

## 4. SCAFFOLDING FORMAL ASSIGNMENTS

**Scaffolding:** Facilitating the climb from one complex phase to the next slightly more complex phase of a project.

### Why?

- Breaks up the cognitive task into smaller, more manageable tasks
- Allows for more intervention when it's useful
- Fosters global revision—revision in one's understanding of the subject matter
- Shows more clearly the relationship between in-class and out-of-class work

**How?** By working backwards from the assignment itself:

1. List the cognitive skills required to complete an assignment.
2. List what content knowledge students must understand before they can say something of their own about it or apply that knowledge to a new situation.
3. Work smaller assignments into the course that will prepare students to think in the ways the assignment requires and that reinforces the materials and content they need to complete an assignment.

### Ways to Accomplish This:

1. Informal writing assignments sequenced throughout the semester or part of the semester
2. Prewriting activities/Write-to-Learn activities
3. Staging the assignment itself into sub-topics or “chunks” that will eventually be put together
4. A combination of 1-3

### Four Types of Scaffolding

1. Writing Skills: Practice skills or strategies which usually don't make up a paper in and of themselves (e.g., outlining the background of a problem, defining a position) but are key implicit or explicit components of the final paper.
2. Context-Based: Journal entries focused on exploring the content of the assignment.
3. Rhetorical Skills: Practice in the aspects of the rhetorical situation and how changing the situation changes writing (e.g., audience analysis or adaptation exercises).
4. Text-based: Closer to prewriting; journal entries which help the reader interact with a text more incisively, providing ideas for the reader-turned-writer.