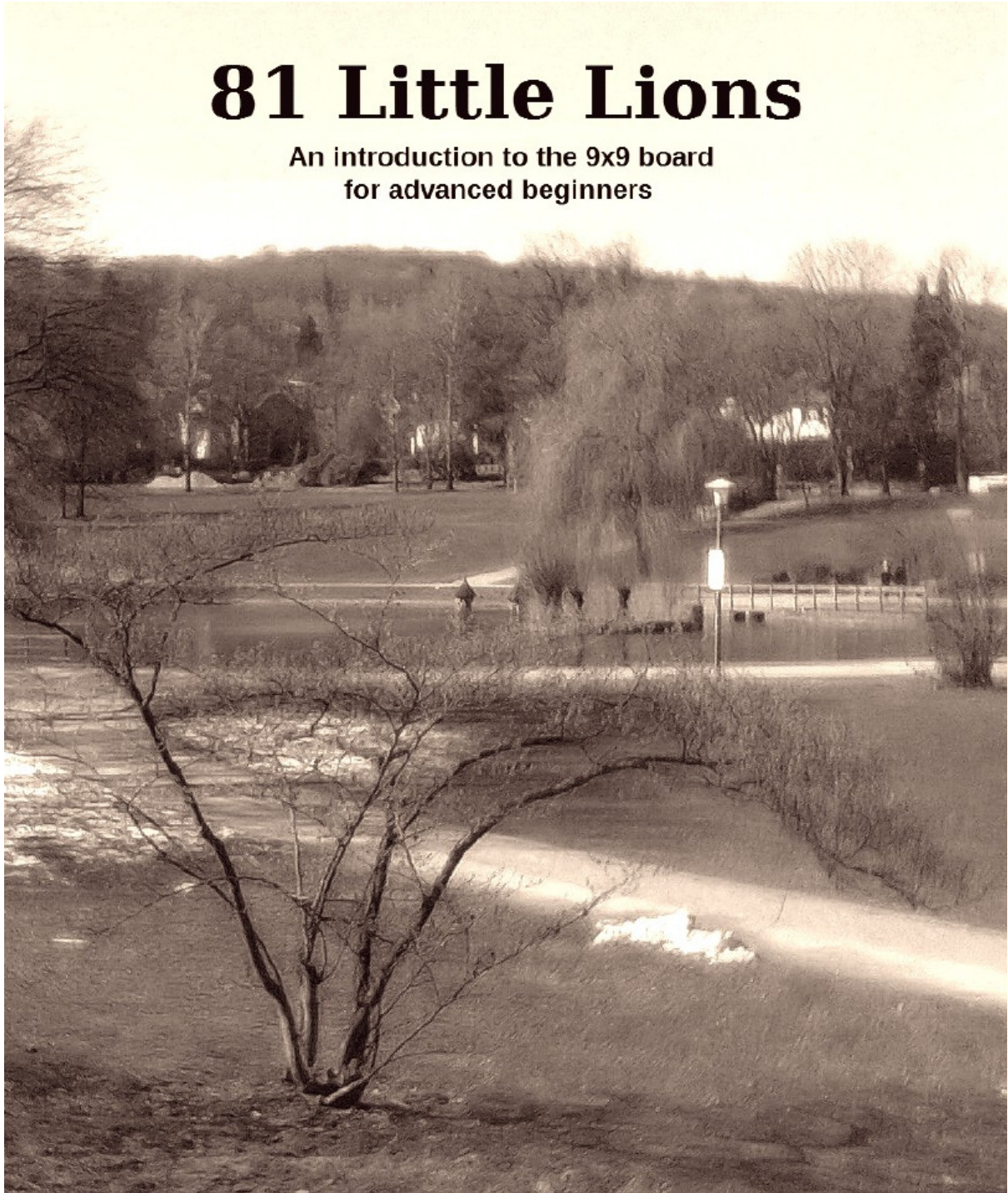


# 81 Little Lions

An introduction to the 9x9 board  
for advanced beginners



*by Immanuel deVillers*



# **81 Little Lions**

**An Introduction to the 9x9 Board  
for Advanced Beginners**

**Revised Edition**

**Immanuel deVillers**

**Edited by Lucas Félix de Oliveira Santana**



*81 Little Lions: An Introduction to the 9x9 Board for Advanced Beginners* —  
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January 9, 2019.

*For Jon,*

*who introduced me to 9x9.*

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# Welcome to 9x9

Dear Reader,

You will likely have picked *81 Little Lions* because you have found little information about the 9x9 board. This is the same reason why I wrote this little guidebook. There are plenty of resources for the 19x19 board, but almost none on the 9x9. I am trying to take a first step to change that. This book is meant as an introduction to the world of 9x9 play, even though it is far from giving a complete overview or perfect information about the subject.

I am a passionate 9x9 player, and a good friend of mine who is 3-*dan* considers my rank to be around 1-*dan* for the 9x9 board, my overall rank on other board types being around 3-5-*kyu*. Now, why did an amateur like me decide to write a book about Go, given that I am nothing more than an advanced beginner myself? Well, I spend most of my free time doing *tsumego* and playing 9x9 games, and I love Go. If I can make at least one player in the world stronger, or share my love for 9x9 after reading this book, I will consider it a success.

Countless hours of my lifetime went into finding and working on strategies and tactics for the smaller boards. Obviously, there are many players in the world who are more experienced than me, and who might have a different view on some of the topics in this book. Still, I invite you to read through my experiences and learn from them—or judge them over as trash: that is up to you! The major part of this book consists of stuff that I found out by myself, and I felt it was a good idea to share it. Feel free to contact me<sup>1</sup> and discuss your own thoughts.

I recommend this book to players of ~15-*kyu* and stronger. You should know the basic Go terms like *atari* and *komi* and be familiar with the concepts of *sente* and *gote*.

If you are looking for a place to play 9x9 more seriously, I recommend the [Online Go Server \(OGS\)](#).<sup>2</sup> It has by far the greatest bulk of serious players on that board type and there you will find a game on any strength within a minute 24/7.

I wish you an enjoyable read and hope you learn something new from this book.

Yours truly,  
Immanuel deVillers

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<sup>1</sup> You will find my contact information at the end of the book. See page 57.

<sup>2</sup> <https://online-go.com/>

# About This Edition

As profound as Go is, there is one aspect of its beauty that even a complete beginner can appreciate: Its community. In the short period since I decided to study this wonderful game, I have met many amazing, dedicated individuals who took their time to patiently teach and inspire me. I am truly indebted to every single one of them and they have my admiration.

Someone once told me that by emulating those we admire we may hope to become like them someday. Well, it will take time and effort before I can apply that advice to the Go board, but I figured there was a way I could (in fact, I believe anyone can) follow their example right now: By using the little I already know, and the few skills I already have, to help others.

This new, revised edition of *81 Little Lions* is a modest attempt of doing that, hopefully a first step on that path, and I want to thank Immanuel deVillers for having written such a helpful guidebook in the first place and for gently giving me the opportunity to work on it.

Also, my gratitude to all of you who have helped me so far: For every game, every piece of advice, every word of encouragement. May the road rise up to meet you, may the wind be always at your backs, may the sun shine warm upon your faces, may the rains fall soft upon your fields, may your boards be made of kaya, your stones of slate and shell, your bowls of mulberry. . .

And here is to the loveliest girl in this world, who helped me find some mistakes in this edition and is a source of continuous inspiration and joy in my life—the day she starts playing Go with me, I will have reached complete bliss. Maria Amélia, my heart is always with you.

Last but not least, my best to you, reader. I hope you will enjoy this book.

Lucas Félix de Oliveira Santana,  
The Editor





"After channeling these waters, Yu divided up the newly drained land (still afloat on water confluent with the surrounding oceans) into nine great square sections bordered by rivers.

"On the grid of a Go board, especially the 9x9 board that beginners learn on today (conceivably the original size of those used in prehistoric times), it seems not implausible that the first Go players would have beheld, like Chikamatsu's Immortals, not a map of the Sky, but a map of China.

"[...]

"There were a number of motifs in the story-telling of Mongolia and Tibet that functioned like those of water in the *Tale of the Nisan Shamaness*. Although Go is not mentioned in *The Secret History of the Mongols*, important events in Genghis Khan's life were marked off by the appearance of the number '9.' In this fashion, in some versions of the longest folk tale in the world, the semi-mythical early Tibetan frontier warlord Gesar (cf. the Byzantine word 'Caesar') played a divinatory Go game before making important decisions."

[Peter Shotwell, *The Game of Go: Speculations on its Origins and Symbolism in Ancient China*, 1994-2008, p. 33, p. 44.]

# 1. The Basics

“Believe it or not, I have never played 9x9 before.”

That is something I heard some time ago when I was chatting with a *dan* player. He had not been interested in the 9x9 for quite some time, but as his rank grew stronger, he wanted to try it out and asked me for a game.

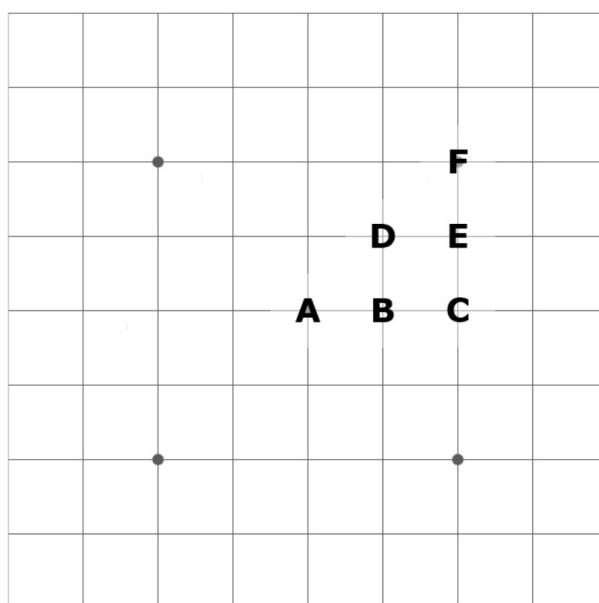
Be aware that you can always be a 9x9 beginner, even when you are 9-*kyu* or stronger. Since 9x9 needs a different approach in strategy, picking it up for the first time can be confusing.

Most things that you know and learn on a 19x19 board do not apply for the 9x9 board. But let us look at the major differences together.

## 1.1. Openings

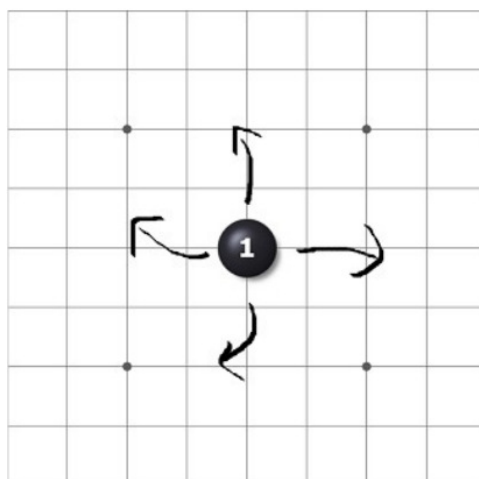
The total number of good moves to start on the 9x9 board is six (see the diagram below). Since the board is so small, any of these opening moves has a different character from the others.

If you play an advanced player, it is important to know what your opponent is scheming with his opening move.



(Diagram 01)

### 1.1.1. *Tengen* (5-5 Point)



(Diagram 02)

The middle of the board (5-5, *tengen*) is a very good opening.

Usually, you would not start on the middle on a 19x19 board, but on the 9x9 board that is a perfectly possible option. Many pro players start on the *tengen*. The reason for its popularity is the large number of options that Black gets.

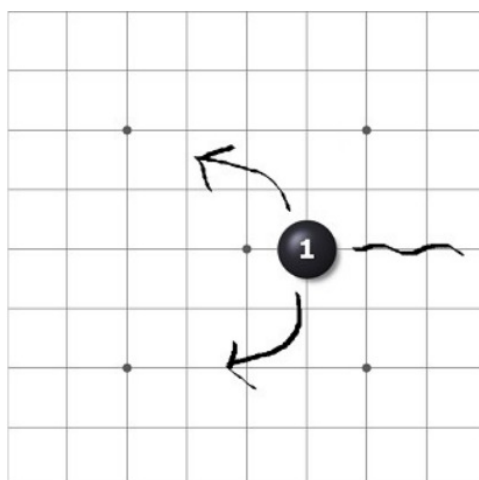
It creates influence over all sides of the board, and whatever White does, Black can choose his next move carefully. It is also the favorite opening in pro games.

Now that we have looked at *tengen*, let us take a look at the other points. The following pages do only feature a few examples, but there is a more detailed *joseki* section later in the book.<sup>3</sup> All examples are taken from pro games.

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<sup>3</sup> See page [23](#).

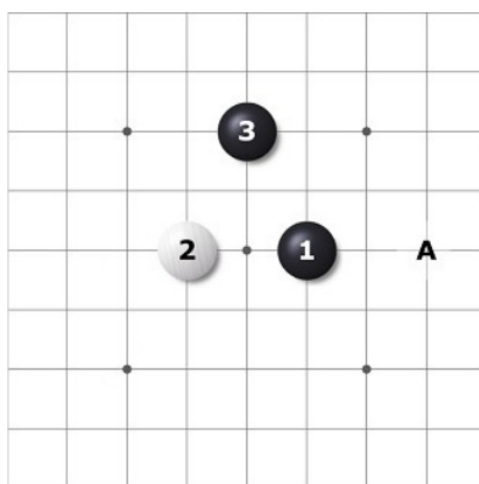
### 1.1.2. *Takamoku* (5-4 Point)



(Diagram 03)

When a player starts on the *takamoku*, the character of the 9x9 game changes into a fighting game. It creates a subtle influence over the shorter edge of the board and aims at the opposite direction. In pro games, this is the second favorite opening, together with the *komoku*.<sup>4</sup>

#### 1.1.2.1. *Takamoku* (5-4 Point) — Example



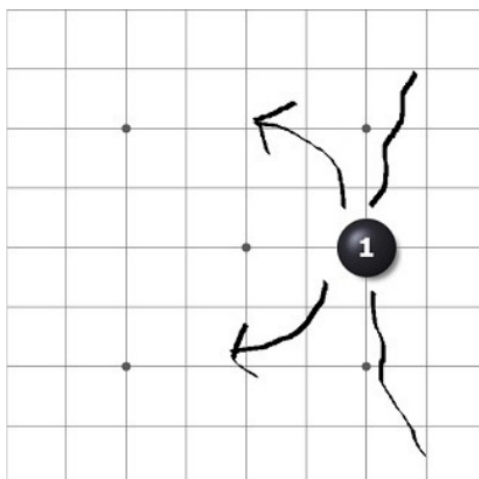
(Diagram 04)

White responds with taking the other *takamoku* and a fight will likely occur. Black 3 takes big influence over the upper right corner and invites White to invade on A.

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<sup>4</sup> See page [12](#).

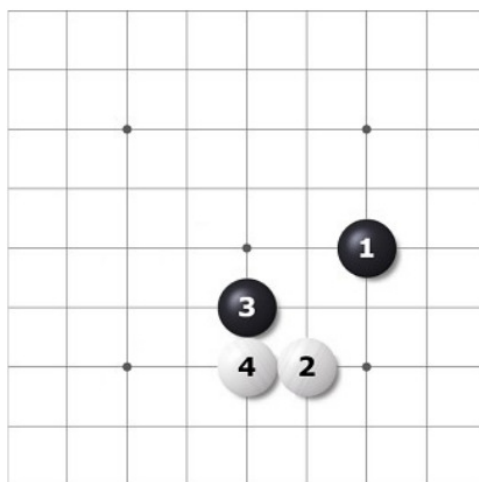
### 1.1.3. *Mokuhazushi* (5-3 Point)



(Diagram 05)

Aiming to make territory on the side, the *mokuhazushi* is a more territorial opening. Which side to take is not determined yet, and Black will act according to where White plays first. Because of its slow and passive character, the *moku-hazushi* is rarely played in pro games.

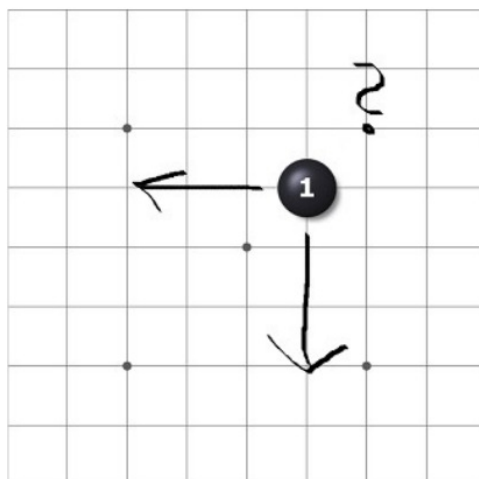
#### 1.1.3.1. *Mokuhazushi* (5-3 Point) — Example



(Diagram 06)

If White takes a close corner, Black can immediately attack the White stone from the safe base that he has made on the right side of the board, but this also strengthens the White group on the lower part of the board.

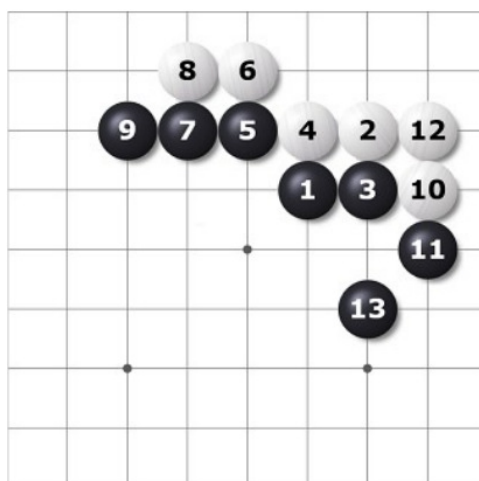
#### 1.1.4. *Hoshi* (4-4 Point)



(Diagram 07)

Being the third favorite opening in pro games, the *hoshi* is a very influence-oriented move. Black aims to take big parts of the corner, if the opponent lets him, but his true intentions are a fight over the whole board.

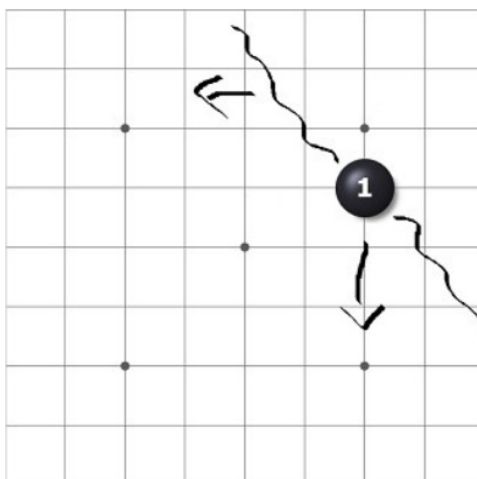
#### 1.1.4.1. *Hoshi* (4-4 Point) — Example



(Diagram 08)

If White remembers the 3-3 invasion *joseki* from the 19x19 board and plays it here, she will have a bad awakening. After the *joseki*, Black is in a superior position and has influence over a huge framework.

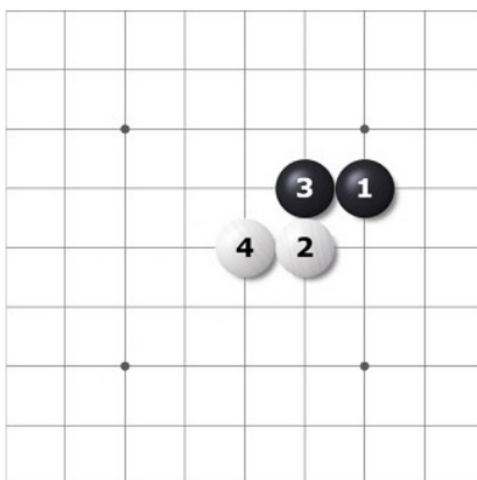
### 1.1.5. *Komoku* (3-4 Point)



(Diagram 09)

The *komoku* shares rank two, together with the *takamoku*,<sup>5</sup> in pro-game popularity. It is a very calm and solid move, but not as passive as the *mokuhazushi*<sup>6</sup> or the *sansan*.<sup>7</sup> It takes a good share of the corner and Black keeps his ability to extend into either direction.

#### 1.1.5.1. *Komoku* (3-4 Point) — Example



(Diagram 10)

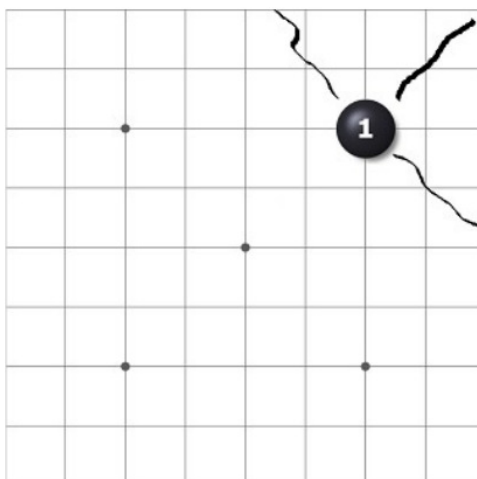
If White decides to attack Black's safe corner with 2, the extension with Black 3 is a calm response. White 4 gets influence over the middle as compensation.

<sup>5</sup> See page 9.

<sup>6</sup> See page 10.

<sup>7</sup> See page 13.

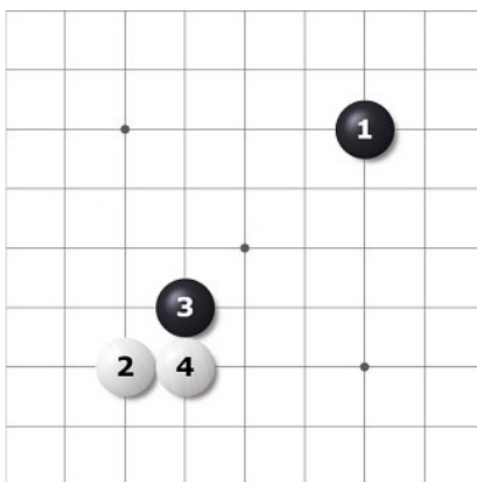
### 1.1.6. *Sansan* (3-3 Point)



(Diagram 11)

The *sansan* is a playable opening, but it is only very rarely played by professionals. While it takes solid territory for Black, it is also very passive. In my experience, this is the favorite move of beginners, mainly for being afraid of losing a group. Put away that fear and experiment with other openings!

#### 1.1.6.1. *Sansan* (3-3 Point) — Example

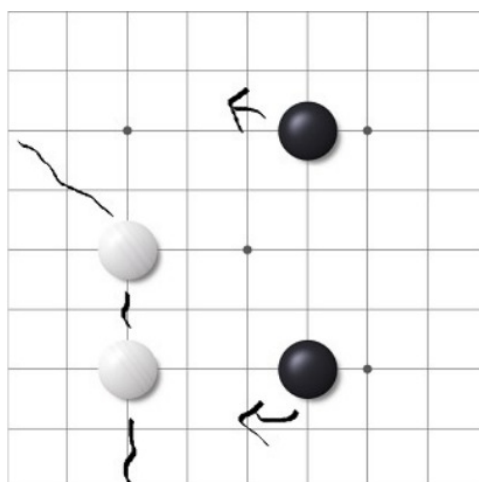


(Diagram 12)

White will not wait and will take a corner herself as a follow-up because of the *komi*. Black has no choice and has to attack heavily with 3. White can strengthen her corner with White 4.



## 1.2. Influence Is Subtle, Control Is Everything



(Diagram 13)

If you look at the diagram above, you will notice that White has a very solid territory in the lower left corner while Black has influential stones on the fourth line. On a larger board, influence-oriented play, where you create a large framework, is much easier; on the small space of that 9x9 board, however, White can now invade the Black framework and take away all those potential points.

I recommend that you play only for control until you have a good, basic understanding of how influence works on the 9x9 board. But what does playing for control mean? It means that your goal is playing for territory. And yet, playing only for territory is too passive on the 9x9 board. Instead, you have to find moves that make solid territory but still have as much influence as possible! This is the very reason why *tengen*<sup>8</sup> is the most popular opening: It is an outpost in the center of the board, allowing to make territory into any direction.

You need to understand that playing for control is the main goal on 9x9. Influence is very subtle, and not as important for the advanced beginner. Once you have a better grasp of the overall play you can come back and experiment with influence strategies.

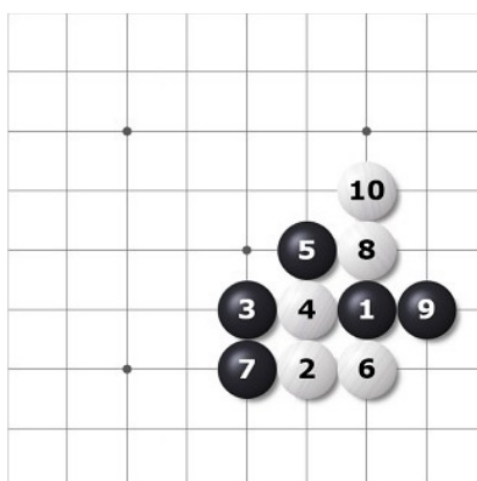
## 1.3. A Mistake Is Always Lethal

On the 19x19 board you can make a few major mistakes and still win the game. The 9x9 board, however, is much more unforgiving about your blunders. More often than not, losing a group of a few stones will decide the game in your opponent's favor. The implication of this problem is that you need to take more time to think about your moves. Getting stronger on this board type is directly related to your own will of time investment into it. If you stop seeing the 9x9 board as the small joyful brother of the "true" big board, you will already have improved in rank.

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<sup>8</sup> See page 8.

## 1.4. Instant *Tsumego*

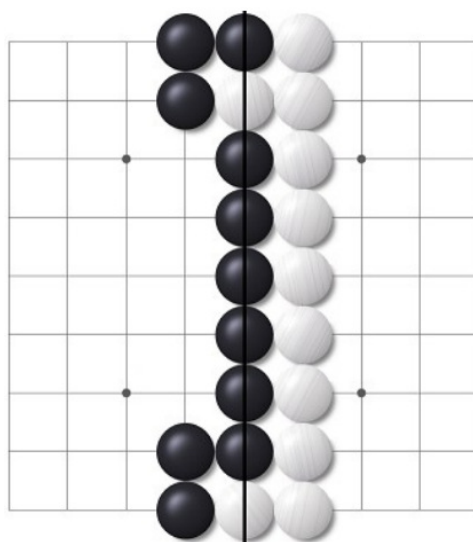


(Diagram 14)

Does the diagram above look like the start of a *tsumego*<sup>9</sup> to you? One of the major advantages of this board format are the fast paced games with a lot of fights. After the opening moves, you face instant *tsumego*. It is not a coincidence that *tsumego* make you much stronger on the 9x9 board. If you would like a more playful approach to 9x9 games, start seeing them as your daily *tsumego* practice.

## 1.5. *Komi* Is a Bitch

I chose the polemic heading because I often cursed *komi* when I was starting to play 9x9 games. It is 5.5 or 6.5 points for White most of the time, depending on the ruleset. If you take a look at the diagram below, who do you think wins?



(Diagram 15)

---

<sup>9</sup> See page 18 for the chapter on *tsumego*.

The middle is marked and you can see that Black's territory is 5 points larger than the White one. Those points are a huge area on the 9x9 board, and yet White wins—because of the *komi*. Even after she sacrifices five of her stones, and the game ends with equal points of territory, she wins by 0.5 point.

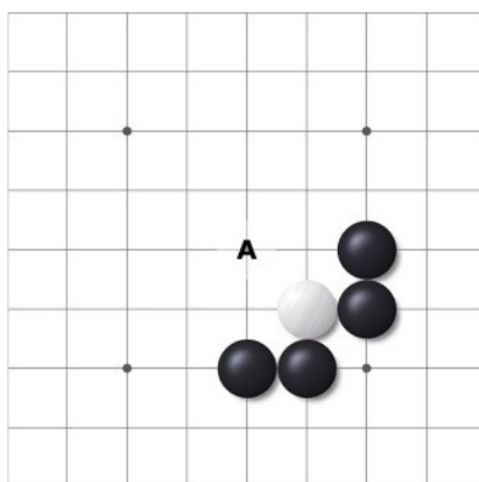
The *komi* also takes a large part in the psychology of your gameplay. While Black needs to take a more aggressive approach to the game, to make up for the *komi*, White can choose more solid moves.

Do not let that discourage you from playing on 9x9 boards. As a beginner, you might find it unfair that the *komi* seems so huge for White, however, as you progress and start to have a good understanding of the openings,<sup>10</sup> you will notice that the first Black move is worth much more than 5.5 points.

The better you understand how to use that first move as Black, the less problems you will have with *komi*. Soon enough, the time will come when you will be happy to take Black!

Nowadays I often think that the *komi* could be higher for White.

## 1.6. There Is Not Enough Space to Run



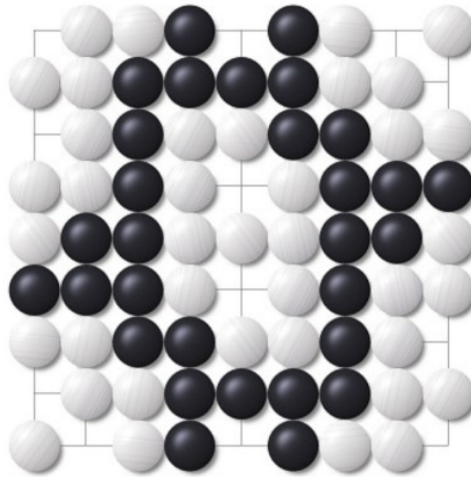
(Diagram 16)

A White move at A would be playable to save the endangered stone on the 19x19 board; there is not enough space to run on the small board, however: If White plays at A, Black can make a profitable move elsewhere. That is only an example diagram, but you will notice it yourself in your own games: Trying to save a group by running away will end in disaster most of the time.

---

<sup>10</sup> Refer back to page 7 for the section about openings.

## 1.7. Two Groups Are Enough



(Diagram 17)

There is a popular proverb for the 19x19 board which goes: “Five groups might live, but the sixth will die.” If you transpose this proverb to the 9x9 board, it will most probably go: “Two groups can live, but the third will likely die.”

Of course, you can make three living groups on the 9x9 board in some rare circumstances, but this is nothing that you want to aim for. It is not a successful tactic on the 9x9 board to play for three groups, so avoid it.

You can also use this knowledge to your advantage: If your opponent overplays a lot, you can always rely on knowing that only two of his groups will likely become alive in the end and stop responding to every overplay.

## 2. *Tsumego*

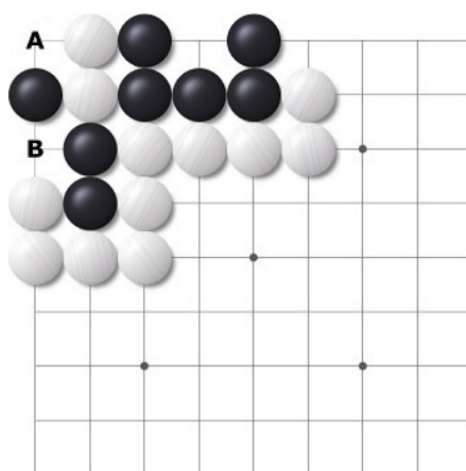
Probably the most important element of getting better at the 9x9 board is studying *tsumego*, also known as Go puzzles. But while some players enjoy them, others find them tiresome and boring—and although it is no problem at all to find yourself in this category, it means you will need to invest more time into playing and your overall progress will be slower compared to others. But what is the benefit of *tsumego*?

All of us who play Go learn to recognize patterns on the board. After we have seen a pattern in play many times, we need only a few seconds to recognize it—and from our previous experience with it, we often know a good response to it.

There are some patterns that are very complex, however, and in normal play we might overlook them. *Tsumego* aim at those, giving us a finished board state and asking us to “solve this!”. They increase the learning speed for those special occasions incredibly fast.

Sometimes the opponent will try to trick you, and you will be more likely to fall for his trap when the situation is unknown to you.

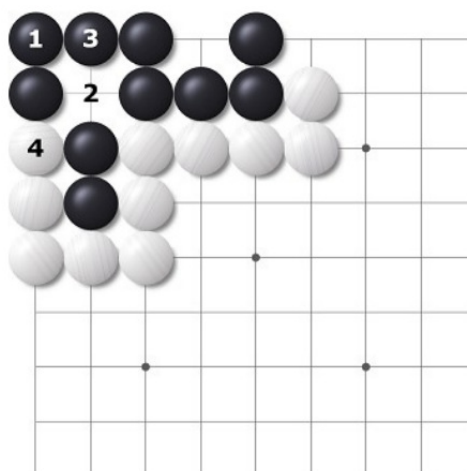
### 2.1. Example *Tsumego*



(Diagram 18)

Let us take the *tsumego* above as an example. Would you rather play A or B? Try to answer within 5 seconds and explain to yourself why you chose that move. It is Black's turn.

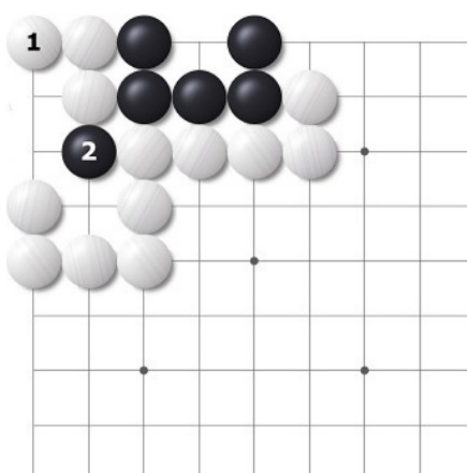
### 2.1.1. Example *Tsumego* — Option A



(Diagram 19)

The more natural response at A is wrong, as White will take away Black's eye space with a throw-in.

### 2.1.2. Example *Tsumego* — Option B



(Diagram 20)

If you have already invested some time into *tsumego* study, or if your rank is advanced enough to read through the situation, you will have answered B, which is correct. Only by sacrificing the 4 stones can Black achieve life.

If the answer to that *tsumego* took you more than 5 seconds, then you have the answer to “why do them?” at hand: For improvement! And if it took less: Good job, now do harder ones! Many *tsumego* teach you that your first intuitive reaction is wrong and will correct your mistake quickly. The more time you spend doing *tsumego*, the less time you will need in an actual game—and most of the time, falling for tricks will be a thing of the past.

## 2.2. Study Guide

But “how do I study them?” is also an important question to ask. Here are my recommendations on how to study *tsumego*:

### 2.2.1. Pick a predefined number of *tsumego* and stick to them until you have mastered them.

There is less benefit when you switch your *tsumego* collection everyday. Pick a set of 100-200 puzzles and stick with them until you have mastered them all. Only then switch to the next collection.

### 2.2.2. Do not cheat! Hands off your mouse!

If you are doing *tsumego* on a piece of paper with a pen, this is not relevant. However, on many websites that offer *tsumego* you can just click randomly through the puzzle and go back to the start when it is wrong. Do not do this! Solve the *tsumego* in your head only and only use your mouse when you are 110% certain that you got it right!

### 2.2.3. Never look at the solution.

If you cannot find the solution for a *tsumego*, either spend more time on it or switch to one that you can solve. If you solve a *tsumego* yourself, the positive effect on your memory is huge. There is zero benefit if you cheat yourself.

### 2.2.4. Take your time. Then repeat and improve your time.

If you are solving a *tsumego* for the first time, take your time. The solution might take you 20 minutes, but who cares? Once you solve it, the joy will be overwhelming and you will never forget it. Review it after a week and see if you can solve it more quickly this time. The goal is to be able to solve it in less than 5 seconds.

### 2.2.5. Do at least 1 *tsumego* per day.

Had a long day at work? No time for anything? No problem: Print out a page to look at while you are watching TV or laying in bed. If you have a smartphone, download one of the many *tsumego* apps available and do one while brushing your teeth. I suggest that you do at least 1 puzzle per day. It takes a minute to solve a *tsumego*. Do it! Now!

### 2.2.6. The optimal number of *tsumego* per day is 10-20.

It is optimal that you do 10-20 puzzles per day. You can do 200, if you have the free time, but the memory benefit decreases quickly after those first 10 ones. Quality is the key to success when doing *tsumego*, not quantity.

## 2.3. Where to Find *Tsumego*

You probably downloaded *81 Little Lions* from the [Online Go Server \(OGS\)](#)<sup>11</sup>—if not, check out the [official release thread](#)<sup>12</sup> for different formats of this book (AZW3 and EPUB) and updates. I invite you to visit that website and click on “[Puzzles](#).”<sup>13</sup> You will find a large library with hundreds of *tsumego* there. OGS is also one of the best communities to play Go online, so try it out!

For beginners, I recommend the *Encyclopedia of Life and Death*, by Cho Chikun. It features 900 *tsumego* on all elementary aspects and it is the best collection for this level out there. Doing all 900 of them, together with the guide provided above,<sup>14</sup> will take you to a stable 6-*kyu* rank within a few months.

You can find the printable version<sup>15</sup> here:

<http://tsumego.tasuki.org/books/cho-1-elementary.pdf>

The online version is available on OGS: <https://online-go.com/puzzle/5/>

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<sup>11</sup> <https://online-go.com/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://forums.online-go.com/t/81-little-lions-an-introduction-to-the-9x9-board-for-advanced-beginners-by-immanuel-devillers-revised-edition-2019/19848/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://online-go.com/puzzles/>

<sup>14</sup> Back on page 20.

<sup>15</sup> You will notice that the [printable version](#) has no solutions attached. This is intended, so you cannot cheat! You can verify your solutions in the [online version](#).



### 3. Learn *Joseki*

“But learning *joseki* is bad! Do not do it until you are <insert random rank here>.”

That is one of the standard sentences that any Go player has heard at least once in his lifetime. Some players preach it like a mantra, some will throw it at your face without even understanding what it means. If you ask any of them why they speak that sentence, most will tell you that they heard it from someone else—or go with “I do not want to play moves that I do not understand.” But I feel that this common approach is wrong.

There is a consensus that memorizing *joseki* is wrong if you do not understand the reason behind it. However, *joseki* moves are also considered the best in certain localized situations. Most of us are amateur players, and of course we will not understand everything about a *joseki*, but by totally neglecting them until we hit a predefined rank we are only hindering ourselves.

When I was a beginner (~19k), I was often obliterated in the corner on a 19x19 board. A 3-3 corner invasion would totally kill my stones. One player then recommended me to study and learn the corresponding *joseki*, which I did for a week. Obviously, I could not understand those moves at my rank back then, but afterward, knowing the best moves and having spent time with them, I was never tricked again when playing people of my own rank—and I climbed a few ranks quickly.

So, instead of completely ignoring *joseki* and then telling other people what to do, try a different approach:

1. Pick up three of your favorite openings and study one or two *joseki* for each of them.
2. Play out the moves on a board and think about every move for at least a minute.
3. Try to understand why each move is the best move.
4. Try to think about responses that differ from the *joseki*. How would you react to them and why?
5. Write down any uncertainties and review them after some time to see if you have found clarity.
6. A lot of questions will arise: Write them down and show them to a stronger player.

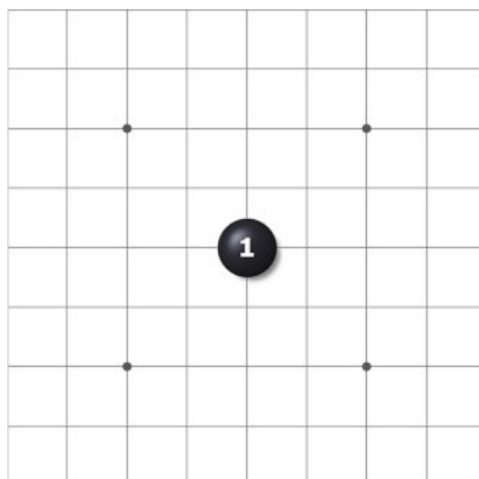
## Studying your favorite *joseki* is one of the first steps to becoming stronger.

I am certain that the opening on a 9x9 board is the most important part of the game. By picking up your three favorite openings and studying one or two *joseki* for each of them you will already be 2-3 ranks stronger within a week. Do you not have a favorite opening? How about the *tengen* (5-5)?<sup>16</sup>

### 3.1. My Favorite *Joseki*

Listing all possible *joseki* variations for the 9x9 board would be a huge task, but you can find a very good learning resource on the Internet under [Francia's 9x9 Joseki Collection](#),<sup>17</sup> where I have put together a larger collection of them. I can also recommend the [9x9 Opening Explorer](#), by mark5000.<sup>18</sup>

As for this book, I will introduce my two favorite *tengen* variants to you. As I mentioned before, the *tengen* is the most popular opening in pro games. And, to reiterate, I recommend that you study the *tengen* openings first.



(Diagram 21)

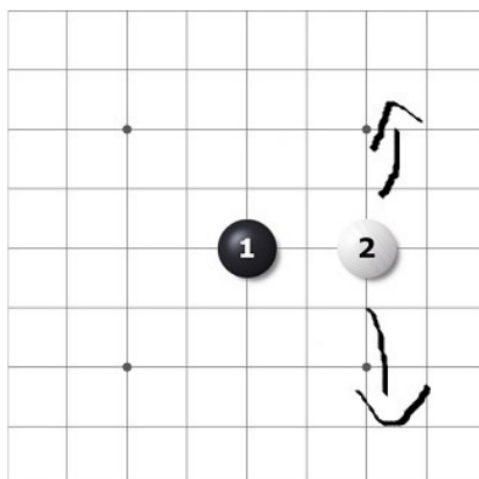
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<sup>16</sup> See page 8.

<sup>17</sup> <https://online-go.com/puzzle/132/>

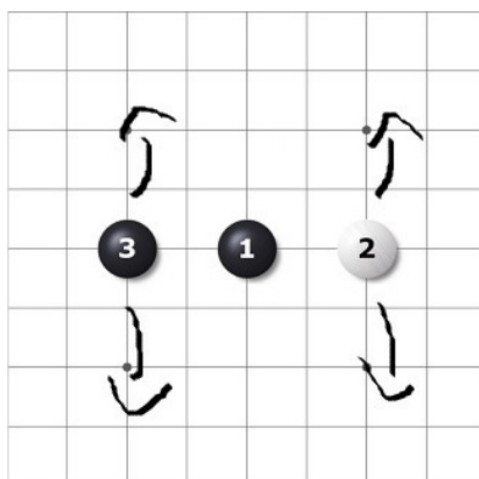
<sup>18</sup> Available here: <https://online-go.com/puzzle/181/>

### 3.1.1. *Tengen* (5-5) *Joseki* — Variation 1



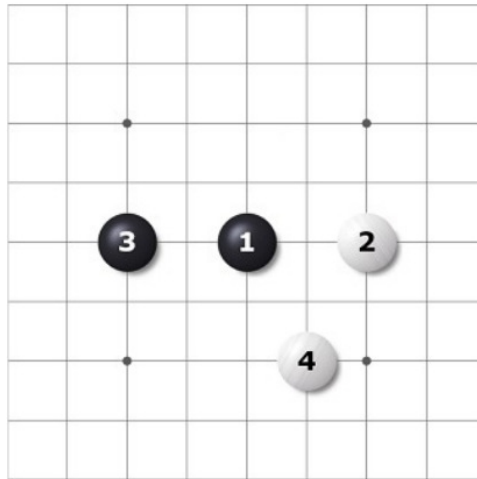
(Diagram 22)

White 2 is a common response to the *tengen* opening. White does not yet decide which corner to take and leaves that decision to Black.



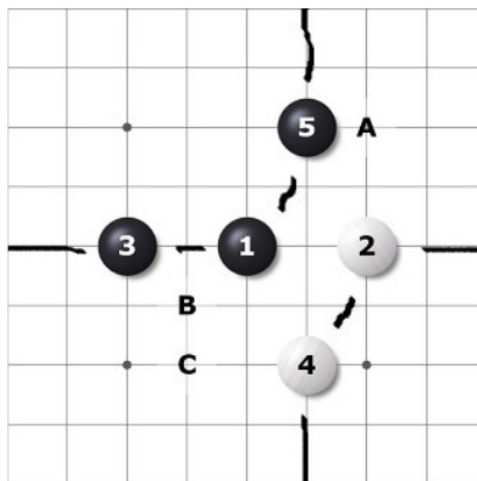
(Diagram 23)

A good and common response is Black 3. It might look too passive, but it is very good for Black not to decide over a direction yet. He also gains a good influence over the left part of the board.



(Diagram 24)

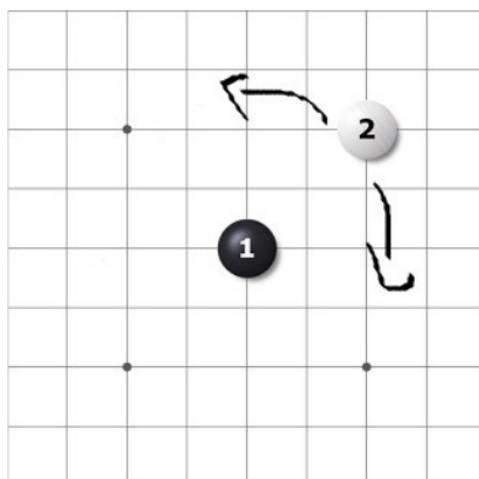
White 4 makes solid territory and finally decides for a corner.



(Diagram 25)

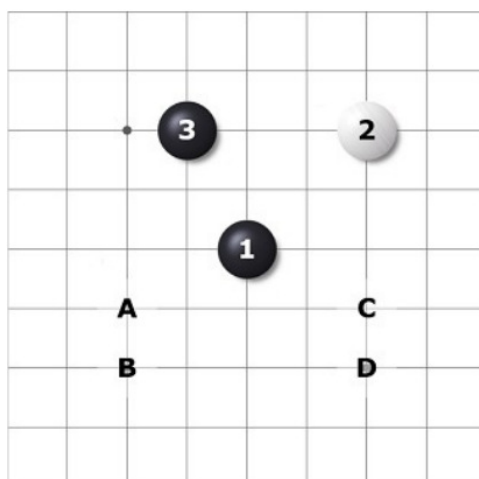
Black 5 is one of the standard responses and the *joseki* ends here. As White has 5.5 points of *komi*, the positions are about equal in points. White has the possibility of playing A, B, or C next.

### 3.1.2. *Tengen* (5-5) *Joseki* — Variation 2



(Diagram 26)

Another common response to the *tengen* opening is White 2. It makes a solid corner territory and extensions into either direction are possible.



(Diagram 27)

Black cannot safely attack White 2 directly. A good response is Black 3, as it threatens to take big corner territory and creates a large influence over the left side of the board.

White has several good options for her next move: A and B are invasions into Black's influence and will start a fight; C is a solid and territorial move and D invites Black to an attack between the two White stones.

## 4. *Furikawari*

“You exchange a potential territory for the territory of your opponent—and vice versa.”

Simple as it sounds, the Japanese term *furikawari* stands for “an exchange of potential territory.” Open space or framework is switched between the two players and turned into territory in the process—but of course, when doing play that ends in *furikawari*, you want to get the best result for yourself and not help the opponent!

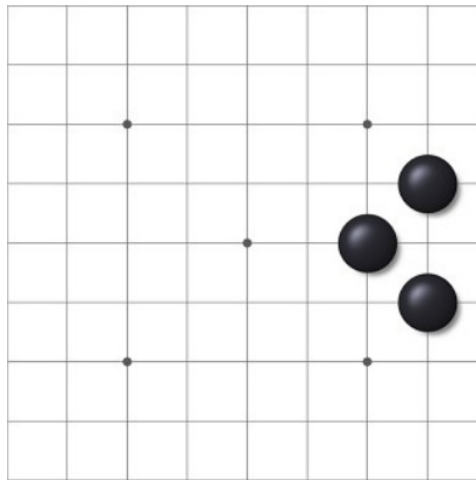
When I first learned about *furikawari*, I found it to be a rather vague topic that had no practical use for me. And when it happened in my games, there were no specific beginner techniques I could refer to and I had a hard time.

I will try to make this road easier for you! In the two upcoming sections I will (hopefully) give you a better understanding on how to use *furikawari* in your own 9x9 games.

Imagine yourself as the White player in the diagrams that follow.

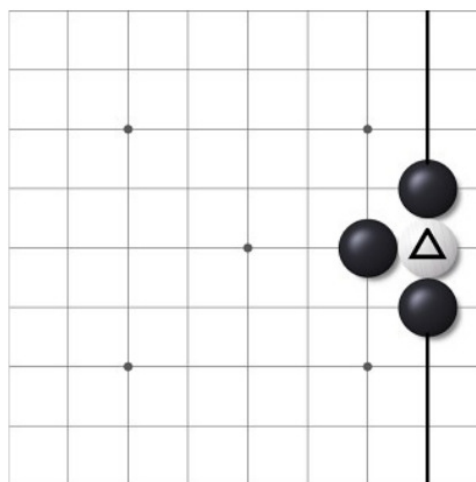
## 4.1. The Chapel Technique

This is one of the basic capturing techniques in Go.



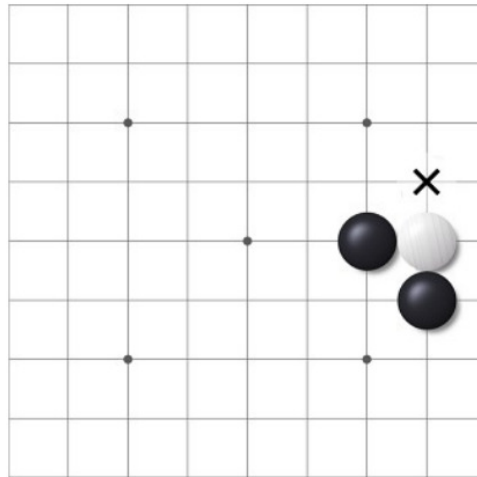
(Diagram 28)

The three Black stones in the diagram above form the chapel.



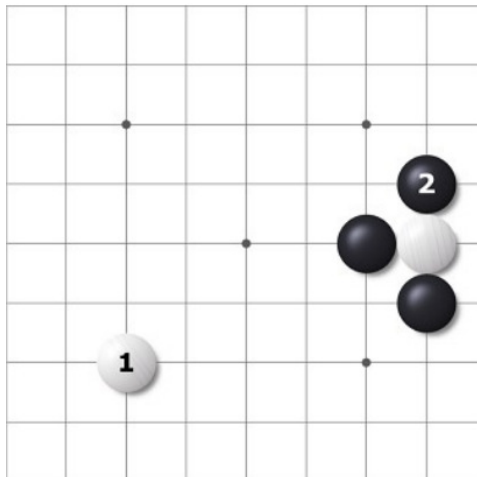
(Diagram 29)

The chapel only works on the second line of the board. The three Black stones surround the single White stone, facing the edge. The White stone cannot be saved and is dead.



(Diagram 30)

But it is possible to turn the opponent's chapel around as a technique for *furikawari*. Look at the diagram above. The two Black stones placed around the White stone are “*threatening a chapel*.”

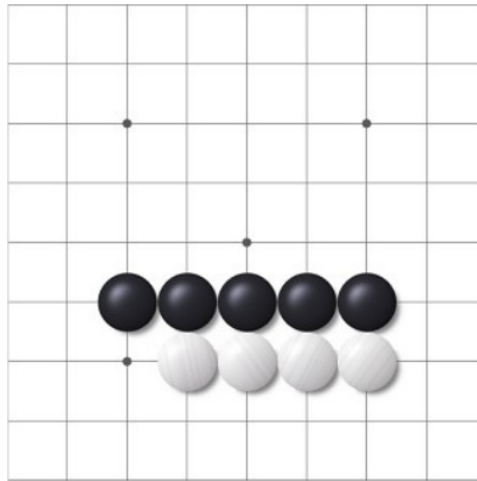


(Diagram 31)

If White ignores the threat and plays elsewhere, Black 2 can capture the White stone in a chapel. But then White could just sacrifice her stone and make a very profitable move elsewhere.<sup>19</sup>

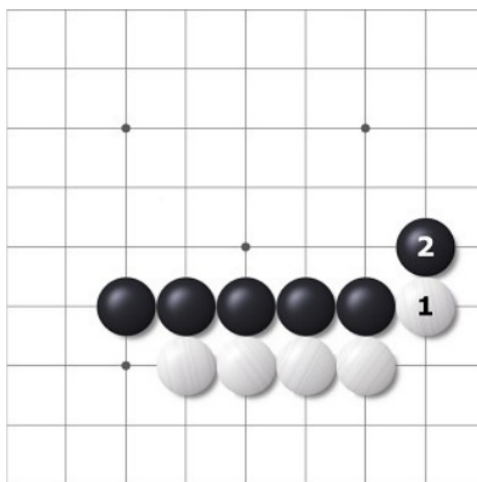
<sup>19</sup> So please notice that Black 2 is an endgame move! Playing it this early would be a mistake because of the free move that White would get.





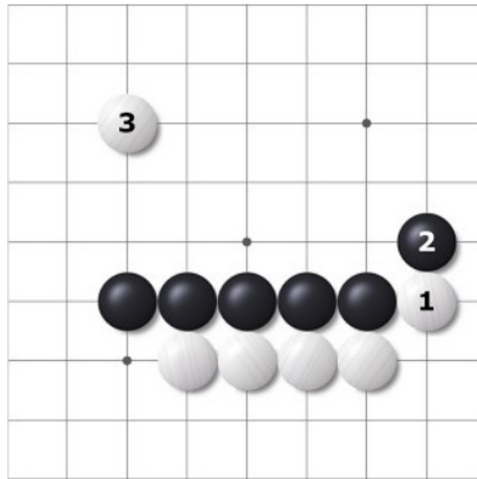
(Diagram 32)

Let us start another example with the common position above. Black has big influence over the top of the board and White has a small group on the lower side.



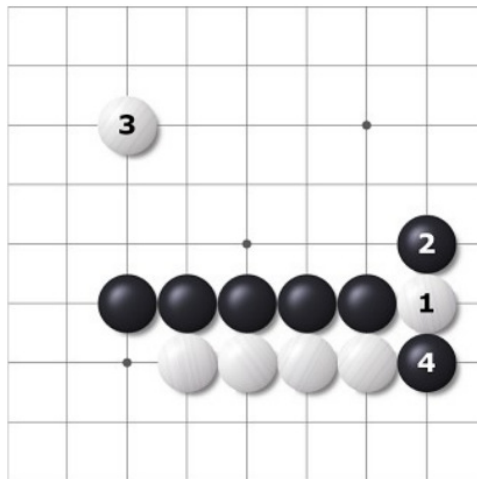
(Diagram 33)

White bends around the Black group with White 1. A common response by Black is to “threaten a chapel” with Black 2. But this is exactly what White wants.



(Diagram 34)

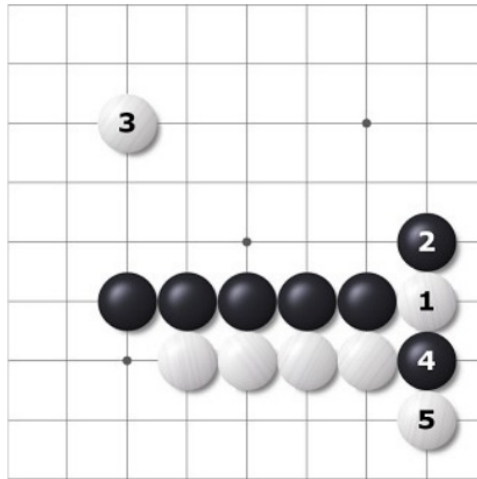
White can now ignore the chapel threat and take a big point elsewhere on the board.<sup>20</sup> The correct move for Black is to play in the upper left corner and react to White 3.



(Diagram 35)

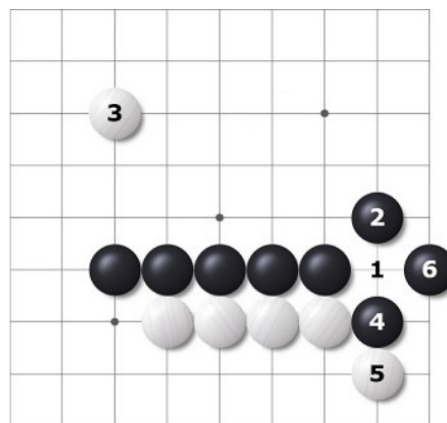
However, Black will often fall for the “trap” and play the chapel next.

<sup>20</sup> One could argue that it would generally be a better play for White to connect her stones after Black 2, but while this is often true for 19x19 boards, on 9x9 boards it is only so in some cases. In any event, that is not overly important in that instance, as it is just a simple example of how the chapel technique can be used to gain a *sente* move.



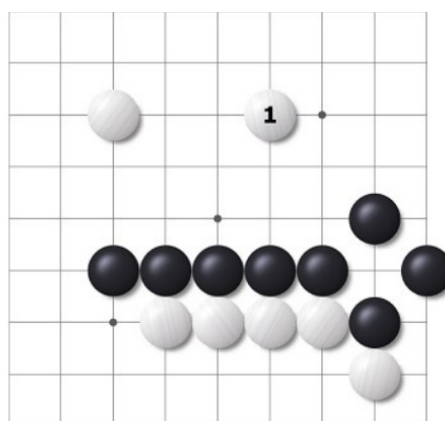
(Diagram 36)

White will react by putting Black 4 in *atari*. If Black decides to play elsewhere now, Black 4 will be captured by White. If Black captures White 1, White gets a free move elsewhere. This is a big dilemma for Black. White can be happy with the result, no matter what happens next.



(Diagram 37)

Most of the time, Black will capture the White stone with Black 6.



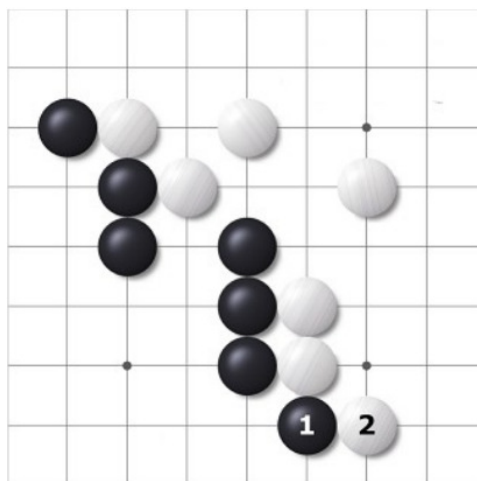
(Diagram 38)

The diagram above shows the result. White has sacrificed a tiny bit of territory in the corner but gained a free move elsewhere. This is huge for White, and Black can think about resigning. This was just an example in which *furikawari* was used to win on a 9x9 board. Sometimes exchanges will be very subtle and only experience and counting will tell if the technique is worth playing.

Knowing and using the chapel technique is a must-have for any advanced 9x9 player, especially since the result is a lot better than on bigger boards. Its main benefit is to get a free *sente* move by sacrificing a stone. I suggest that you experiment with the chapel to get a good feeling for it.

#### 4.1.1. A Pro Game Example

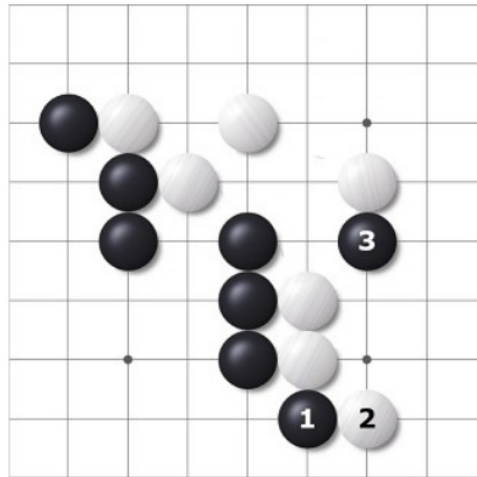
The following example is taken from [the sixth game](#) between Kudo Norio (9p) and Yamada Kimio (9p),<sup>21</sup> in which the chapel is used by Black to *furikawari*.



(Diagram 53)

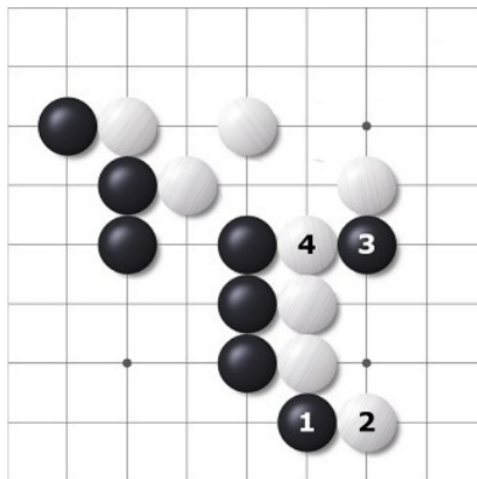
At this stage of the game, White has a strong position over the top right and the game is highly in his favor. After White is bent by Black 1, he threatens a chapel at White 2.

<sup>21</sup> Available here: <https://online-go.com/game/1310716/>



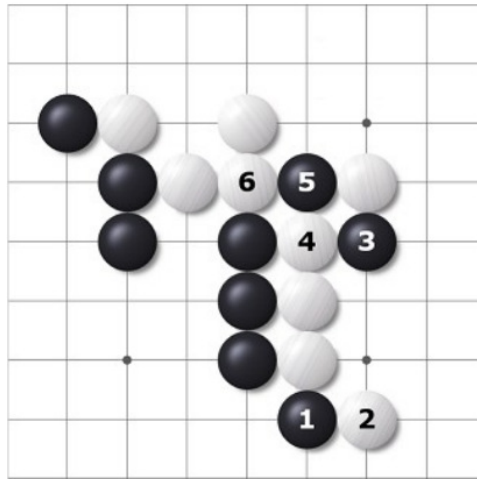
(Diagram 54)

Black 3 uses this to his advantage and ignores the threat by invading. White cannot play the chapel but has to react to Black's play.



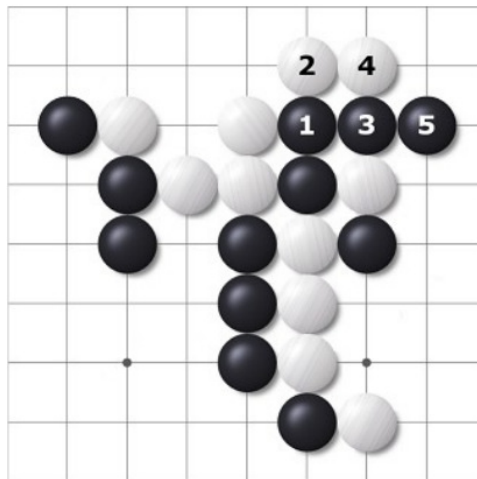
(Diagram 55)

White 4 cuts the Black stone off, and it looks like White is in a good position again. But Black has a plan!



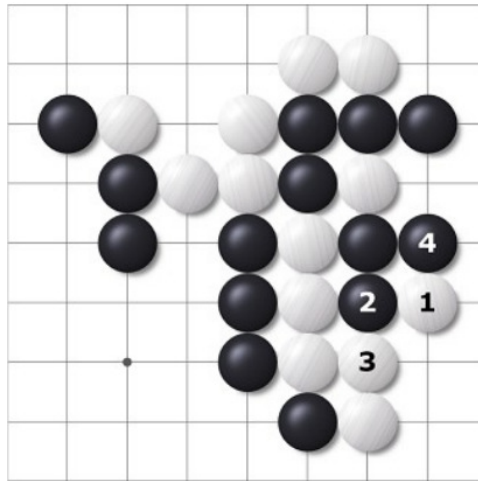
(Diagram 56)

Black 5 cuts off the White stones from each other, and White 6 does the same to the Black stones at 3 and 5. Notice how Black 1 takes away a liberty from the White group. Without this, White 6 would have given *atari* to Black 5 from the other direction. The chapel still has not been resolved, because of Black's furious attack. Can you read out what will happen next?



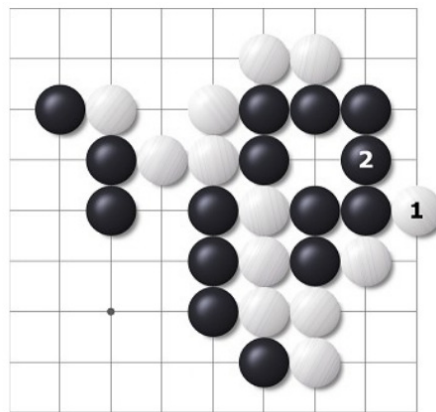
(Diagram 57)

Black pulls his stone out of *atari* with Black 1, and a small sequence follows in which Black gets pushed to the edge of the board.



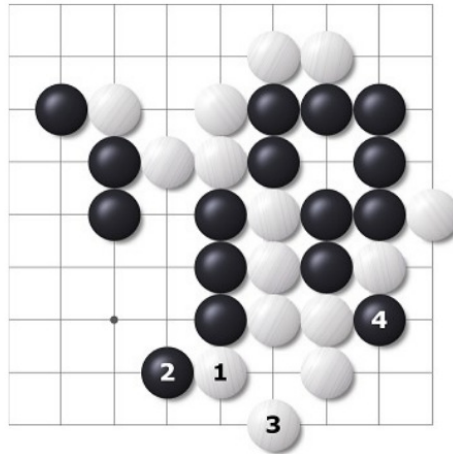
(Diagram 58)

Black has surrounded a White stone in the process and is almost alive now. Black 2 is an *atari* to the White group, and White 3 connects and saves it. This invasion was only as successful because Black had used the chapel technique initially.



(Diagram 59)

White 1 puts the three Black stones in *atari*, and Black has to capture and connect with Black 2.



(Diagram 60)

Finally, the chapel is resolved with White 1 and Black 2. For his group to stay alive, White must capture at 3, and Black 4 does the same thing for his group on the right. If you go back to the initial diagram,<sup>22</sup> would you have guessed this outcome?

Obviously, playing this well demands the highest level of skill in Go. But it is a good example of how you can use the chapel technique to gain an advantage.

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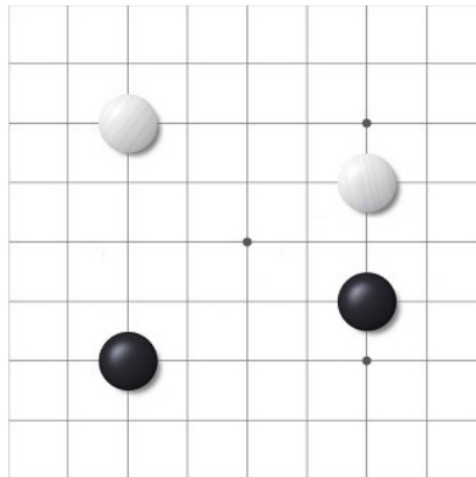
<sup>22</sup> See page [33](#).



## 4.2. The Attach-Crosscut Technique

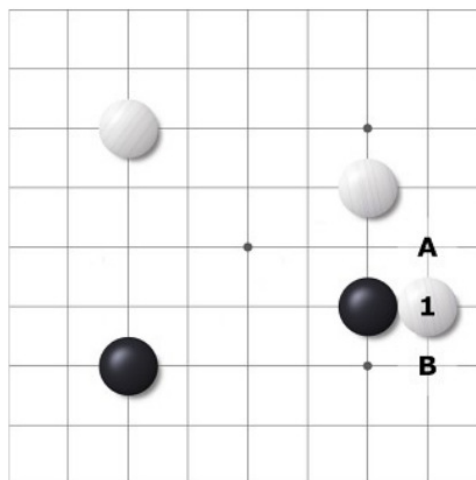
Another technique for a possible *furikawari* is the attach-crosscut. It has many possible outcomes and I will try to address the most common ones.

To be uniform with the previous section, I switched the colors and White plays first in the following example.



(Diagram 39)

Where can White play to do *furikawari*?

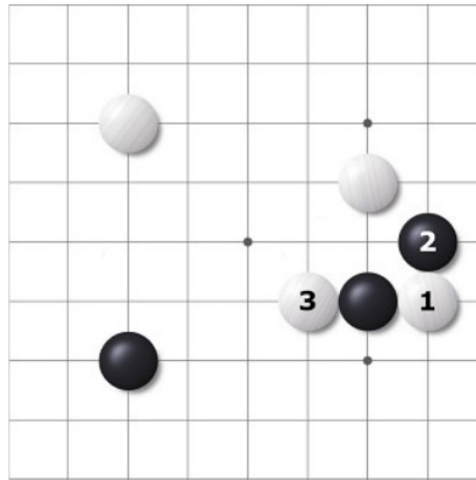


(Diagram 40)

White 1 is the move to start an exchange of potential territory. While it looks counter-intuitive to attach this close to the edge of the board, it is a possible play. Black will probably play A or B now. If he decides to play elsewhere instead, White will already be satisfied with the result.

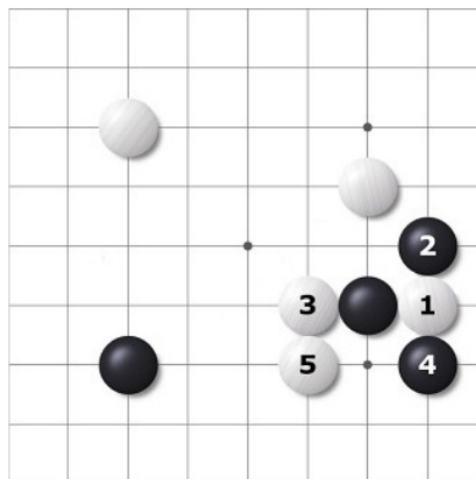
### 4.2.1. Attach-Crosscut — Option A

#### 4.2.1.1. Attach-Crosscut — Option A — Variation 1



(Diagram 41)

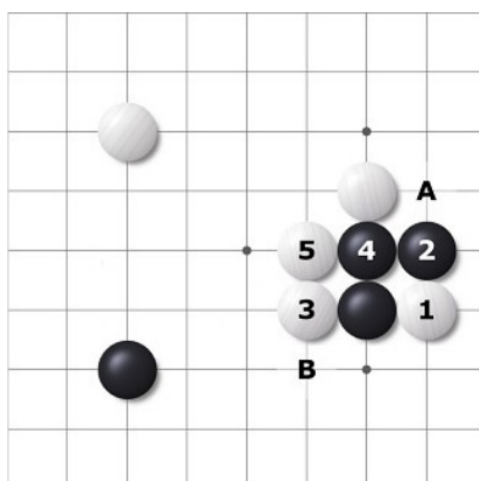
After a Black play at A, White can do different variations that are good for her. One possibility is the clamp at White 3.



(Diagram 42)

If Black captures White 1 in a chapel, White can safely extend with White 5 and be happy that she has invaded Black's territory successfully.

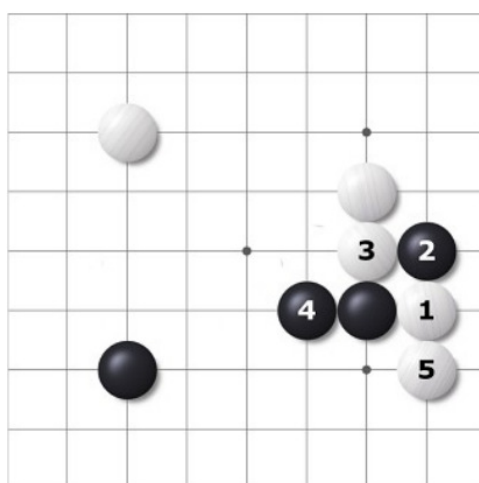
#### 4.2.1.2. Attach-Crosscut — Option A — Variation 2



(Diagram 43)

If Black decides to connect his stones at Black 4 instead, White 5 closes the border to her territory. A and B are possible continuations for both players: If Black takes B, White could play A, and vice versa.

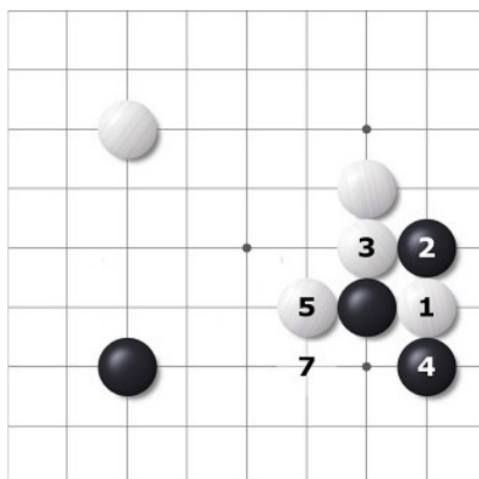
#### 4.2.1.3. Attach-Crosscut — Option A — Variation 3



(Diagram 44)

After Black's taking option A earlier, this variation is also a possibility for White. If Black extends into the middle with Black 4, White 5 invades deeply into Black's territory.

#### 4.2.1.4. Attach-Crosscut — Option A — Variation 4

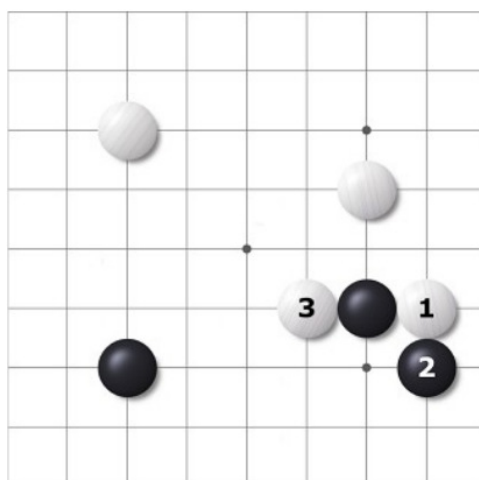


(Diagram 45)

If Black plays the chapel with Black 4, White 5 will *atari* on the opposite side. Black can now capture White 1 or connect his stones. White can be happy about either choice and play move 7.

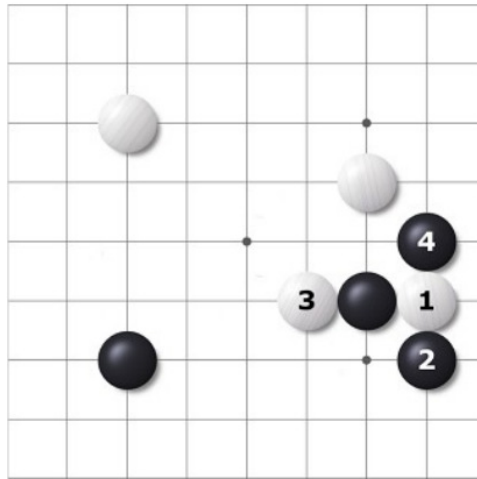
#### 4.2.2. Attach-Crosscut — Option B

##### 4.2.2.1. Attach-Crosscut — Option B — Variation 1



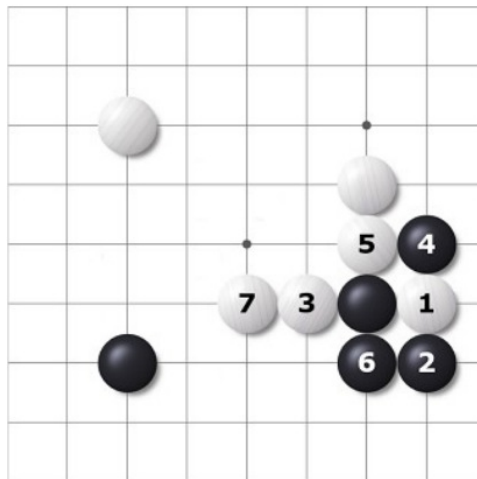
(Diagram 46)

After the initial moves, Black can also decide to block White 1 on the other side of the board. As in the previous examples, the wedge at 3 is playable for White.



(Diagram 47)

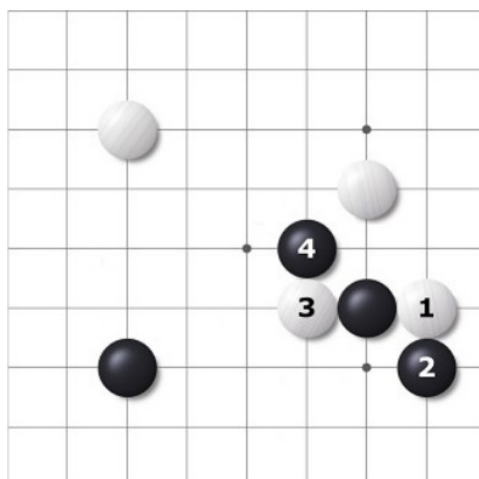
If Black is greedy, he might play the chapel at Black 4. This is a horrible move for him, as you will see in the next diagram.



(Diagram 48)

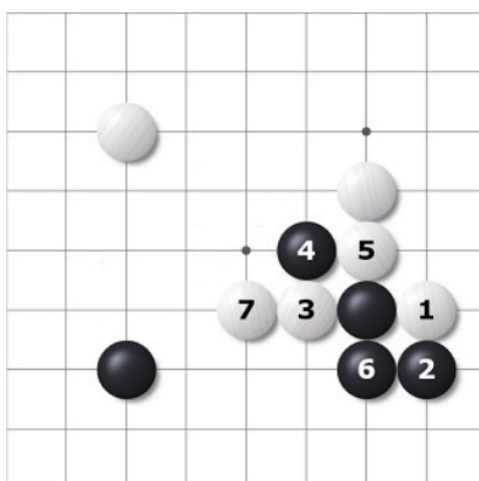
White will waste no time and will *atari* the Black stone with White 5. Black has to comply and connect his stones or his territory will be lost. As a result, White can strengthen her big territory. White 7 is a good and solid possibility.

#### 4.2.2.2. Attach-Crosscut — Option B — Variation 2



(Diagram 49)

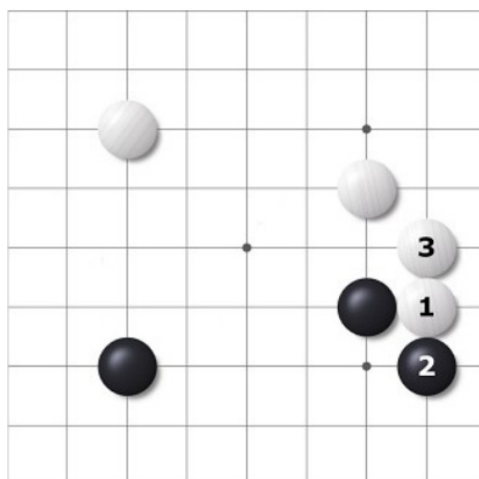
Black might try to push through the White formation with Black 4, but this variation is not a good choice for him.



(Diagram 50)

White can simply react with White 5, forcing Black to connect his stones. The extension at White 7 is good for White and she can be satisfied with the result.

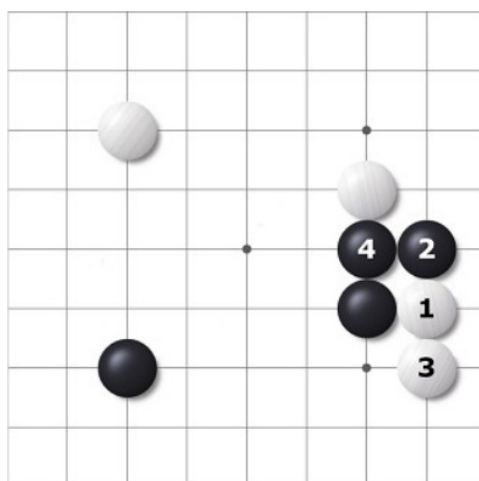
#### 4.2.2.3. Attach-Crosscut — Option B — Variation 3



(Diagram 51)

White 3 is a very defensive variation and will probably not lead to an exchange of territory. It is playable, though, and reduces some of Black's territory.

#### 4.2.2.4. Attach-Crosscut — Option B — Variation 4 (Mistake)



(Diagram 52)

Do not mix up the previous variation and this one. Here, if Black blocks on the other side and White extends her initial stone, Black can connect his stones and will then be in a very strong position!

The success of the attach-crosscut technique depends a lot on the surrounding stones. So, before you play it, take into consideration whether the result of the exchange will be good for you.

Of course, there are a lot more possibilities for *furikawari*, but explaining all possible situations would be enough for a book on its own. With the two simple mechanics you have seen, you will have a good start on how to exchange territory successfully.

Experiment with the techniques and apply them in your games. If you fail, try to review and find out what went wrong. Understanding the basic concept behind

*furikawari* and how it is used on 9x9 will make you at least one rank stronger on the 9x9 board.



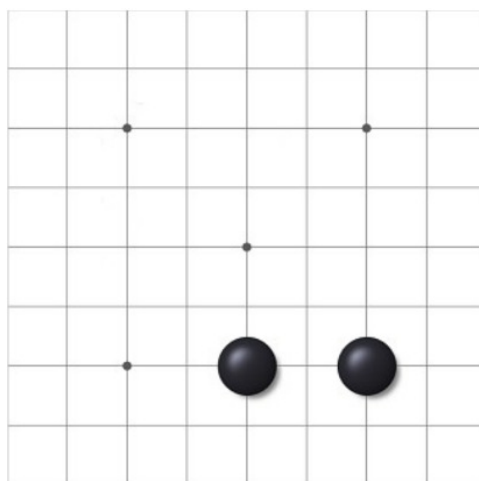
## 5. On Jumps

Extending from your own stones and groups is one of the most important elements of the 9x9 game. Jumps and extensions are a good way to gain control over the board without creating too many weak spots for the opponent to exploit.

However, it is also important not to extend blindly, but to think about what happens afterward. The following sections will provide a few things to remember.

### 5.1. Good

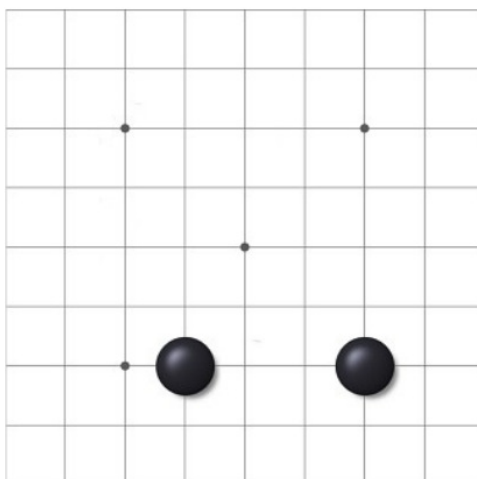
#### 5.1.1. One-Point Jump



(Diagram 61)

The one-point jump is a very solid and good move to extend your control on the board—especially when being played on the third line! Before you extend a stone or group, consider the one-point jump first.

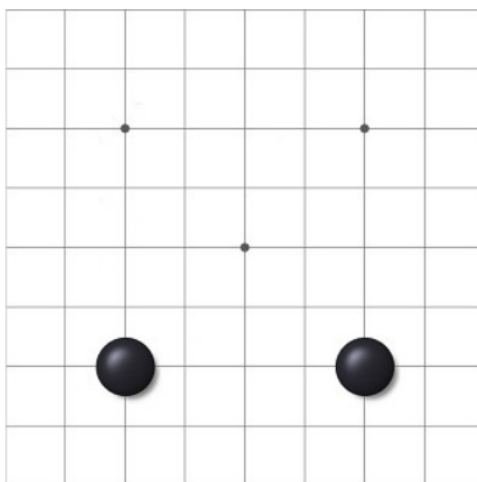
### 5.1.2. Two-Point Jump



(Diagram 62)

The two-point jump is another good extension to make a solid base on the side of the board. Before you play it, make sure that there are no enemy stones around that could cut into your extension.

### 5.1.3. Three-Point Jump

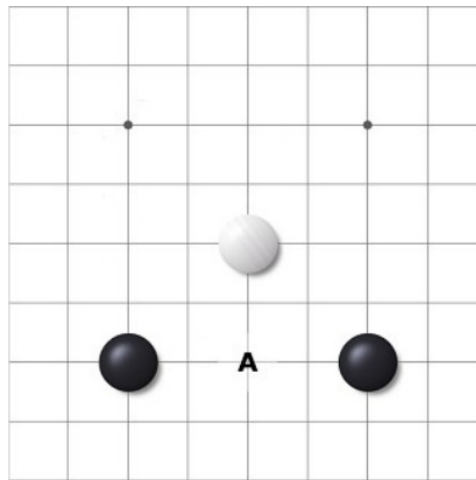


(Diagram 63)

The same principles apply to the three-point jump: If there are no enemy stones around yet, it is a playable option! In the diagram, if White decides to wedge between, Black can extend to the open directions and live.

## 5.2. Bad

### 5.2.1. Three-Point Jump With White Stone on *Tengen*

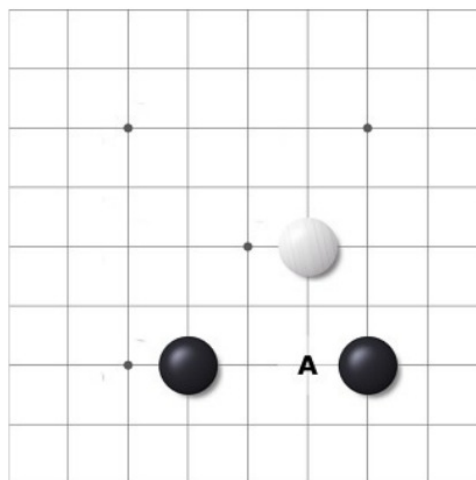


(Diagram 64)

The three-point jump is never a good extension if there is a White stone on *tengen*. In the diagram, White will wedge at A after the extension and Black will have to fight for his life on one side.

## 5.3. Depends

### 5.3.1. Two-Point Jump With White Stone Around



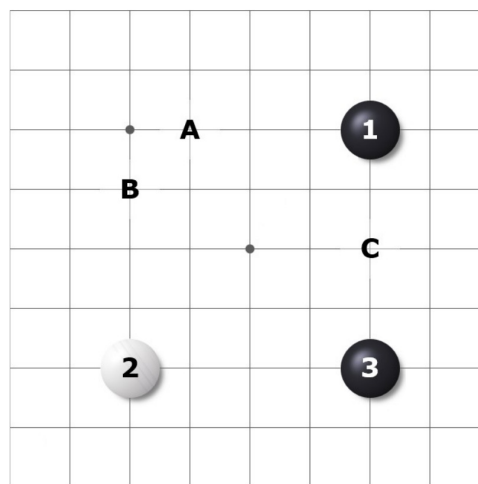
(Diagram 65)

You should consider carefully if you want to play a two-point jump when a White stone is around. In the diagram, a wedge at A would not be too painful yet, but it would create cutting points with *aji* for later.

## 6. Practical Trainer

I want to do a little practical training with you. In the following pages, I will show you starting diagrams with a few moves having been played already. These examples are taken from amateur games and they show positions that can be seen very often. You will be given three choices for each and it is up to you to find a good answer. Since there are no pro-game records of those positions, I will try to give a detailed explanation from my point of view.

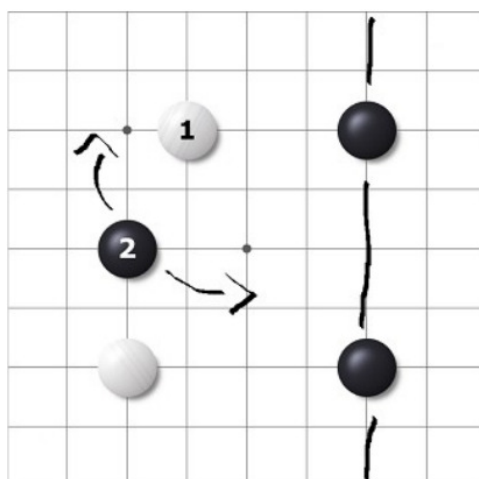
### 6.1. Training 1



(Diagram 66)

White to play. A, B or C?

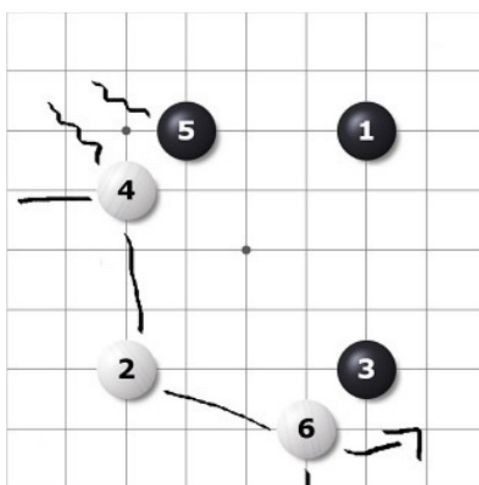
### 6.1.1. Training 1 — Option A



(Diagram 67)

The move at A is a common beginner mistake. It is too greedy for White to create the open space. Black 2 will be an optimal invasion and White will have a hard time.

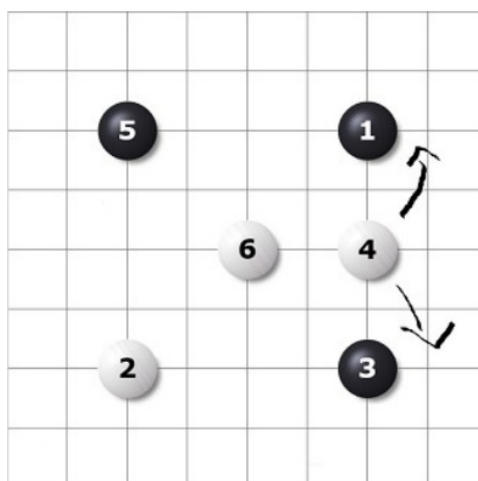
### 6.1.2. Training 1 — Option B ✓



(Diagram 68)

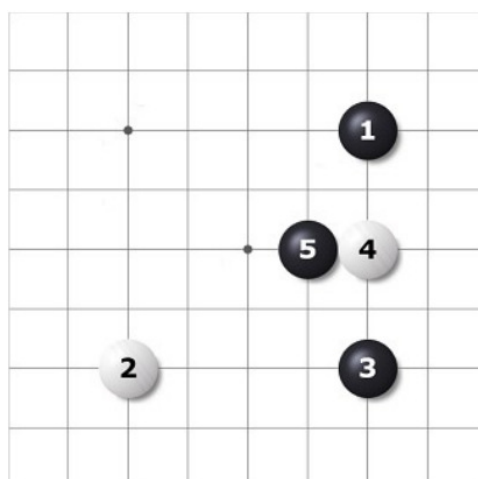
B is a solid and good move. It looks very passive, but White makes good territory with it. If Black 5 takes away the corner, do not forget that White has 5.5 *komi* to compensate! White 6 is a good and calm response.

### 6.1.3. Training 1 — Option C



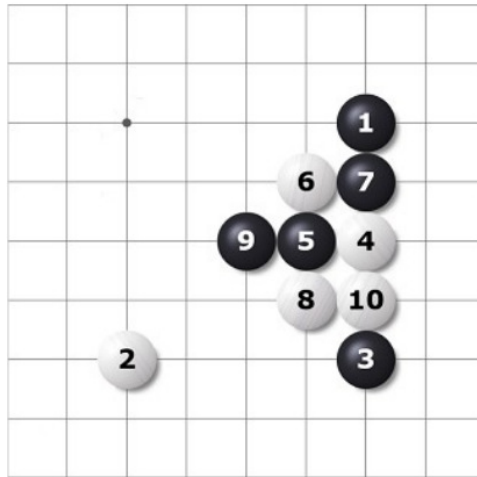
(Diagram 69)

C is also a playable choice and Black will not wait to take another corner with 5. White 6 can safely extend to *tengen* in return and a fight over the whole board will start. If White manages to split the Black groups into three later, she will be able to kill one of them.



(Diagram 70)

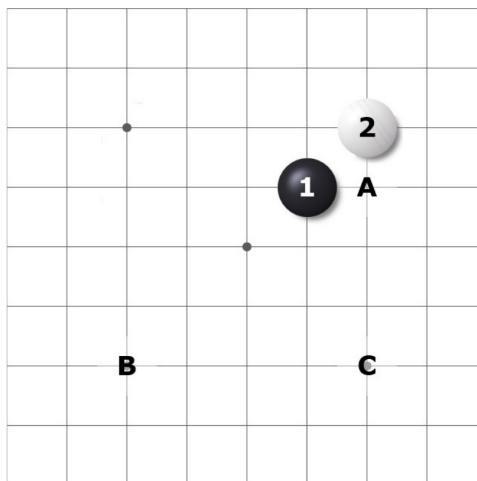
Some beginners will make the mistake of answering White 4 with a contact move at Black 5. This is a very good for White, as she can exploit the cutting points while running away. See the next diagram.



(Diagram 71)

Even though the situation looks complicated, the overall result is a lot better for White, as she gets the lower right corner and Black's groups are separated until he captures White 6.

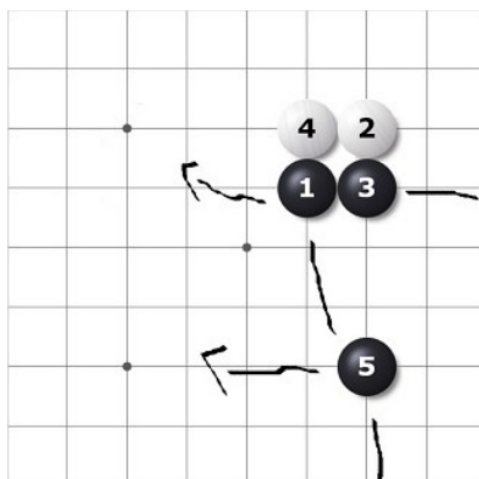
## 6.2. Training 2



(Diagram 72)

Black to play. A, B or C?

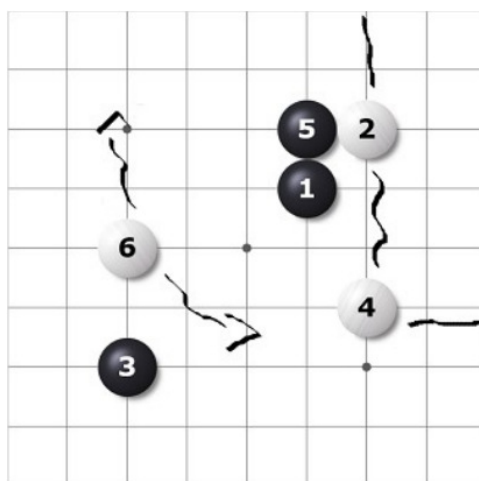
### 6.2.1. Training 2 — Option A ✓



(Diagram 73)

Black 3 is the best answer to punish White's overplay in the opening. White needs to extend with 4 or lose the corner. This makes her initial move inefficient. Black 5 takes a huge chunk of the board.

### 6.2.2. Training 2 — Option B

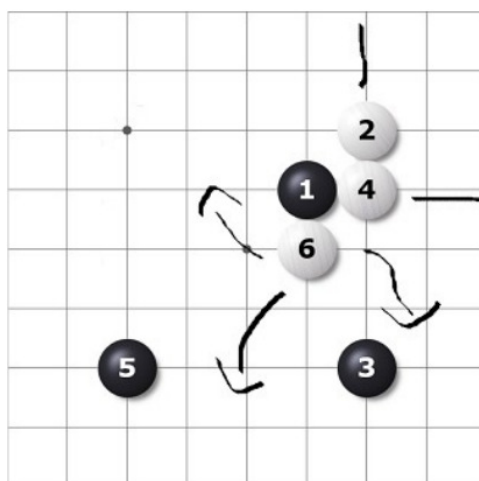


(Diagram 74)

Ignoring White 2, Black can take the opposite corner. This is not a good move, because White will extend with White 4. If Black blocks (either side) with 5, White will sacrifice her initial stone and start a whole-board fight.



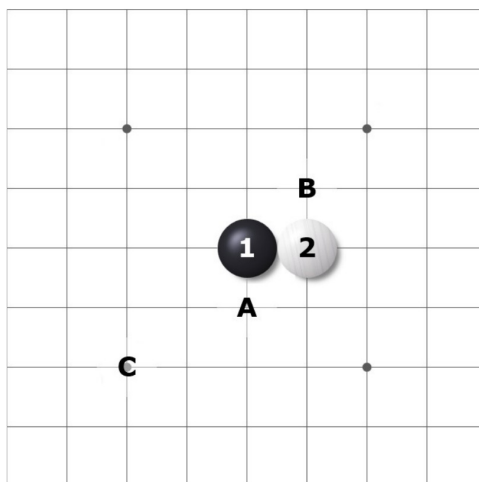
### 6.2.3. Training 2 — Option C



(Diagram 75)

C is the worst option, as White will play 4 to make a solid corner. Black has no choice and needs to take a second corner as compensation with Black 5. White 6 can then start an invasion from a safe base.

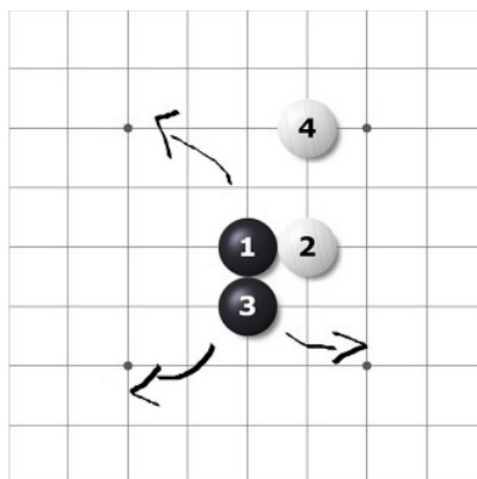
### 6.3. Training 3



(Diagram 76)

Black to play. A, B or C?

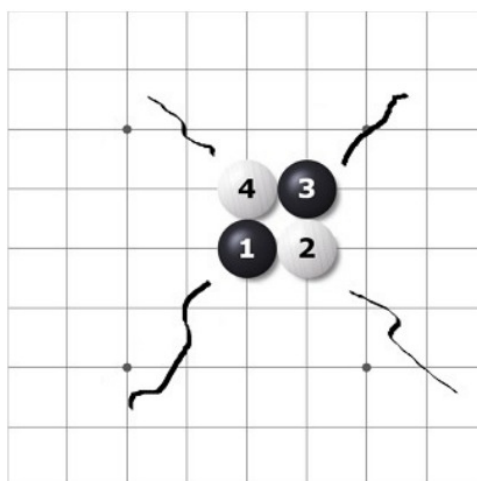
### 6.3.1. Training 3 — Option A ✓



(Diagram 77)

The solid extension at A is the correct move to punish White's overplay. If White wants to make safe territory with White 4, Black can carefully plan his next move and possibly invade.

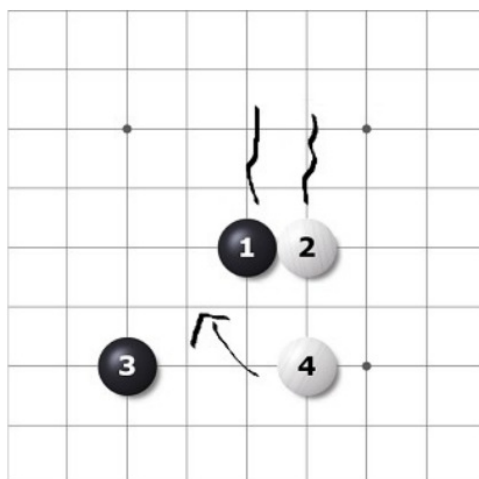
### 6.3.2. Training 3 — Option B



(Diagram 78)

If Black decides to cut, White can do the same and start a *semeai* over the whole board. Black has to carefully think if he wants this outcome before playing the move at B.

### 6.3.3. Training 3 — Option C



(Diagram 79)

White will be thankful for the passive move at Black 3 and extend her control over the board with White 4. The open space between Black 1 and 3 is bad for Black, as White can invade later.

## 7. The End?

Yes, the book is already at its end and I hope you have learned something new from my introduction to the 9x9 board. Of course, I could only give you a basic understanding of this special board size—and there is much more to learn and discover! If you lose a lot on the 9x9 board, do not let that discourage you! As the popular saying goes: “The master has failed more than the student has even tried.”

I want to give a special thanks to [mark5000](#), who gave me great input on many parts of the book (and who is an excellent 9x9 player himself).

Also, a thank you to those who helped me getting stronger, read over the book, and those who are my good friends. ♥

That includes (in alphabetical order): [anoek](#), [arnfasta](#), [BOAtanne](#), [calantir](#), [crodgers](#), [donbambone](#), [Elli](#), [Gast-Account](#), [Kuroneko](#), [Levvo](#), [matburt](#), [Migaki](#), [Mikasa](#), [mlopezviedma](#), [pathogenix](#), [Satomi](#), [ST000MA](#), [thouis](#), [tinuviel](#), [trohde](#), [TTT](#), [Vanna](#), [vranzel](#), [xhu98](#).

Feel free to contact me via [immanuel.devillers@gmail.com](mailto:immanuel.devillers@gmail.com) or send a message to [Françisa](#) on the Online-Go Server (OGS).

### 7.1. Link List

- Online Go Server (OGS): <https://online-go.com/>
- *81 Little Lions*, by Immanuel deVillers — Revised Edition (2019) — Official Release Thread: <https://forums.online-go.com/t/81-little-lions-an-introduction-to-the-9x9-board-for-advanced-beginners-by-immanuel-devillers-revised-edition-2019/19848/>
- Françisa’s *9x9 Joseki Collection*: <https://online-go.com/puzzle/132/>
- mark5000’s *9x9 Opening Explorer*: <https://online-go.com/puzzle/181/>
- Cho Chikun’s *Tsumego* (PDF): <http://tsumego.tasuki.org/books/cho-1-elementary.pdf>
- Cho Chikun’s *Tsumego* (Online): <https://online-go.com/puzzle/5/>
- Collection of 9x9 Pro Games (SGF):<sup>23</sup> <https://online-go.com/library/57612/>
- Peter Shotwell’s *The Game of Go: Speculations on its Origins and Symbolism in Ancient China* (PDF): [http://www.usgo.org/files/bh\\_library/originsofgo.pdf](http://www.usgo.org/files/bh_library/originsofgo.pdf)

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<sup>23</sup> You need to be registered and logged in to access this collection.