The Writing Center

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO
DENVER | ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

Scaffolding and Sequencing Writing Assignments

Scaffolding is the process of breaking down a larger writing assignment into smaller assignments that focus on the skills or types of knowledge students require to successfully complete the larger assignment. Sequencing is the process of arranging the scaffolded assignments into an order that builds towards the larger writing assignment. This process enables efficient and engaged student learning by allowing faculty to more effectively teach concepts and assignments.

Benefits of Scaffolding and Sequencing
- For Students: Presents writing assignments as integrated activities; aligns writing with course goals; creates discrete, manageable cognitive tasks; prepares students to think as the larger assignment requires.

- For Faculty: Allows for frequent intervention and guidance; uses response time more effectively; facilitates student familiarity with the final draft; enables quicker and more efficient grading.

Scaffolding and Sequencing
To effectively scaffold and sequence writing assignments, first identify the knowledge and skills needed to complete the final writing assignment; then create a process for students to follow and present it through a sequence of shorter assignments. This method can be broken into five steps:

1. Establish a final writing assignment

2. Identify what course-specific knowledge is needed to complete final assignment

3. Identify what skills (2-3 verbs – See Bloom's Taxonomy on p. 4) are needed to complete final assignment

4. Identify the needed skills sequence (2-3 verbs) by tracing the verbs backward through Bloom's Taxonomy. Identify 2-3 additional skills/verbs that are needed to accomplish each of the original skills/verbs (from Step 3)

5. Create an assignment sequence that focuses on and teaches the individual skills and types of knowledge identified. Sequence assignments in an order that builds off of the skills from the preceding assignment

Scaffolding and Sequencing: Example
Class: Social Psychology 2462

1. Final Writing Assignment
    - 4-5 page paper that a) identifies both a long-term problem of sustainability and a possible solution, b) analyzes the solution, and c) synthesizes the problem and solution in order to demonstrate the best practice for implementation

2. Knowledge Required
    - Basic concepts of social psychology
    - Understanding of sustainability problems
    - Knowledge of pros and cons for solutions to sustainability problems

3. Skills
    - Ability to identify the problem and solution
    - Ability to analyze solution implementation
    - Ability to synthesize solution with problem

4. Skills Sequence
    - Identify = Choose and Define
        o Define = State
    - Analyze = Indicate and Demonstrate
        o Indicate = Choose
        o Demonstrate = Explain and Discuss
    - Synthesize = Relate, Critique and Draw
        o Relate = Show
        o Critique = Apply and Describe
        o Draw = Interpret

5. Assignments Sequence
    - Sequence 1
        o **Pre-assignment 1.1**: Choose a concept of social psychology discussed in Chapter 2 and state it in your own words.

        o **Paper 1**: Identify two concepts of social psychology discussed in Chapter 2. Define the importance of these concepts in relation to sustainability.

    - Sequence 2
        o **Pre-assignment 2.1**: Identify a long-term problem of sustainability (Chapter 5). Explain the significance of this problem.

        o **Pre-assignment 2.2**: Using the long-term problem of sustainability identified in Pre-assignment 2.1, indicate the impacts of the problem on a specific population or area. Discuss the three most significant / dangerous impacts.

- o **Paper 2**: <u>Demonstrate</u> why one impact (from Pre-assignment 2.2) is more significant / dangerous than the other impacts. Then, <u>analyze</u> the problem's long-term impact on sustainability in relation to the population selected.

- Sequence 3
  - o **Pre-assignment 3.1**: <u>Identify</u> two potential solutions for the long-term problem of sustainability identified in Paper 2. <u>Apply</u> the solutions to the identified problem.

  - o **Pre-assignment 3.2**: <u>Describe</u> one of the theories of sustainability (Chapter 7) to the two identified solutions from Pre-assignment 3.1. <u>Interpret</u> both of the solutions for their effectiveness to solve the sustainability problem.

  - o **Paper 3**: <u>Show</u> how the solutions positively affect the identified population. <u>Draw</u> larger conclusions as to the feasibility of these solutions.

- Sequence 4
  - o **Pre-assignment 4.1**: <u>Critique</u> two long-term problems of sustainability (Chapter 9). <u>Relate</u> the problems to your specific population.

  - o **Paper 4**: <u>Identify</u> both a long-term problem of sustainability and a possible solution. <u>Analyze</u> the solution, and <u>synthesize</u> the problem and solution in order to demonstrate the best practice for implementation.

For further information on related concepts, please see the following handouts:
- Creating Effective Rubrics
- Evaluating Student Writing

Bloom's Taxonomy

Scaffolding Skills

Chart moves from easier skills, located at the top, to harder skills, located at the bottom. Each of the categories presupposes that the student understands all the skills in the categories above it.

Category	Generic Skills	Sample Verbs
Remembering **Recalling information**	The learner is able to recall, restate and remember learned information.	Choose, Cite, Enumerate, Group, Label, List, Listen, Locate, Match, Memorize, Name, Outline, Quote, Read, Recall, Recite, Record, Relate, Repeat, Reproduce, Review, Select, Show, Sort, State, Underline, Write
Understanding **Explaining ideas or concepts**	The learner grasps the meaning of information by interpreting and translating what has been learned.	Account for, Annotate, Associate, Classify, Convert, Define, Describe, Discuss, Estimate, Explain, Express, Identify, Indicate, Interpret, Observe, Outline, Recognize, Reorganize, Report, Research, Restate, Retell, Review, Translate
Applying **Using information in another familiar situation**	The learner makes use of information in a new situation from the one in which it was learned.	Adapt, Apply, Calculate, Change, Collect, Compute, Construct, Demonstrate, Dramatize, Draw, Exhibit, Generalize, Illustrate, Interpret, Interview, Make, Manipulate, Operate, Paint, Practice, Sequence, Show, Sketch, Solve, Translate
Analyzing **(Critical Thinking)** **Breaking information into parts to explore understandings and relationships**	The learner breaks learned information into its parts to best understand that information in an attempt to identify evidence for a conclusion.	Analyze, Appraise, Arrange, Calculate, Categorize, Compare, Contrast, Criticize, Debate, Detect, Diagram, Discriminate, Dissect, Distinguish, Examine, Experiment, Group, Infer, Inquire, Inspect, Investigate, Order, Probe, Question, Relate, Research, Scrutinize, Separate, Sequence, Sift, Subdivide, Summarize, Survey, Test
Evaluating **(Critical Thinking)** **Justifying a decision or course of action**	The learner makes decisions based on in-depth reflection, criticism and assessment.	Appraise, Argue, Assess, Choose, Compare, Conclude, Criticize, Critique, Debate, Decide, Deduce, Defend, Determine, Differentiate, Discriminate, Evaluate, Infer, Judge, Justify, Measure, Predict, Prioritize, Probe, Rank, Rate, Recommend, Revise, Score, Select, Validate, Value
Creating **(Critical Thinking)** **Generating new ideas, products, or ways of viewing things**	The learner creates new ideas and information using what has been previously learned.	Act, Assemble, Blend, Combine, Compile, Compose, Concoct, Construct, Create, Design, Develop, Devise, Formulate, Forecast, Generate, Hypothesize, Imagine, Invent, Organize, Originate, Predict, Plan, Prepare, Propose, Produce, Set up