

The Slowest Step

Eight activities

Activity 1: Remember the story

1. What went wrong on last year's packing night, and why were the bags slow despite everyone being busy?
2. What do Tzali's timing experiments show, and what is the slowest step?
3. Describe the line he designs. Why six boys on ribbons?
4. What happens twice on packing night, and how does Tzali respond each time?

Activity 2: Fact or guess

1. Last year's packing night finished in thirty-five minutes. Fact / Guess
2. The whole-bag teams beat the line in the ten-minute test. Fact / Guess
3. Tzali moves his two slowest ribbon boys to the food table. Fact / Guess
4. Tzali fills more bags than anyone else on packing night. Fact / Guess

Activity 3: Think and write

1. "We were all busy. The bags were not." Explain the difference, using last year's room.
2. The senior says chessed isn't a factory. Give Tzali's two answers, and say why the second is stronger.
3. "The pile tells you the truth." What does the pile tell you that people don't?

Activity 4: Apply it - Minka's breakfast line

1. Minka runs the seminary's Rosh Chodesh breakfast setup: drinks, plates, food, and the fruit-cutting that takes four times longer than everything else. (a) Where do the extra hands go, and why there? (b) Ten minutes in, the drinks back up. What does she do, and what does she NOT do?
2. A helper says, "Just tell everyone to move faster." Why is that walking faster instead of fixing the line?
3. Find the slowest step in one line from your own life. What would staffing it look like?

Activity 5: Scrambled words (from the story)

1. NEIL
2. GABS

3. TUOCN

4. LIPE

Activity 6: Word work

Match each word to its meaning from the story.

1. bottleneck a. a row of stations where work passes from one step to the next
2. station b. the slowest step, which sets the speed of everything
3. congestion c. a fixed spot where one step of the work happens
4. line d. too much motion in too little space

Activity 7: Word search

Find the eight words hidden in the grid. All words run left to right.

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L I N E K V W B F Y
R I B B O N N O R S
B A G S A I Q Z X J
S L O W E S T H U P
S T A T I O N C D E
P A C K I N G V W B
C O U N T P L M N O
P I L E D E A I Q Z
X J K V W B F Y G H
U P L M N O R S T C

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The eight words: LINE, RIBBON, BAGS, SLOWEST, STATION, PACKING, COUNT, PILE.

Activity 8: Your turn - walk your line

Pick one recurring production in your life - a Friday at home, a group project, a job you do with others. Write five lines: the steps, where the pile forms, and one change that staffs the slowest step instead of hurrying the fast ones.