Scaffolding is a way to guide students gradually toward a better understanding of a topic. The goal is that they will eventually become independent and be able to solve the problem on their own. By taking progressive steps towards independence you avoid overwhelming students, and by involving them in the learning process you avoid editing their papers for them.

Use scaffolding when the error is rule-based and has a lot of examples to reference. For grammar this may include verb tense, verb agreement, word form, articles, and prepositions, though there are exceptions in grammar that must be memorized and can’t be taught through scaffolding.

There are 5 major steps to scaffolding when working with a student on a paper:
1. Identify the common errors and choose one to work on
2. Provide the student with the rule and examples of how to correct the error
3. Work together on one example from the student’s paper
4. Identify another example of the error in the student’s paper and have her/him correct it on their own
5. Ask the student to find similar errors in a sentence or paragraph

Example (coordination/subordination):
1. After having the student read a paragraph out loud you’ve noticed that they’ve made several mistakes when combining clauses.
2. Using the CLAS handout you discuss the rules for coordination and subordination (make sure the student understands terms like dependent and independent clauses), giving examples of each. Ideally use correct examples from the student’s own paper.
3. Find one example of the error in the student’s paper and correct it with the student, asking questions and referring to the handout as necessary.
   a. “In this sentence, is this clause dependent or independent? What about this one? So, should you use coordination or subordination? What conjunction do you think would work best?”
4. Find another example and have them correct it on their own.
   a. “Okay, here’s another example. How do you think you can fix it?”
5. Have the student read through the rest of the paragraph and ask them to try and find the rest of the errors.
   a. “Do you see any other errors like this in this paragraph?”

Tips:
- If a student is unable to complete a step, return to the previous step before moving on. Go slow, giving students time to work through each step.
- It may be time-intensive, so only focus on a few error types in a single sitting.
- Make sure to set expectations with the student ahead of time so they don’t anticipate having their whole paper edited.
- Become familiar with common errors so you can more easily identify them.
- Be encouraging. Point out things they’re doing correctly.