



INTRODUCTION

Saiju is an abstract strategy game for 2 players. Although there are stones for each player, as well as neutral stones, you can place **any** stone you want! The object is to make groups of same-colour stones that have more stones of your symbol than your opponent's.

The motif for the 3 symbols is Setsu-Getso-Ka, a traditional Japanese trilogy of Snow, Moon, and Flower. "Saiju" is a coined Japanese word meaning "coloured pearls", which is named after Renju, a professional variant of Go-Moku.

COMPONENTS

- 1 gameboard: 36 hexes, arranged as a larger hexagon without a center
- 36 Colour stones: 3 colours (white, yellow, pink) × 3 symbols, 4 of each combination
- 3 black Shadow stones: each with one of the 3 symbols

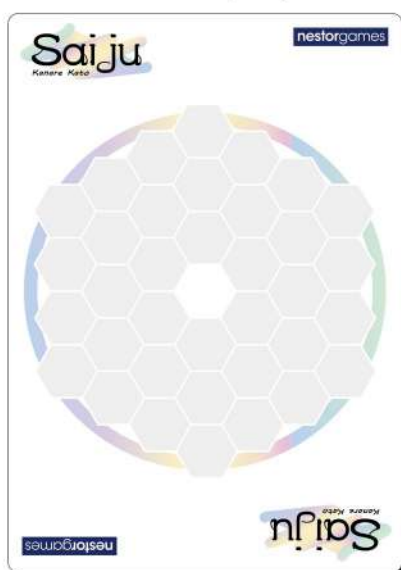
SETUP

The 3 symbols represent Snow (a snow crystal), Moon (a crescent), and Flower (a petal of cherry blossom).

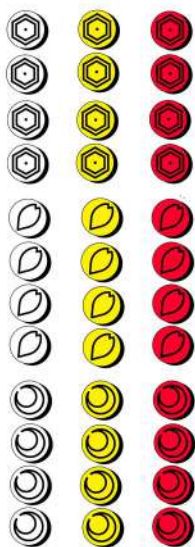
One player plays as Snow; the other, as Moon. Flower is always neutral.

Place the board between you, then arrange the 36 Colour stones neatly beside the board as a common supply, with the Snow stones close to the Snow player, the Moon stones close to the Moon player, and the Flower stones in the middle. This makes it easy to remember which player is which symbol, and to see how many stones of each type remain at any moment.

Snow player's side



Moon player's side



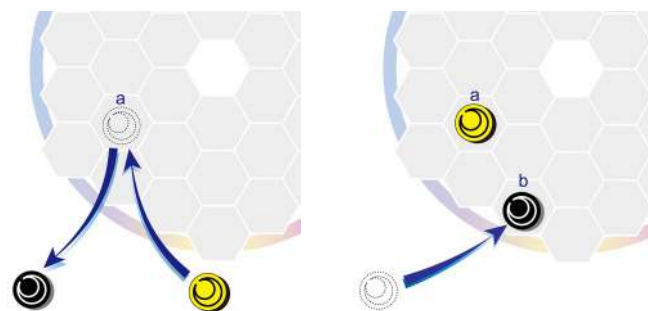
GAMEPLAY

To start the game, the Snow player places the Moon Shadow stone on any space of the board; then Moon places the other two Shadow stones (Snow and Flower) on two other spaces. Snow always goes first.

On your turn, you must place a Colour stone as follows:

1. Replace **any** Shadow stone with a Colour stone depicting the same symbol.
2. Then place the Shadow stone on any empty space.
3. If only 1 Colour stone of that symbol remains in the supply, its placement is foregone: Replace the Shadow stone with it, and remove the Shadow stone from the game.
4. If only 1 Shadow stone remains in play, and only 1 colour of Colour stone remains in the supply, there are no choices left to be made in the game: Remove the Shadow stone from the game, and fill the rest of the spaces with the remaining Colour stones.

If you wish, you may place a Colour stone of a second symbol by following the same steps. In other words, you can place **2 different** Colour stones on your turn.



Example: Snow replaces the Moon Shadow stone on space a with a Yellow Moon stone. Next, Snow places the Moon Shadow stone anew on space b. Now Snow has three options:

- Do the same process to place a Snow Colour stone.
- Do the same process to place a Flower Colour stone.
- Skip placing a second Colour stone.

END OF THE GAME

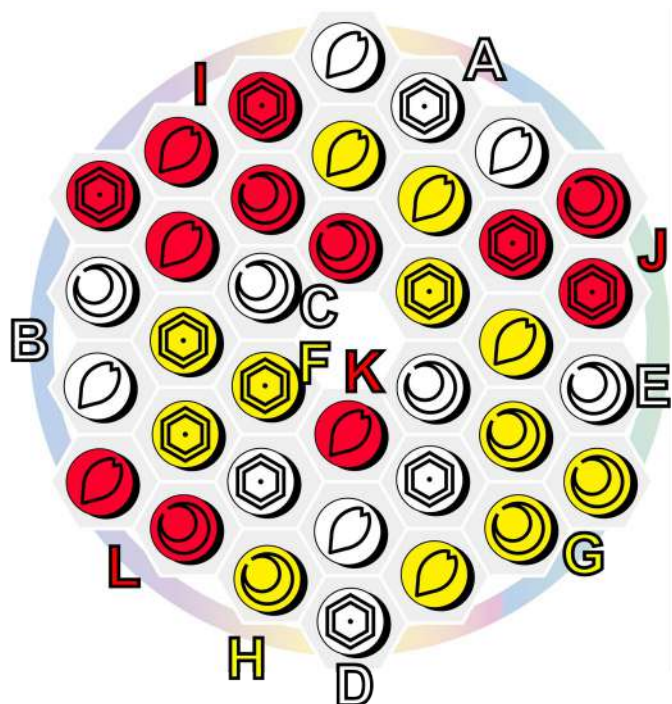
The game ends when all 36 spaces of the board are filled with Colour stones (and thus all three Shadow stones have been removed from the board, and all 36 Colour stones have been placed).

Check each contiguous group of white stones, then yellow stones, then pink stones, as follows:

1. If one of the following is true, the group does not score; skip the rest of the steps and check the next group:
 - The group has fewer than 3 stones.
 - The group has only one type of stone (e.g. entirely Moon stones).
 - The group has the same number of Moon stones and Snow stones.
2. If there are **more Snow stones** in the group than Moon stones, **Snow scores**; otherwise Moon scores.

- The number of points you get is equal to the total number of stones in the group. If the group contains all three symbols, its value is doubled.

In other words, you get 1 point per stone for each group of 3 or more, containing 2 – 3 different symbols, with more of your symbols than your opponent's; if it contains all 3 symbols, it counts double.



Scoring example:

- | | |
|----|--|
| A. | 3 stones, 2 types, more Snow than Moon; $3 \times 1 = 3$ points for Snow. |
| B. | 2 stones... which is fewer than 3 stones, so it doesn't score. |
| C. | 1 stone... which is fewer than 3 stones, so it doesn't score. |
| D. | 5 stones, all 3 types, more Snow than Moon; $5 \times 2 = 10$ points for Snow. |
| E. | 1 stone... which is fewer than 3 stones, so it doesn't score. |
| F. | 3 stones, 1 type... which is fewer than 2 types, so it doesn't score. |
| G. | 8 stones, all 3 types, more Moon than Snow; $8 \times 2 = 16$ points for Moon. |
| H. | 1 stone... which is fewer than 3 stones, so it doesn't score. |
| I. | 6 stones, 3 types, but the same number of Snow and Moon, so it doesn't score. |
| J. | 3 stones, 2 types, more Snow than Moon; $3 \times 1 = 3$ points for Snow. |
| K. | 1 stone... which is fewer than 3 stones, so it doesn't score. |
| L. | 2 stones... which is fewer than 3 stones, so it doesn't score. |

VICTORY

The player with more points wins. Tiebreakers are as follows:

- Whoever scored the largest group with all 3 symbols.
- Whoever scored the largest group with just 2 symbols.

If still tied, play again!

Scoring example, continued: Snow scored a total of 16 points, as did Moon. Moon's largest 3-symbol group contained 8 stones, but Snow's largest 3-symbol contains only 5 stones, so Moon wins the tiebreaker and the game.

SQUARE BOARD VARIANT

You can also play Saiju on a 6×6 square grid. Only orthogonal adjacency can compose the groups: There is no diagonal adjacency.

3-PLAYER VARIANT

Setup: The third player plays as Flower. Turn order is Snow, Moon, Flower.

Gameplay: To start the game, the Snow player places the Moon Shadow stone on any space of the board; then Moon places the Flower Shadow stone; then Flower places the Snow Shadow stone.

End of the game: The steps for checking groups are altered as follows:

- If one of the following is true, the group does not score; skip the rest of the steps and check the next group:
 - The group has fewer than 3 stones.
 - The group has only one type of stone (e.g. entirely Moon stones).
 - Nobody has the single most stones there: It's a tie for the most.
- Whichever player has the single most stones in the group scores.
- The number of points you get is equal to the total number of stones in the group. If the group contains all three symbols, its value is doubled.

Scoring example from before, but in a 3-player game:

- | | |
|----|--|
| A. | 3 stones, 2 types, more Flower than Snow or Moon; $3 \times 1 = 3$ points for Flower. |
| B. | 2 stones... which is fewer than 3 stones, so it doesn't score. |
| C. | 1 stone... which is fewer than 3 stones, so it doesn't score. |
| D. | 5 stones, all 3 types, more Snow than Moon or Flower; $5 \times 2 = 10$ points for Snow. |
| E. | 1 stone... which is fewer than 3 stones, so it doesn't score. |
| F. | 3 stones, 1 type... which is fewer than 2 types, so it doesn't score. |
| G. | 8 stones, all 3 types, more Flower than Snow or Moon; $8 \times 2 = 16$ points for Flower. |
| H. | 1 stone... which is fewer than 3 stones, so it doesn't score. |
| I. | 6 stones, 3 types, but Snow and Moon and Flower are tied for most, so it doesn't score. |
| J. | 3 stones, 2 types, more Snow than Moon or Flower; $3 \times 1 = 3$ points for Snow. |
| K. | 1 stone... which is fewer than 3 stones, so it doesn't score. |
| L. | 2 stones... which is fewer than 3 stones, so it doesn't score. |

Designed by Kanare Kato.

Rulebook (c) 2020 Kanare Kato and Néstor Romeral Andrés.

Art by Kanare Kato and Néstor Romeral Andrés.

Revisions by Nathan Morse.