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Chapter 1

Reading

The problems in this book are almost all reading problems. They are not going to tax your judgement by asking you to find the largest point on the board, choose the direction of play, or ponder the relative merits of profit and outer strength. Instead, they are going to ask you to work out sequences of moves that capture, cut, link up, make good shape, or accomplish some other clear tactical objective.

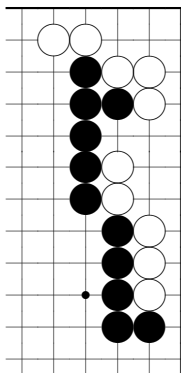
A good player tries to read out such tactical problems in his head before he puts the stones on the board. He looks before he leaps. Frequently he does not leap at all; many of the sequences his reading uncovers are stored away for future reference, and in the end never carried out. This is especially true in a professional game, where the two hundred or so moves played are only the visible part of an iceberg of implied threats and possibilities, most of which stays submerged. You may try to approach the game at that level, or you may, like most of us, think your way from one move to the next as you play along, but in either case it is your reading ability more than anything else that determines your rank.

There is an element of natural talent involved, but for the most part reading ability is developed through study and experience. As you become familiar with various positions and shapes you will find certain moves, called *tesuji*, that come up again and again, and once you learn them your reading will become much faster and more accurate. There are also certain habits of thinking to be acquired, which this chapter will try to illustrate.

The first principle in reading is to start with a definite purpose. There is no better way to waste time than to say to yourself, ‘I wonder what happens if I play here’, and start tracing out sequences aimlessly. Tactics must serve strategy. Start by asking yourself what you would like to accomplish in the position in question, then start hunting for the sequence that accomplishes it. Once you have your goal clearly in mind the right move, if it exists, will be much easier to find.

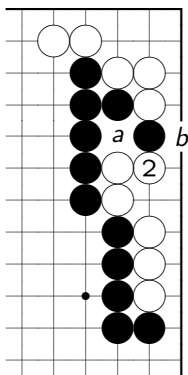
With the goal set, reading is a matter of working your way through a mental tree diagram of possible moves. You should be systematic and thorough. Start with the obvious move, followed by the obvious counter-move, the obvious counter-move to that, and so on until you have a sequence that ends in success for one side and failure for the other. Then take the last move made by the side that failed and try other possibilities. If they all fail too, go back to the same side’s move before that and do the same thing again. It is important to work from the back toward the front of the sequence, to avoid leaving things out. Eventually you will arrive at a conclusion, and hopefully it will be correct.

As an example, let us take the question of whether Black can cut off the five white stones in the lower portion of Dia. 1. Both players want to know the answer to this question, but let us imagine ourselves as Black and follow his thought processes as he reads the problem out.

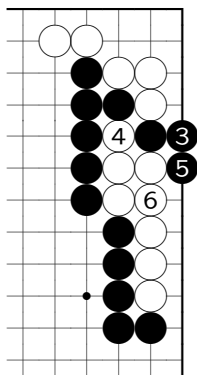


Dia. 1: Black to Play

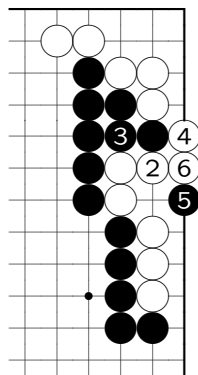
So the White 2 we have been investigating in Dias. 4 to 7 turns out to be a failure; that only means that other, less obvious White 2's have to be tested. The next candidate might be the hane shown in Dia. 8.



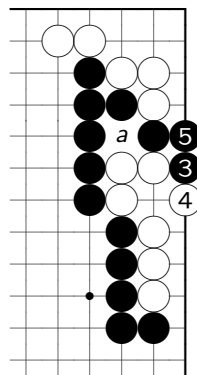
Dia. 4



Dia. 5

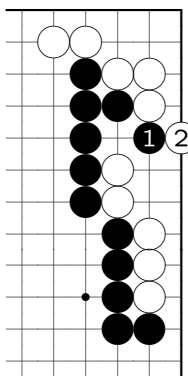


Dia. 6

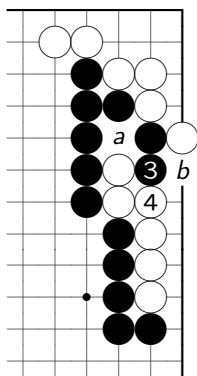


Dia. 7

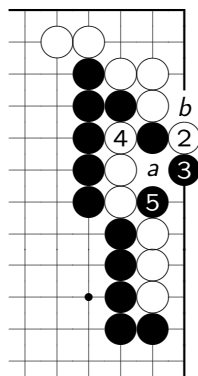
If Black plays 3 in Dia. 9, White will connect at 4 and be threatening to link up with either *a* or *b*. Black cannot defend against both of these threats, so he has failed. In this kind of situation *a* and *b* are called miai; if one player takes one of them, the other player can take the other.



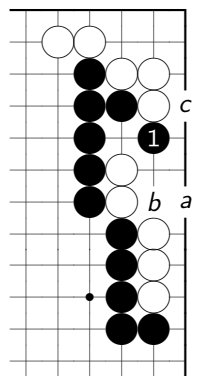
Dia. 8



Dia. 9



Dia. 10



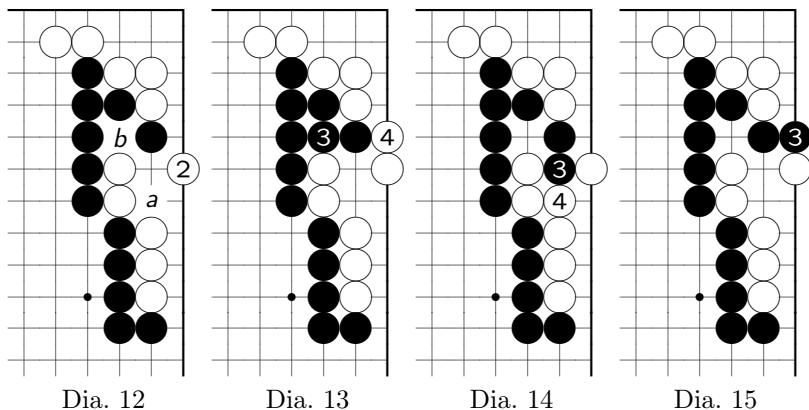
Dia. 11

Black 3 in Dia. 9 failed, but Black 3 in Dia. 10 succeeds. If White cuts at 4, Black has a snap-back at 5; if White plays 4 at *a*, Black captures at *b*; and if White connects at *b*, Black can play 4, 5, or *a*. This eliminates the hane for White 2.

White's resources are fast disappearing, and we must now turn to rather unlikely-looking choices, such as *a*, *b*, and even *c* in Dia. 11, for White 2. Each of these, however, can quickly be eliminated. See if you can find answers to them for yourself; only White *a* is at all tricky, (it invites a mistake in which Black captures two of the white stones but misses the rest).

If you have dealt with the moves in Dia. 11, then a total of six White 2's have been shown to fail. Does that mean that Black 1 is established? Not yet, for there is one White 2 left, the least obvious and strongest move of all.

The last arrow in White's quiver is the one-point jump to the edge in Dia. 12. It guards the cutting point at *a* and hence threatens to cut at *b*. If Black connects at 3 in Dia. 13, White can link up with 4, and Black 3 in Dia. 14 runs into a move that we have seen before. These two Black 3's are failures.

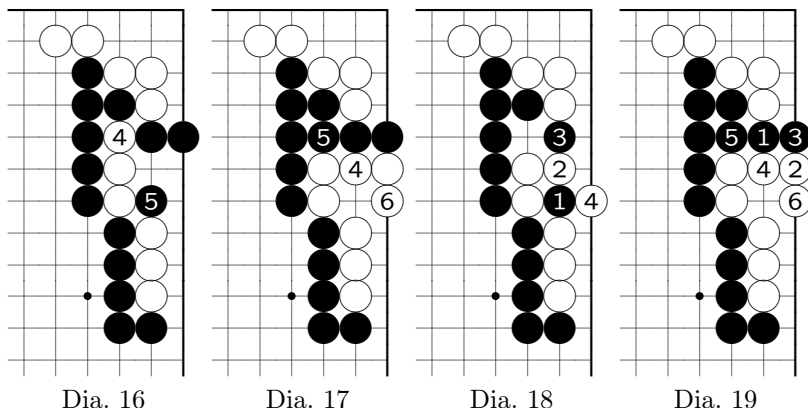


Boldness may succeed where caution fails, so next Black tries blocking White's way directly with 3 in Dia. 15. At first, this seems to work. White cannot cut at 4 in Dia. 16 because Black will cut him right back with 5. Since 4 fails, there is no way White can get through to the corner; he has put up a good fight, but it looks as if he has lost in the end. Just to be on the safe side, however, Black had better doublecheck for an alternative to White 4 in Dia. 16.

And sure enough, there is White 4 in Dia. 17. Black connects at 5 and although White is cut off, he can live by playing 6. There is

something maddening to Black about reading to this point, proving that no matter how White answers Black 1 he can be cut off, only to discover that the cut-off group can live. Patiently Black goes on and tests other Black 1's, like the one in Dia. 18, but they all fail. The conclusion he comes to is that Dia. 19 is the best sequence for both sides.

Since he has put so much thought into it, Black may be tempted to play out Dia. 19 even though it is not a real success; at least it gives him some profit in sente, and maybe White will miss the tesuji at 2.

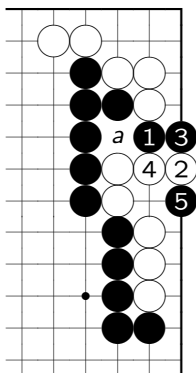


There are two reasons, however, why Black should restrain himself. The first is that moves like these should be saved for use as ko threats. Most games involve at least one ko fight, and the player who squanders his threats before the ko is going to be sorry. If Black leaves the position alone White is not likely to bother making a defensive move, so the opportunity to play 1 will still be there later on.

The second reason is that there is always the chance of having made a reading mistake. Especially in a non-urgent position like this, you can afford to turn your attention elsewhere, then come back later for a second look. Re-examining positions that you have already read out is a good way to spend the time waiting for your opponent to play; it often turns up moves that were missed before.

In the position we are considering, for example, if Black looks again he may finally see 5 in Dia. 20, which destroys White's eye shape while inflicting shortage of liberties on him to keep him from cutting at a.

Now he has the truth. He does not have to play 1 at once, but he knows that when the time comes, the white stones are there for the taking.



Dia. 20

When you have a sequence that almost works, like the one in Dia. 19, it is a good idea not to give up on it. Often changing just one move, or changing the order of moves, or reading just one move further is all that is needed.

What about the positions that are simply too hard to read out? As far as possible, they should be left alone. Future developments may alter them, and the unreadable may become readable, and anyway you lose much more by having a lot of stones captured in a sequence that fails than by letting your opponent defend where you could have destroyed him. In the latter case, while your opponent is defending you get two moves in a row elsewhere on the board. In the former case there is no compensation. Sometimes, of course, you have to push ahead blindly, but remember that it is weak players who are always playing in situations they cannot read out, and strong players who refrain from playing even when they have the situation completely read out.

Most of the rest of this book consists of examples of tesuji and problems on which you can practice your reading. One word of warning about the answers to the problems is necessary. In general there will be only one or two answer diagrams, showing how the correct answer succeeds against the opponent's strongest resistance. For the problem read out in this chapter, only the variations of diagrams 7, 20, and

perhaps 10 would appear in the answer diagrams. The rest of the reading would be left up to you. Occasionally a wrong answer is shown as a pitfall, and marked 'failure'.

Since the opponent's strongest resistance to the correct answer fails, it will not usually be the best move for him to make in actual play. Faced with Black 1 in Dia. 20, for instance, White's best response is not the 'strongest' move at 2, but rather no move at all. In the endgame White should play the hane, (2 at 3), and connect, a variation that would not appear among the answer diagrams. If you respect your opponent's reading ability you will want to avoid many of the even-numbered moves in the answer diagrams of this book.

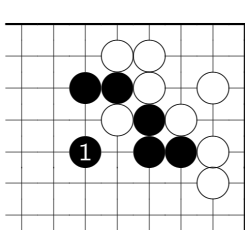
It took us twenty diagrams to get through one problem in this chapter, but most of the problems coming up will not turn out to be so complicated, and even the hard ones should not take so long once you have gotten a grasp of tesuji. The importance of learning tesuji is that you learn where to look for the answer, and can go straight to the move that works without having to waste time thinking about moves that fail.

Chapter 2

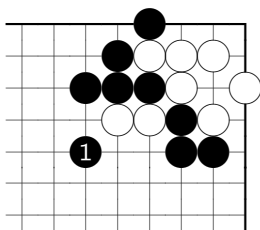
Capture the Cutting Stones

Diagram 1 shows the kind of move that this chapter is about. White has one stone on the outside, partly surrounded by black stones but ready to make a dash for the open. Black 1 traps it, blocking its escape and capturing it.

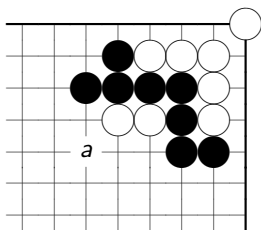
Diagram 2 shows the same type of operation, except that now Black 1 captures two white stones. Try as they may, they cannot escape. In the next few pages you will meet more advanced tesuji for trapping enemy stones out in the open or for running them to earth at the edge of the board.



Dia. 1



Dia. 2

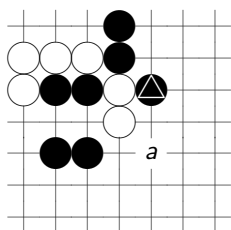


Dia. 3

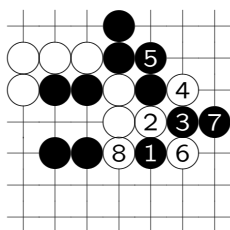
What makes moves like this worth playing is not so much the size of the capture—Black is getting only two points in Dia. 1 and four points in Dia. 2—but the fact that the captured stones were cutting stones. If White, instead of Black, played 1 in Dia. 1 for example, the black stones would be split into two very weak groups, one or the other of which would almost surely die.

Contrast this with Dia. 3, where the two white stones are not cutting stones. Black could capture them with a, but that would be only a four- point move of little significance. Black should ignore the enemy stones, extend farther from his position, and try to surround a much larger area.


The Knight's Move Tesuji



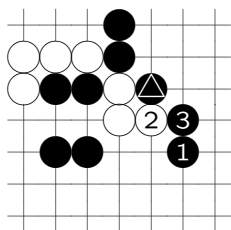
Dia. 1



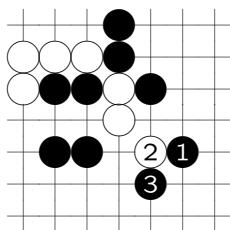
Dia. 2

Dia. 1 Black wants to capture the two white stones in the center. Black *a*, the obvious move, does not work because White can push out between *a* and  and escape with a series of ataris.



Dia. 2 Ataris at 4 and 6 spring White free. Fortunately there is a play that succeeds where Black 1 fails.



Dia. 3



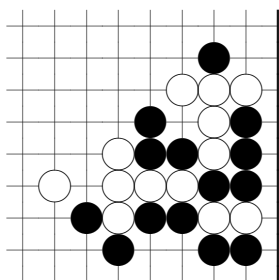
Dia. 4

Dia. 3 This Black 1 is the tesuji; observe its knight's-move relation to Black , the weak stone that caused the trouble in the previous diagram. After 2 and 3 an atari against Black  would accomplish nothing, and White is trapped much as in Dia. 2 on the previous page.

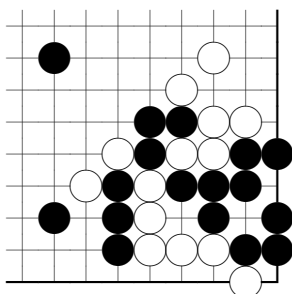
Dia. 4 Nor can White escape this way. Black 3 stops him.

Problem 1. White to play and capture the cutting stones.

Problem 2. White to play and capture the cutting stones.



Problem 1

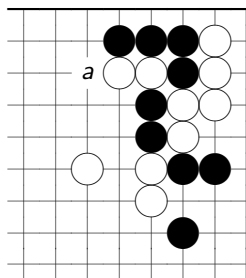


Problem 2

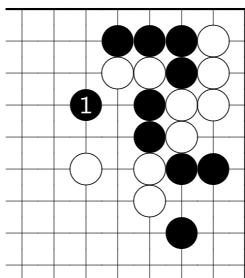
The Loose Ladder Tesuji

Dia. 1. If Black is going to get any kind of result out of this position he has to capture the pair of white stones to the right of *a*, but how? An atari at *a* would not work.

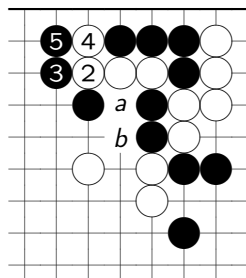
Dia. 2. Black 1 is the tesuji; it sets up a loose ladder.



Dia. 1



Dia. 2

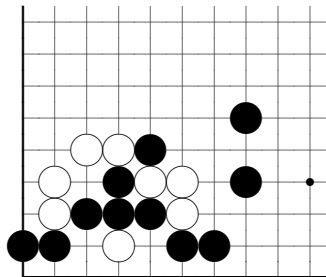


Dia. 3

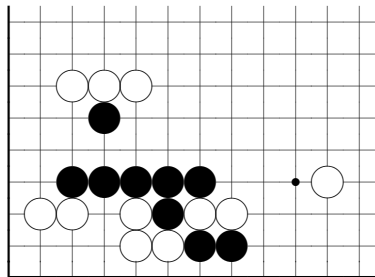
Dia. 3. Black guides White firmly to the edge of the board with 3 and 5, not only trapping the fleeing stones but capturing the whole corner. If at any point White plays *a*, Black *b* puts him in atari and hastens his end.

Problem 1. White to play and capture the cutting stone. It is not enough to find the first move; read out the whole sequence accurately.

Problem 2. Black to play and capture White's cutting stones. If you can't head them off in one 'direction', try the other direction.



Problem 1



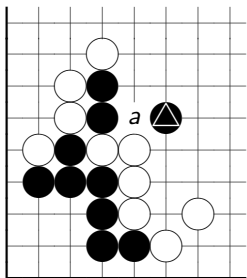
Problem 2

The Slapping Tesuji

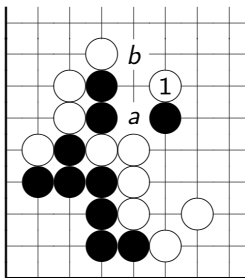
Dia. 1. Black is trying to bring his two stones out into the open with \triangle , (although he is doing it wrong, as will quickly become clear). Can White stop him? The series of ataris, i.e. the ladder, that starts with White a is broken by Black \triangle , so White must look for something else.

Dia. 2. In this shape White 1 is the tesuji. It makes White a a real threat, so if Black is going to resist he must either connect at a himself or try to slip out with b .

Dia. 3. But if Black connects at 2, White has him in a loose ladder with 3 and the rest.



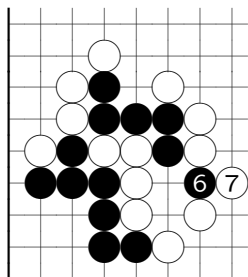
Dia. 1



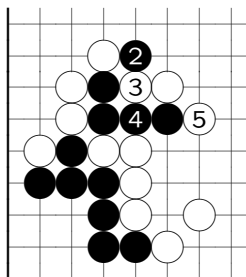
Dia. 4. Black 6 here, an attempt to set up a snap-back, bows before White 7.

Dia. 5. What about the other possible Black 2? White 3 gives atari, and from there on the moves are the same as before, except that the loose ladder becomes an ordinary ladder.

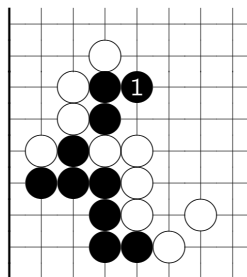
Dia. 6. To return to Black's original move, if he wants to escape he has to make an empty triangle with 1. Empty triangles are bad shape, but at least he has a chance to split White up and attack.



Dia. 4



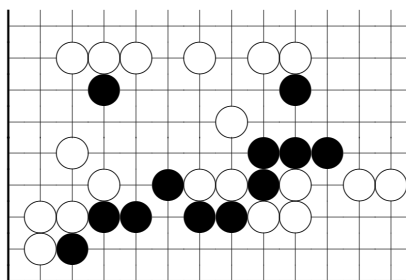
Dia. 5



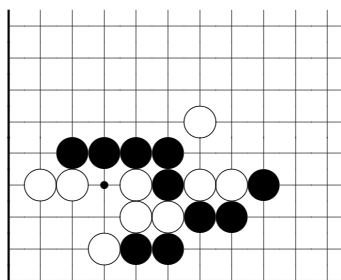
Dia. 6

Problem 1. Black to play and capture the cutting stones.

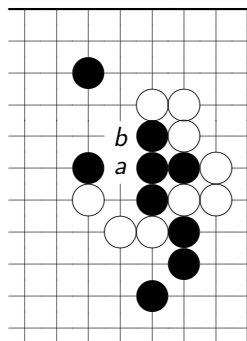
Problem 2. Black to play and capture the cutting stones. Be sure you have read out the whole sequence correctly.



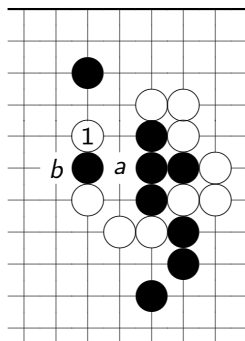
Problem 1



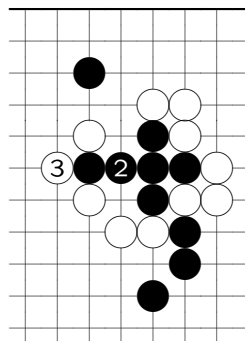
Problem 2



Dia. 1



Dia. 2



Dia. 3

The Clamping Tesuji

Dia. 1. There may seem to be no way for White to capture anything in this position. If he cuts at *a*, for example, Black can get away with *b*.

Dia. 2. There is a tesuji, however: the clamping move at 1. Its effect is to make miai of *a* and *b*.

Dia. 3. For Black to connect at 2 is pointless. White 3 leaves him with no room to wriggle.

Dia. 4. But if he extends out with 2, White 3 severs him. Black's 4 does not work because White 5 captures his stones in a snap-back. Similarly, if Black played 2 at 4, White would answer at 5, leaving 2 and 3 as miai. Clamping tesuji do not always involve snap-back, but they are sometimes hard to see, so we have given you three problems this time.

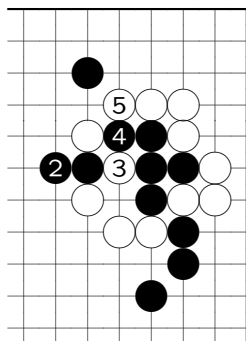
Problem 1. White to play and capture the cutting stones.

Problem 2. Black to play and halt White's escape. Don't be confused by extraneous stones.

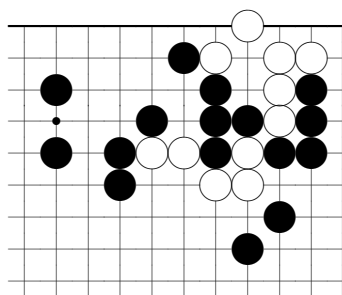
Problem 3. White to play and capture the cutting stones.

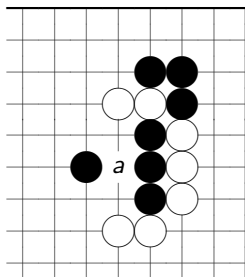
The Nose Tesuji

Dia. 1. Black is in a position to capture the upper pair of white stones, but he must be careful because the danger of White *a* is staring him in the face. A non-contact play would be too slow.

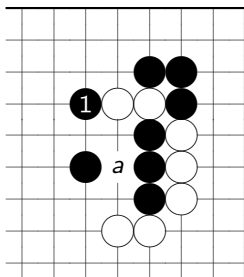


Dia. 4

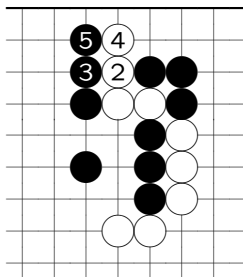




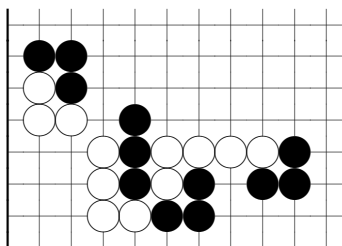
Dia. 1



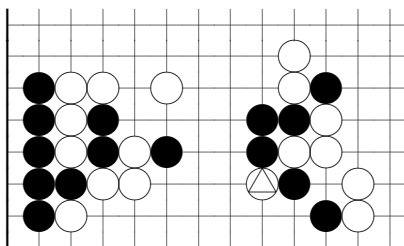
Dia. 2



Dia. 3



Problem 1

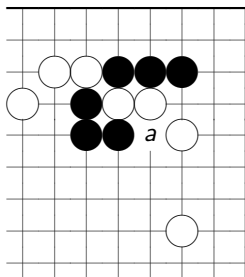


Problem 2

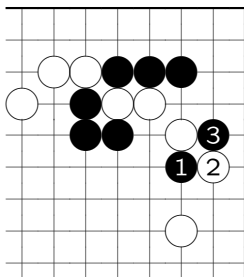
mistake for Black to start by giving atari at *a*. Common sense might tell you that; Black can give atari either at *a* or from the other side, so he should hold both ataris in reserve and wait until one of them becomes effective.

Dia. 2. The tesuji is the contact play at 1. White's best response is 2, and Black cross-cuts with 3.

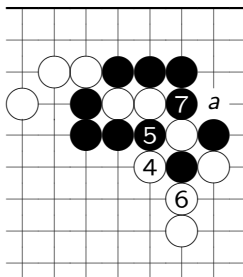
Dia. 3. If White gives atari at 4, Black gives a counter-atari at 5 and White cannot connect at 7 because of shortage of liberties. All he can do is to capture at 6, letting Black have two stones with 7 or *a*.



Dia. 1



Dia. 2

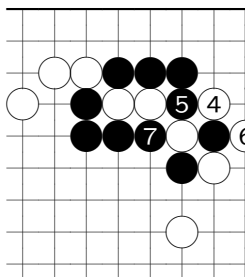


Dia. 3

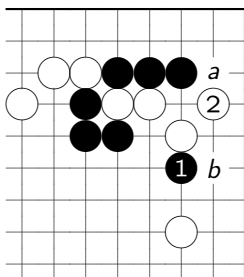
Dia. 4. If White gives atari from the other direction with 4, Black alters 5 accordingly.

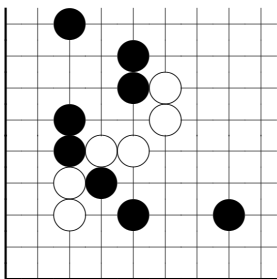
Dia. 5. There is one move to watch out for in this shape. Occasionally when Black plays 1 White can resist with 2, threatening a and b.

Dia. 6. But in the present position Black can foil White and make a big capture with 3 etc.

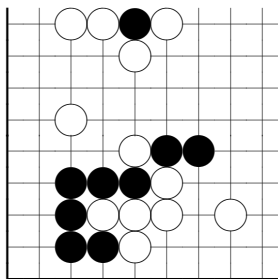


Dia. 4





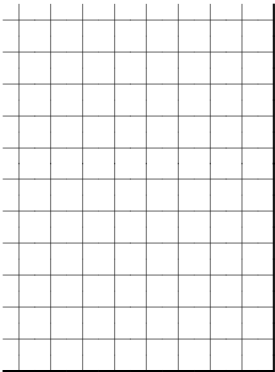
Problem 1



Problem 2

(number 1), Black can save his cutting stones if he plays a certain way, but White can get a good result anyhow.

The answers appear briefly on the following two pages. As usual, the answer diagrams show moves that the player who loses the sequence should leave unplayed.



8. White to play

Chapter 3

Amputate the Cutting Stones

The theme of this chapter is the same as that of the last: the capture of small groups of enemy stones. The difference is that whereas before the idea was to capture them by blocking their escape route, the idea now is to capture them by detaching them from a larger body of enemy stones, and the techniques differ accordingly. Usually the target stones will be cutting stones, but we shall not be finicky about going after non-cutting stones on occasion for the sheer profit of capturing them.

Snap-back

Snap-backs are the first really interesting tactics of the game that most players learn; perhaps you can remember when you first encountered one. For those who may not be sure of the term, the next three diagrams present a quick review.

The Throw-in Tesuji

The Squeeze Tesuji

Ladder-Building

The Placement Tesuji

More Problems

Chapter 4

Ko

Chapter 5

When Liberties Count