

Hippo and the Extra Passenger

A little adventure about trying a new way

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Ages 5–7



The picnic cart said no. Not in words. In a small wooden thump. Hippo lifted the lid and tried again. Still no click from the little latch. Come close, little one. I'm Ori, and this morning Hippo had made a promise. He would pack the picnic supplies and wheel them to the shady tree beside the workshop. Elephant had already brought the blanket. Hippo wanted to arrive pushing the cart himself. Inside were three tied packs and four little loose pouches. Every pack held ten pouches. All thirty-four had to come along.



“I packed them so neatly,” Hippo said. “Why won't the cart shut?” Elephant rested the blanket on the bench. “I'll stay right here while you try.” Elephant patted the cart. “Two places for big packs. A shallow drawer for loose pouches. And this lid folds out into our picnic table.” He tested the drawer. Its handle gave a tiny squeak. “First, we need to close the lid for the journey.” “A cart on the path, a table under the tree,” Hippo said. “My whole picnic can travel with me.”



Hippo turned the third pack sideways. Perhaps sideways was smaller. He eased the lid down. The corner of the pack nudged it straight back up. “The passenger still won't sit down,” Hippo said. Elephant's trunk curled. “A very well-dressed passenger.” The pack wore a bow. Hippo had tied it himself, after putting ten pouches in the packing tray, one in every little space. He had liked the soft rustle when all ten became one tidy pack. He straightened the bow. It would be a shame to undo it.



So he tried a different place for the same pack: on top of the other two. Slowly. Carefully. Now the lid stayed open even wider. Hippo let out a small puff of breath. The pack came back onto the bench. Nothing was squashed, but nothing was ready to travel, either. “I wanted to bring the whole picnic,” he said. “Not leave a bit behind.” Elephant sat beside him. “The blanket can wait with us.” That was all. No pulling at the pack. No reaching for the latch. Elephant left Hippo room to think.



For a moment, Hippo stopped moving things. The four loose pouches were resting in the shallow drawer. Hippo pulled its handle a little farther. There was room beside them. Plenty of room for small, soft pouches. No room for a whole tied pack. Hippo touched the bow on the bench. Then he touched the drawer handle.



Hippo tapped the bow. “I had ten separate pouches in the tray. I tied them together, but I didn't make any new supplies.” He moved his paw back to the drawer. “If I open this pack, the pouches will still be here. All ten.” “Same goal. A new way,” Hippo whispered. He looked at Elephant. “I don't need three packs. I need all the pouches.” Elephant leaned forward, listening. Hippo brought the extra pack close. His paw paused on the knot. That bow had taken him a while. Then he put one paw on the table and took a slow breath. “Same goal. A new way.”



Hippo loosened the bow. He opened the extra pack himself. The first little pouch slipped into his paw. He laid it beside the four in the drawer. Another followed. Then another. He moved slowly enough to give each pouch its own place. “One, two, three, four, five,” Hippo murmured, counting only the pouches coming out of the pack. “Six, seven, eight, nine, ten.”



Empty at last. Hippo peered into the wrapping. “Ten out of this pack. Four were already loose. Now fourteen are in the drawer.” He glanced up at the two snug places. “And these two packs can stay tied.” Hippo checked the empty wrapping, the bench, and the drawer. “Nothing left behind. Two packs of ten, and fourteen loose. Still thirty-four supplies.”



He smoothed the last pouch flat. The drawer slid shut. Then Hippo lowered the lid with one paw. That tiny click made him stand a little taller. “The picnic fits,” he breathed. “I changed the packing. I kept the picnic.” Elephant lifted the blanket. “And you found the way.”



“Same goal. A new way,” Hippo said, this time with a smile. He folded the empty wrapping and tucked it beside the drawer. The bow went into his pocket. It had not been wasted. It was simply finished holding those ten pouches together.



Hippo pushed the cart to the tree just outside the workshop. Elephant walked beside him with the blanket. Under the branches, Hippo opened the latch and folded out the lid. The cart became their little table. All thirty-four supplies had arrived.



He spread the empty wrapping over a patch of grass, then settled onto it. Elephant gave a soft chuckle. The extra passenger had not needed a seat in the cart after all. Its wrapping had become a seat for Hippo. Hippo patted the place beside him, and Elephant sat down.


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Same goal. A new way.
Ori says:
Little one, when your plan gets stuck, pause and try a different way. You can change the plan and still take care of what matters.
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