

25 Essential Positions

A few months ago, one of my students asked a great question:

“Besides tsumego, is there anything else I can practice to get better?”

That got me thinking, and soon enough, we had a plan. Together, we picked out 25 classic board positions that everyone should master before reaching 1 dan. These are situations that I’ve learned to recognize in my own games almost instantly, without even having to pause and think.

I have 50 of these positions, but since 50 can be a lot to remember, I’ll give you 25 to practice.

Each position includes:

- A clear explanation
- What you should be thinking about while solving it

Just keep in mind, though these positions are usually the strongest, there are occasional exceptions where there are better moves on the board. But if you practice them, you’ll have an edge in roughly 90 % of your games over your opponent.

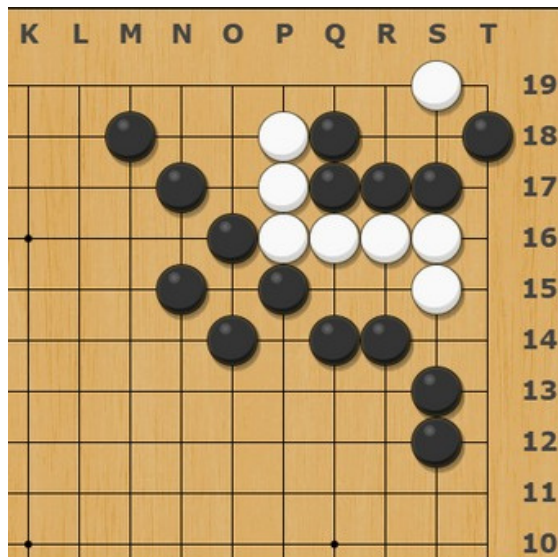
These 25 positions will show up in practically every game.

You’ve probably seen them already, but if you take the time to study and understand them, you’ll start winning more easily and can expect to improve by at least two ranks.

Black to play every time!
Let’s train together and get you to 1 dan!

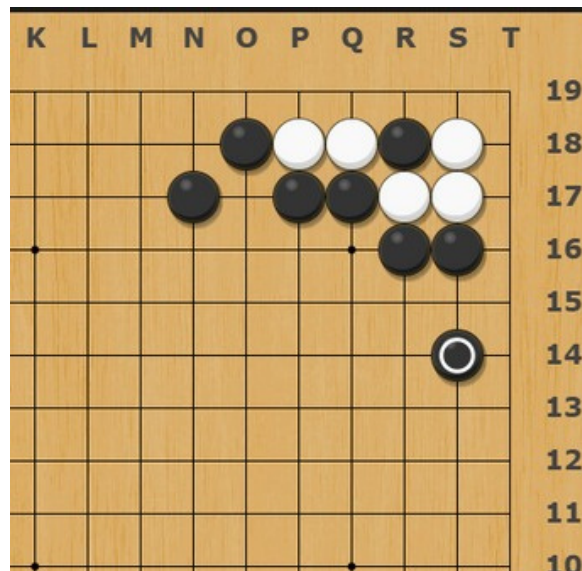
Dia 1.

This position is a capture race (semeai). How should Black play to win this semeai?



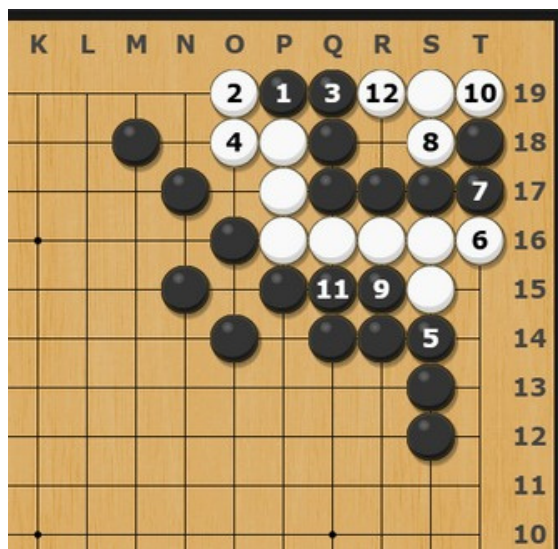
Dia 2.

The corner can be killed. Let's kill it without a ko!



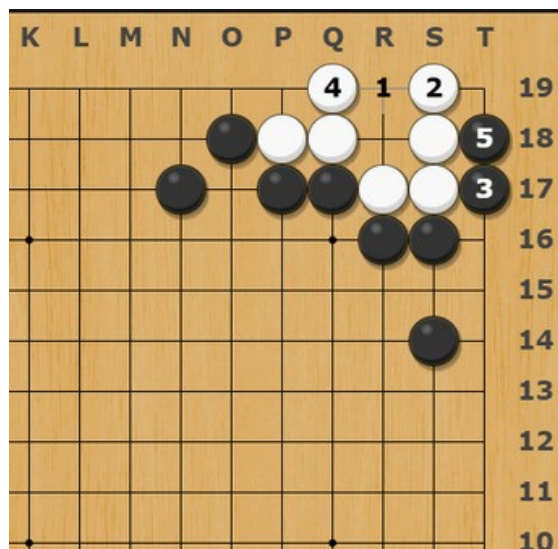
Dia 1 Answer.

If you want to win the capture race, you need to do the bulky five.



Dia 2 Answer.

If Black plays at R19, white is no longer able to make the eye in the corner..



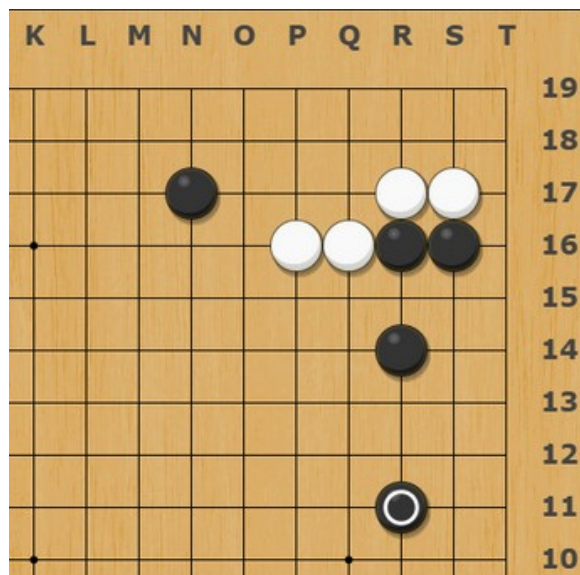
Dia 3.

Kill the white corner without a ko



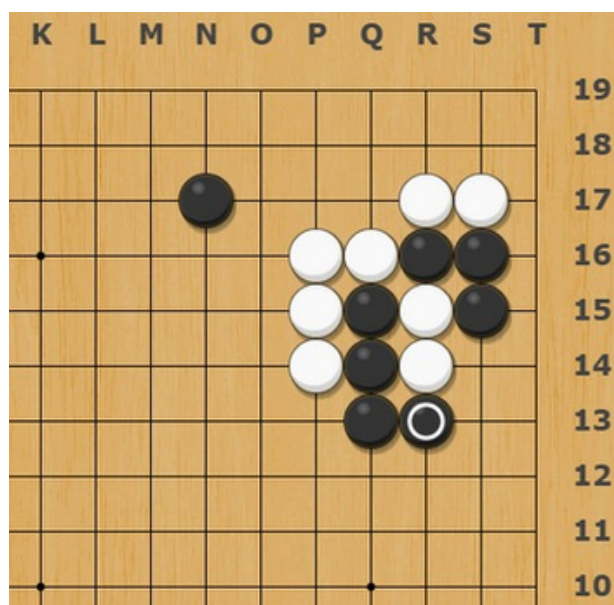
Dia 4.

What is the best way to attack white in the corner?



Dia 5.

This is very similar to the last one. How do you attack white?



Dia 6.

You want to make that piece stronger. How do you attack the corner in sente?



Dia 3 Answer.

T18 prepares a snapback.

Principle:

When you want to kill, make him as small as possible



Dia 4 Answer.

Keima is sente. By playing 5, white is still not alive in the corner.



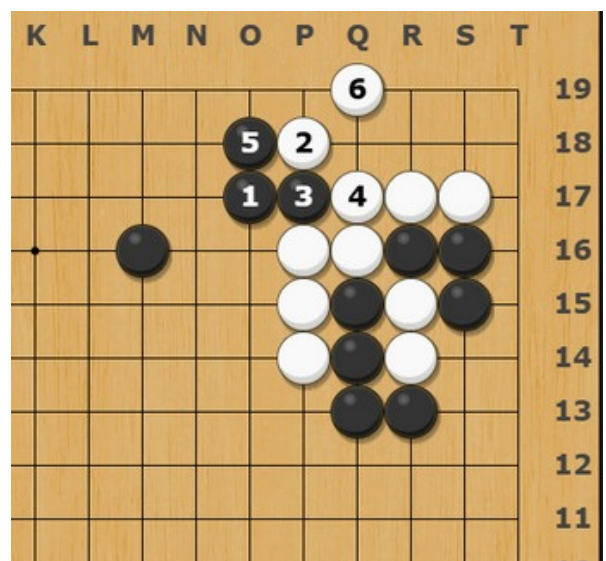
Dia 5 Answer.

This is very similar to the last one. White is still not alive



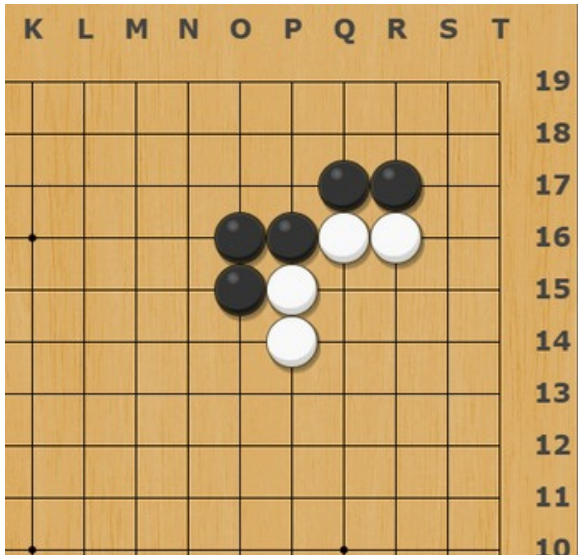
Dia 6 Answer.

If white wants to live, he needs to respond to every move.



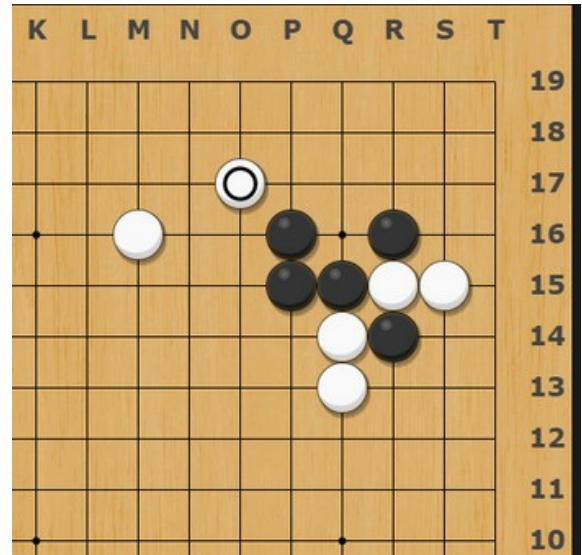
Dia 7.

What is the vital point for white on the right? How do you attack it?



Dia 8.

Tsumego with a nice tesuji. How do you kill the 2 white stones on the right?



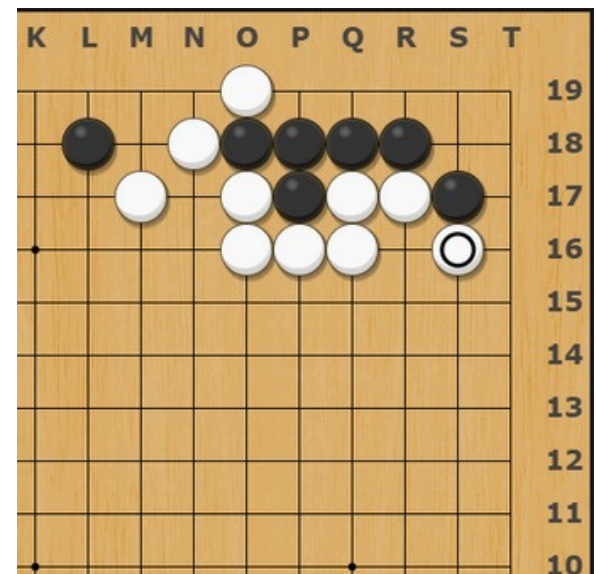
Dia 9.

What is the best way to attack white in the corner?



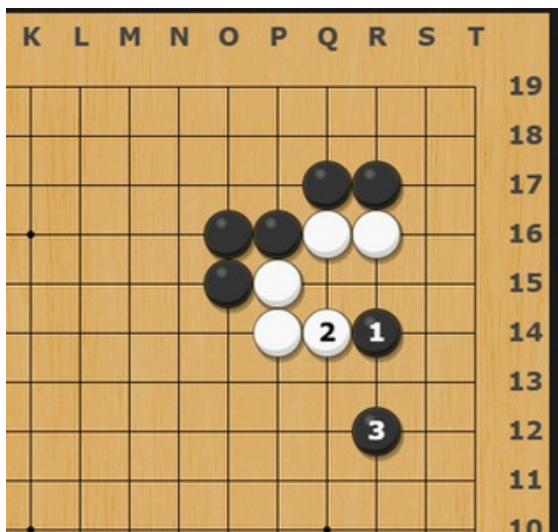
Dia 10.

You need to find a way to live without a ko.



Dia 7 Answer.

1 is sente. This shape is something you will see a lot. Use it as much as you can



Dia 8 Answer.

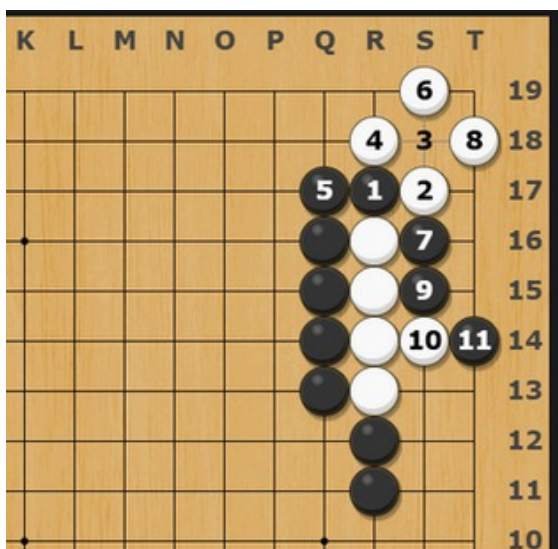
Sometimes sacrificing some stones is going to give you a better reward



Dia 9 Answer.

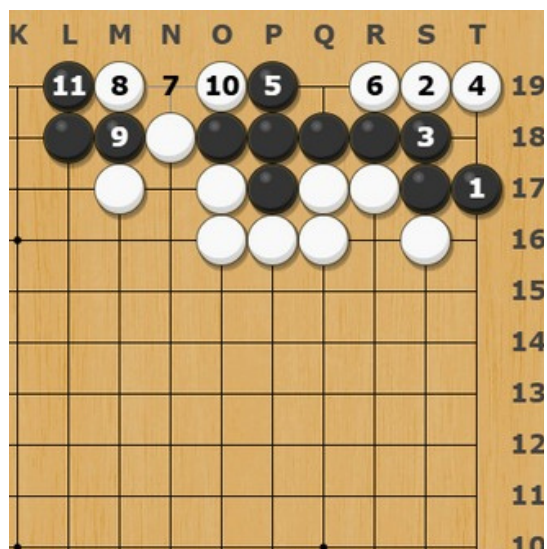
Principle:

Double hane is one of the best tactics when you are stronger than your opponent.



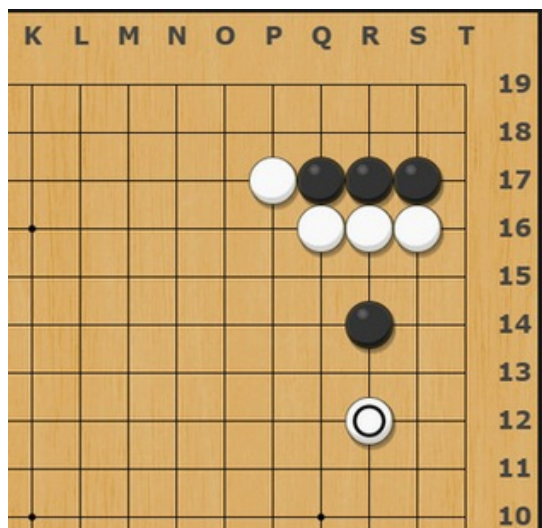
Dia 10 Answer.

I told you earlier a principle about how space is important. When you want to survive, make space.



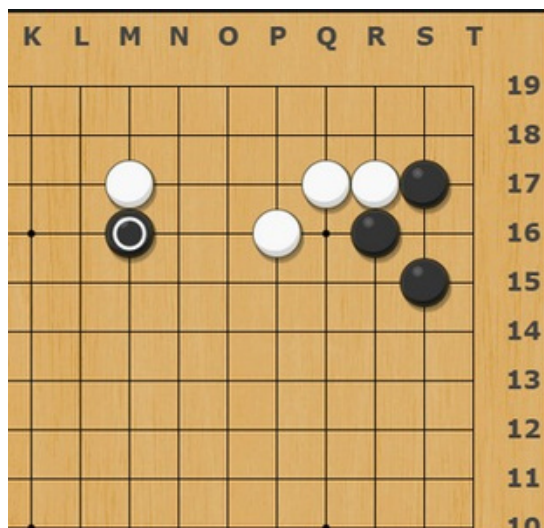
Dia 11.

White has a weakness. How do you exploit it?



Dia 12.

White tries to win more than he should. How do you punish him?



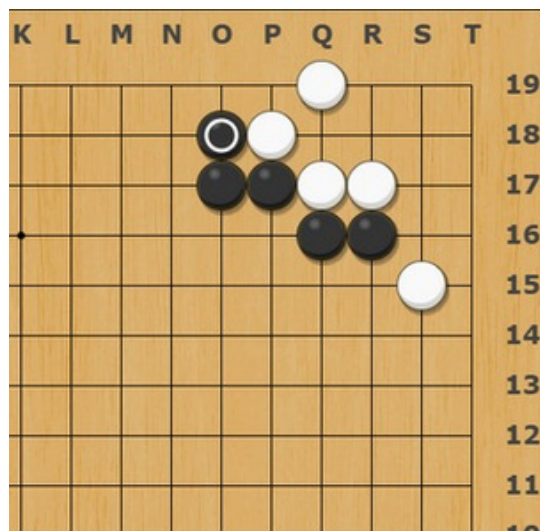
Dia 13.

This is one of my favorites. How do you kill white?



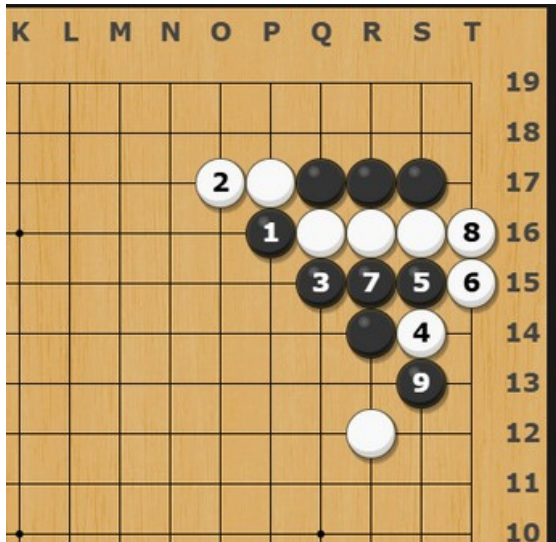
Dia 14.

It looks like white can connect. There is a way to attack him.



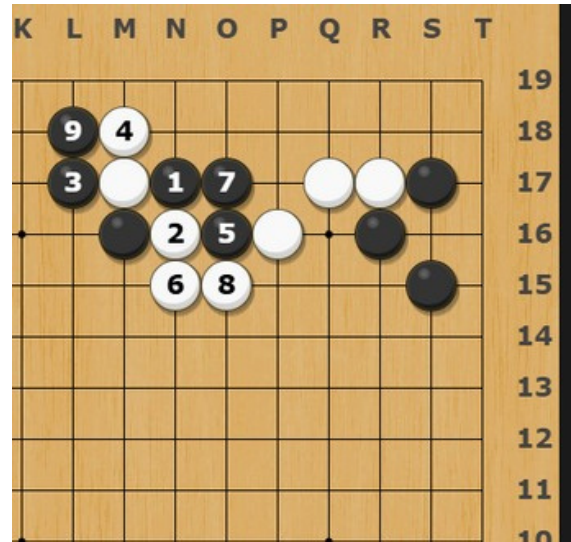
Dia 11 Answer.

Cutting is always a good idea when you are strong.



Dia 12 Answer.

When you have a crosscut, usually is good to make him extend on the second line



Dia 13 Answer.

This is a common shape everyone should learn!



7 and 10 at 1, 8 at 3

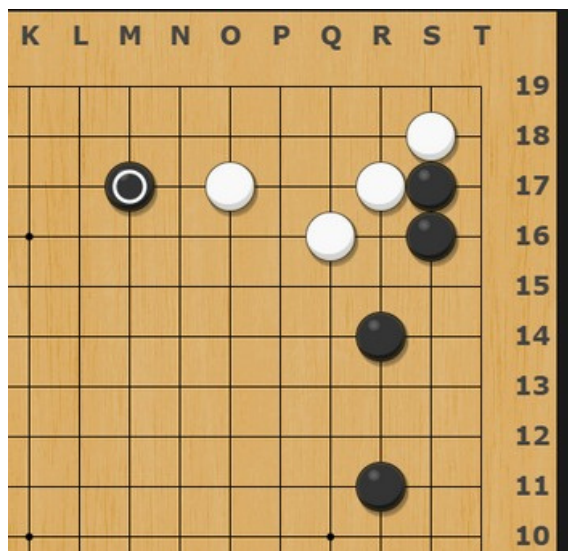
Dia 14 Answer.

Principle
Sente is the easiest way to kill



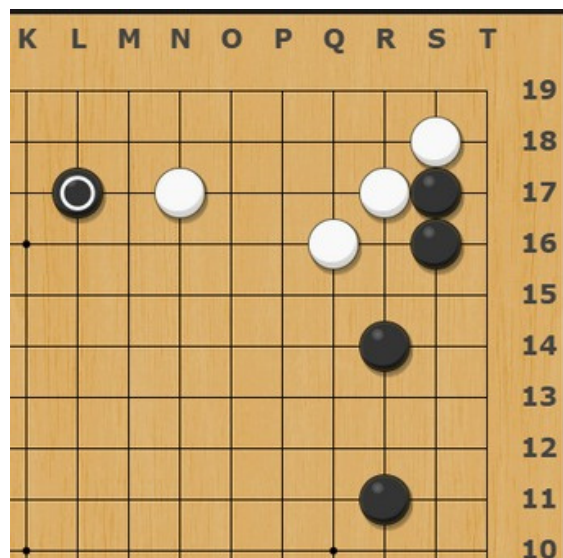
Dia 15.

This is a shape you might recognize.
How do you destroy the corner?



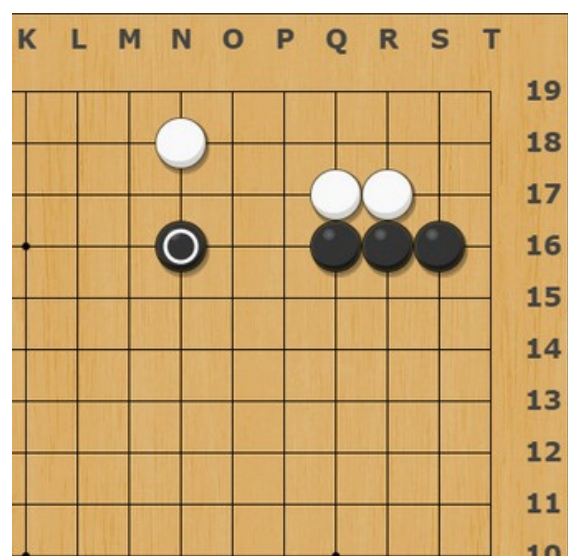
Dia 16.

Very similar to the last one.
Same question



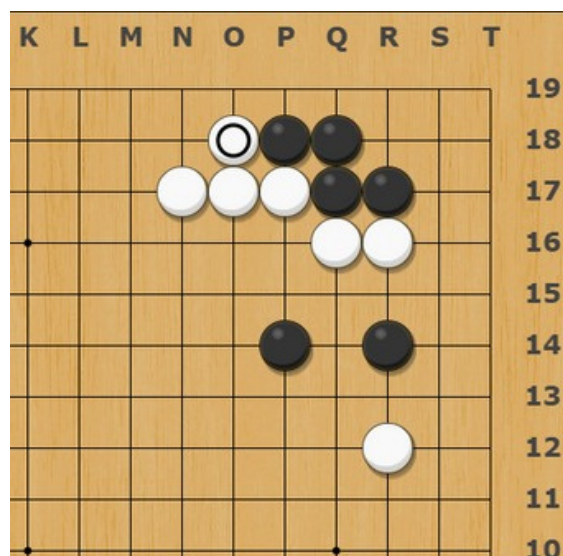
Dia 17.

What is the best way to stop white from extending on the side?



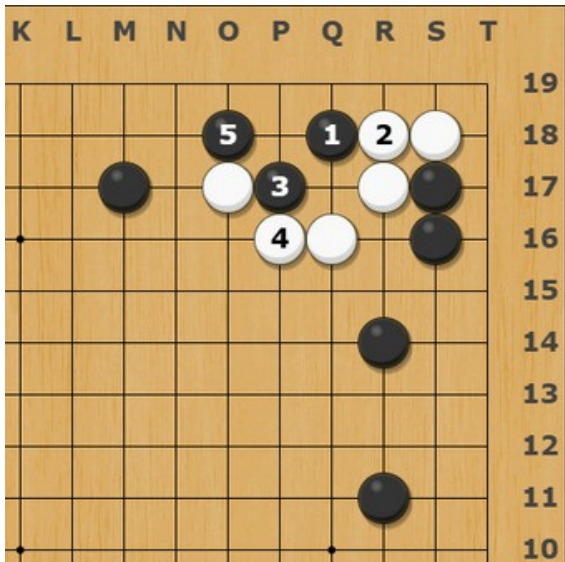
Dia 18.

This is a hard one. I challenge dan players to solve it in under three minutes: what's the best attack?



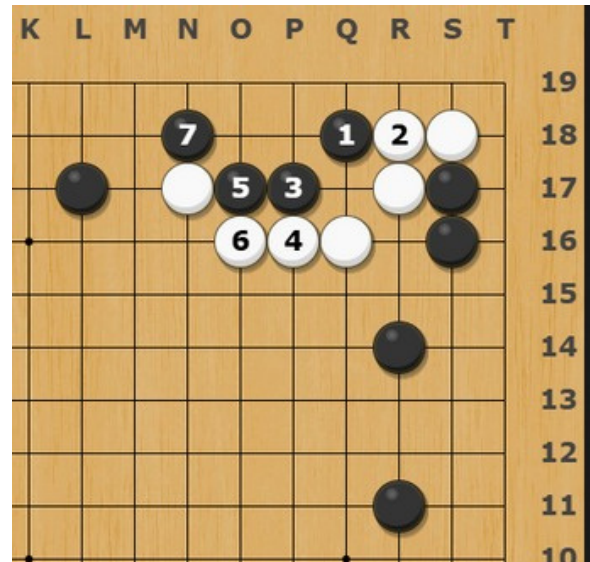
Dia 15 Answer.

Playing the vital point in sente always helps



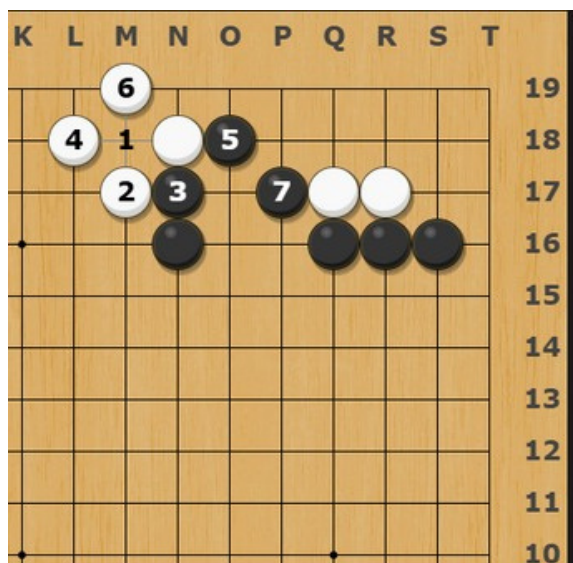
Dia 16 Answer.

It's almost the same shape as before. Use it in your games



Dia 17 Answer.

Playing at 1 feels a little bit counter intuitive, but it works perfectly



Dia 18 Answer.

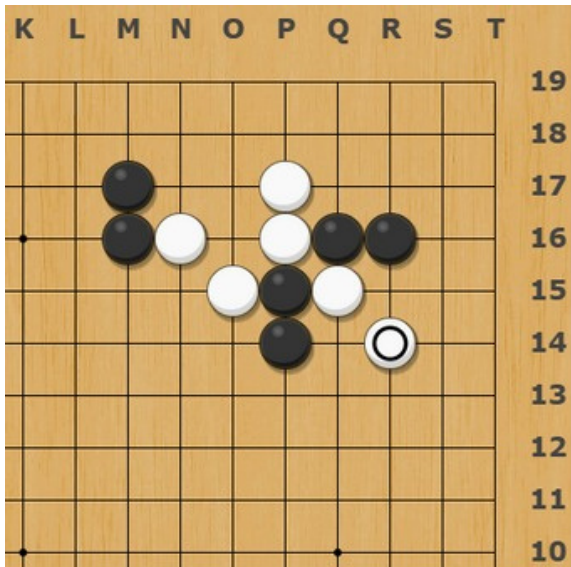
Black is already alive in the corner. He gets sente out of this.



9 and 12 to 1, 10 to 5

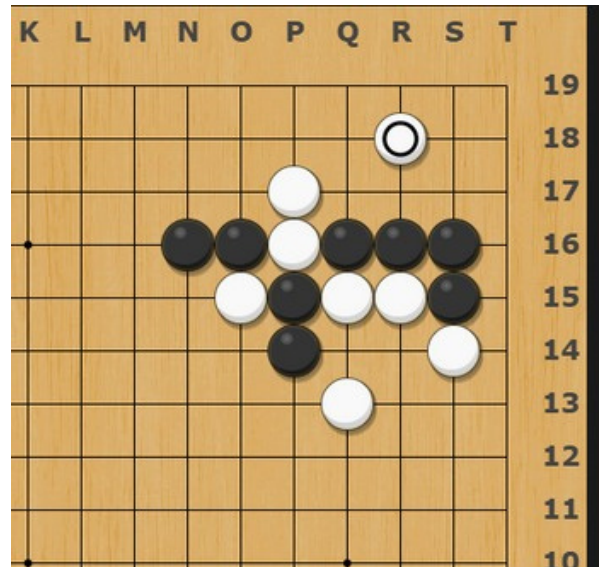
Dia 19.

How do you connect the 2 groups on the right?



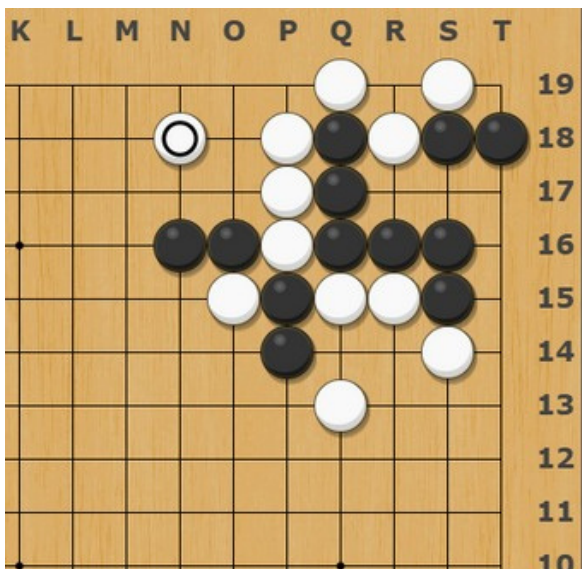
Dia 20.

You need to keep white as weak as possible



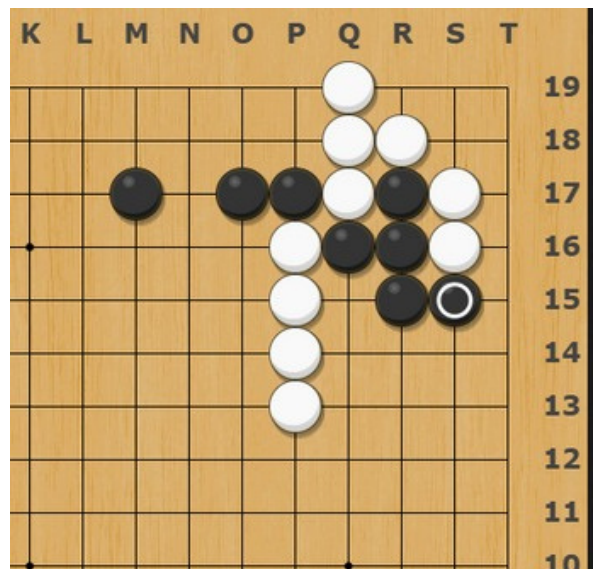
Dia 21.

You kept him weak from the last problem. Now, how would you stop him from extending on the side?



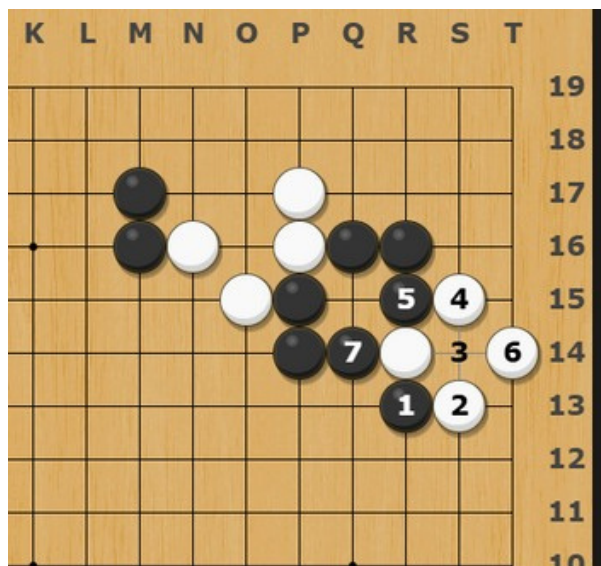
Dia 22.

Do you think you've got this one? It's not the first move alone that matters: find the most efficient way to play.



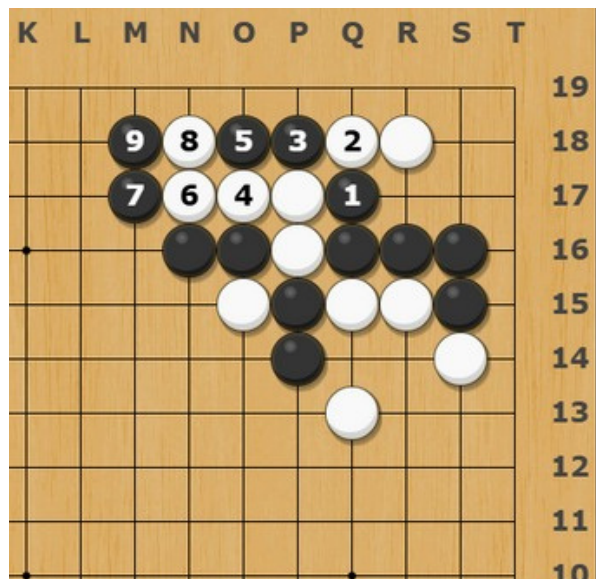
Dia 19 Answer.

This shape will help you a lot.
It's good to keep it in mind



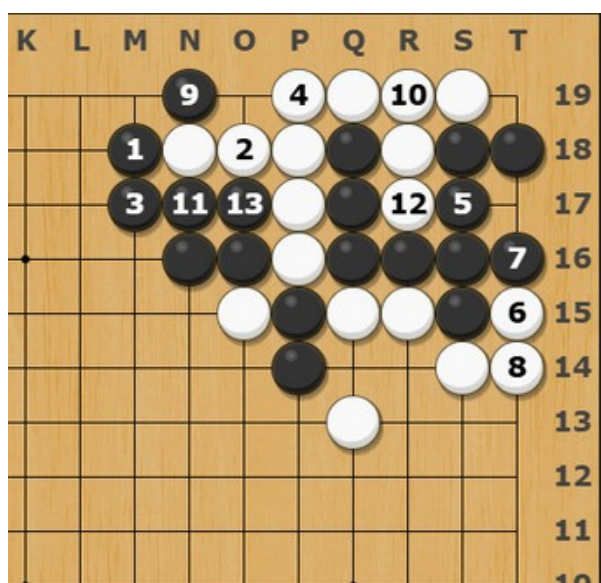
Dia 20 Answer.

Keima can be cut pretty easily



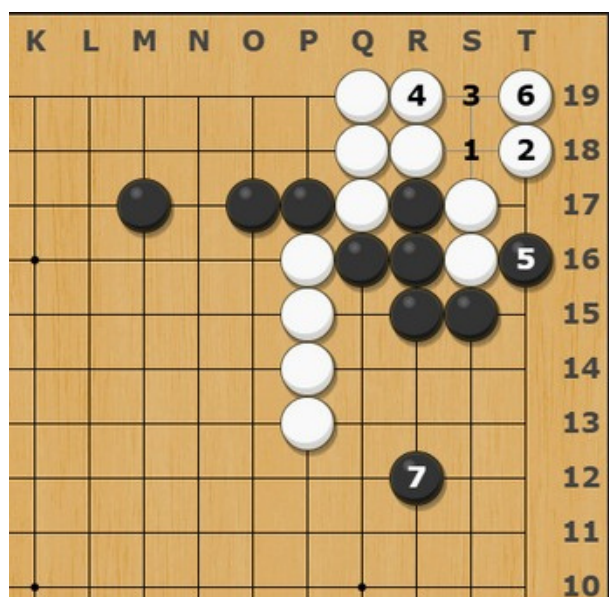
Dia 21 Answer.

We had something similar
before. White is in a lot of
trouble



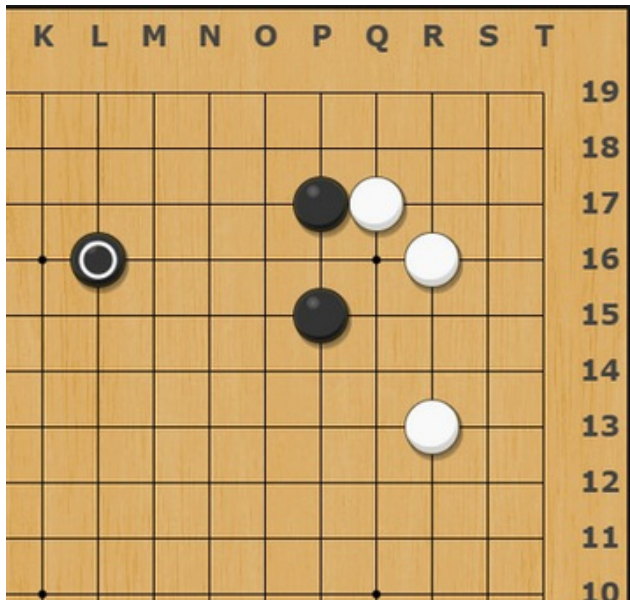
Dia 22 Answer.

Like I said, it's good to know
the vital point, but you need
to know when it's the right
time to play somewhere else



Dia 23.

The idea is simple: You want to play somewhere else, but first you want to get strong in sente



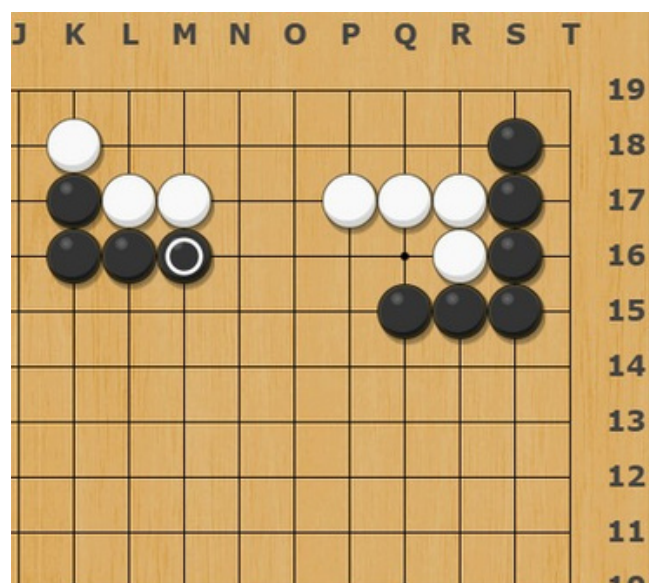
Dia 24.

How do you kill white?



Dia 23.

Can you keep white separated?



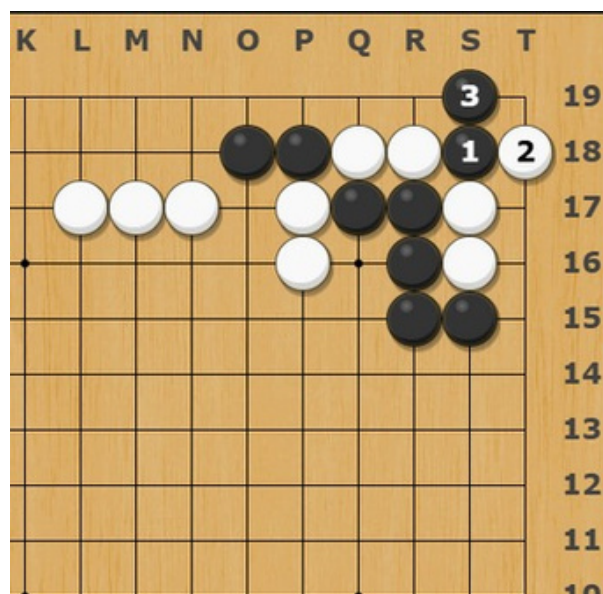
Dia 23 Answer.

This way you can get all these
in sente



Dia 24 Answer.

White is in a lot of trouble



Dia 25 Answer.

This is going to show in your
games. It's a good tactic.



Thank you so much for studying with me!

If you have any feedback on this, I'd love to hear it. Please feel free to message me anytime

If you enjoyed this, I have plenty more examples. I usually explore these concepts in depth with my students and would be happy to share more!

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