles into Art & Design classroom tools. It is not an official examination-board document and does not replace a student's normal access arrangements, a centre's policies or the current specification.

Further guidance

Education Endowment Foundation: Scaffolding - more than just a worksheet; What goes up, must come down: Promoting pupil independence through scaffolding; Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning; and Five evidence-based strategies to support high-quality teaching for pupils with SEND - educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk

AQA: current GCSE and A Level Art & Design specifications and schemes of assessment, including the four assessment objectives and expectations for independent, personal and meaningful responses - aqa.org.uk

Specification note

The AO references are included only to help teachers connect scaffolding to common Art & Design processes. Check the current wording, authentication requirements, access arrangements and assessment guidance for your own board, course and centre.

Classroom-use notice

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WEBSITE Find further GCSE and A Level Art & Design guidance at portfoliotoastar.co.uk.