Scaffolding involves providing temporary support for a child during a task to adjust the level of challenge.

You might help a child with the parts they can't yet manage alone, or make a simpler task more challenging.

Effective scaffolding follows the "Goldilocks principle": you offer just the right amount of support, not too much and not too little.

Effective scaffolding depends on:

- Shared attention: you and the child are focussing together on the same thing

- Knowing the child well: you know what they can and can't do, and how to help them if they get frustrated or switched off

- The child knowing what the end goal is, and how to be successful

- Your positivity and warmth: encouraging the child to believe 'I can do this'

When there are too many options, children might become overwhelmed. Suggesting a couple of choices can be helpful.

By reducing the range of options and offering feedback, you can help children to focus on what they can do and achieve their end goal.

The STAIRS model can guide you when scaffolding a child's learning.

S — Sharing attention

- Get down to the child's level and make sure you're focused on the same thing

T — Thriving together

- Relax and enjoy the activity together
- Give the child time to think and respond
- Let the child try different approaches before you offer help
- Share the positivity: 'you can do this'

A — Avoiding frustration

- If the activity is too hard, simplify it so you know the child can do it
- Encourage the child to try new or challenging things
- Gently take over and do things that are too hard for the child right now

I — Important features need highlighting

- Talk together to highlight the most important parts of the activity
- Make sure the child knows the end-goal
- Reduce distractions

R — Reviewing progress

- Help the child reflect on how they're doing and respond positively to their efforts
- Use feedback sensitively to highlight if the child has gone wrong, so they can have another try
- Demonstrate a step towards the end goal, if the child is finding it too difficult

S — Self-motivation

- Encourage the child to do as much as they can
- Step back when you can, to avoid dependence
- Remember the 'Goldilocks principle': offer just the right amount of support, not too much and not too little