Supply Chains parent guide

You do not need to be an expert to read this book together. Your job is to ask how the explanation works and give the learner room to think.

What this book helps explain

Find the constraint, define the measurement and separate an order from its physical journey.

Three short conversations

First, ask: If one factory station becomes twice as fast, must the whole factory produce twice as much?

Next, read “The slowest necessary step” together. Ask the learner to draw the idea and explain one unfamiliar term. Use the glossary rather than guessing.

Then use the activity below. Let the learner try before reading the answers on the next page. Ask what information would change the answer.

Try it together

A fictional paper factory has three necessary stations with capacities of 12, 8 and 10 items per hour. Assume steady operation and no other constraints. In a second stable system, throughput averages 5 items per hour and average flow time is 3 hours.

1. What limits the first factory's throughput?

2. Would speeding the 12-item station to 24 raise the maximum throughput?

3. What average inventory follows from the second example?

A small activity at home

Draw a made-up order's product, money and information paths. Avoid using a child's real address or tracking number.

Supply Chains conversation notes

Answers to discuss

1. The 8-item-per-hour station is the bottleneck, so throughput cannot exceed 8 per hour under the assumptions.

2. No. The 8-item station remains the constraint.

3. By Little's law, average inventory = 5 × 3 = 15 items, using consistent boundaries and a stable long-run system.

Listen for this distinction

A shipping label is not evidence that the carrier has the parcel. A forecast is an estimate, not a guarantee.

Useful follow-up

If demand averages 4 items a day and replenishment takes 3 days, expected lead-time demand is 12 items, before any safety stock.

When the explanation is unclear

Ask “Which part are we sure about?” and “Can you show me with a smaller example?” Say when you do not know. Read the relevant chapter together and check its sources if the question goes beyond the example.

Signs of understanding

The learner can explain the idea in their own words, use a diagram or example, and say one thing the example does not prove. Repeating the book word for word is not the goal.

Keep the conversation comfortable

Use fictional people and amounts. Do not require personal disclosures. Short sessions are enough; stop before frustration turns reading into a test.

Reading route

The slowest necessary step; When to place the next order; A small rule connecting time and inventory

Companion to Supply Chains: NOW It Makes Sense by Sonny Saggar. First edition. This guide uses original supplementary teaching examples.