FOUR SIMPLE RULES

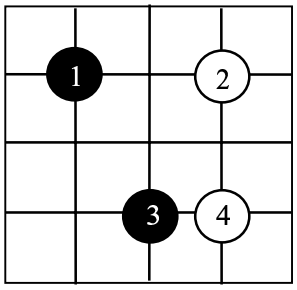

Figure 1

Rule 1- Black plays first followed by White, both sides make moves alternately.

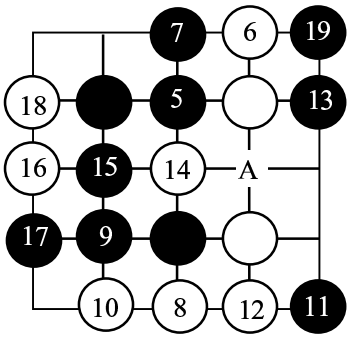

Figure 2

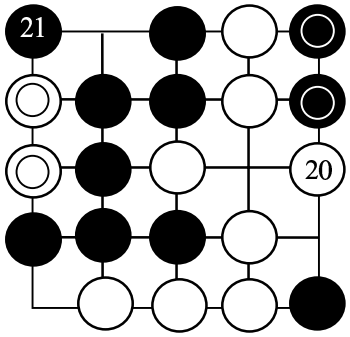

Figure 3

Rule 2- Stones without liberties are dead, and are removed from the board.

Note: marked stones in Figure 3, are captured and removed. See Figure 4 for position after dead stones are removed.

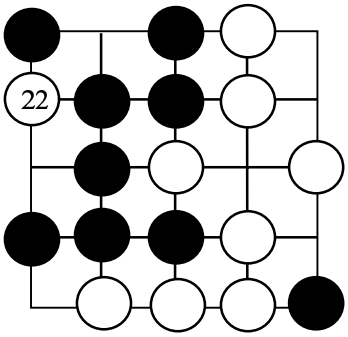

Figure 4

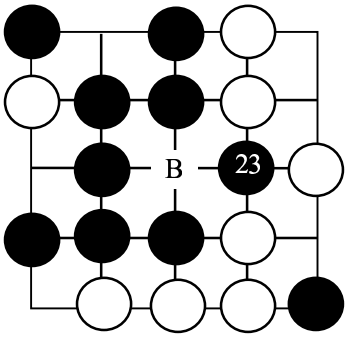

Figure 5

Rule 3- Board positions are not allowed to repeat.

Note: White is forbidden to capture immediately at B in Figure 5 after Black captures at 23, for it will repeat the board position of Figure 4. White must play elsewhere with 24 before capturing at 26 (Figure 6).

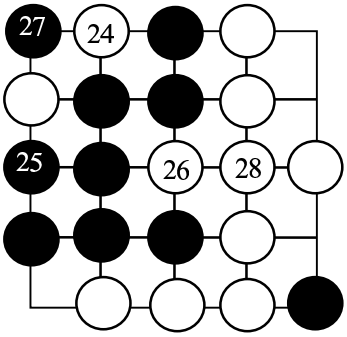

Figure 6

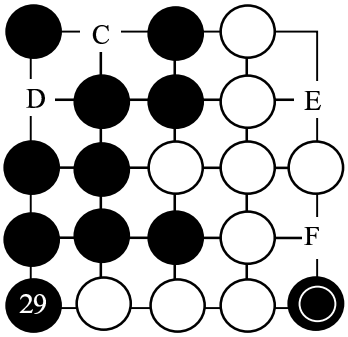

Figure 7

Rule 4- Fill stones into vacancies to count territory. The side with more stones on the board wins.

Note: After the game is finished, remove all dead stones (e.g., the marked stone in Figure 7) before counting. As shown in Figure 8, White wins by 1 point (White has 13 pts and Black has 12 pts).

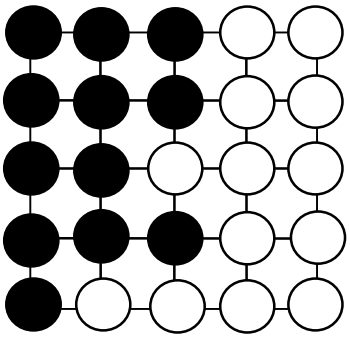
Figure 8

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Figure 1- The four moves in this figure are opening moves. Opening moves usually start from the corners, before extending to the sides, and then proceeding to the center of the board. Note: In handicap games, the weaker player takes Black and makes as many consecutive moves on the board as needed to make it an even game (before White makes the first move). Terminology: the opening is known as 'fuseki'; White 4 is called an 'attachment' on Black 3.

Figure 2- Liberties are the vacant spaces associate with a stone. Only horizontal and vertical liberties are considered (Black 1 and White 2 in Figure 1 have four liberties each; Black 3 and White 4 have three liberties each). Stone(s) with only one liberty left are said to be in check or under 'atari' for they can be captured in the following move (see Figure 3). White 16 and 18; Black 13 and 19; and White 14 are under atari. Stones under atari can generally be rescued by escaping or connecting (e.g., White can rescue White 14 by connecting his stones at A.) Note: If Black 9 is played at 10, White plays double-atari at 9. Also, Black 19 which plays into an atari is generally not a good move. Terminology: White 6 is called a 'descent' to the edge; Black 7 is a 'block'; White 8 which bends around an opponent's stone is a 'hane'; White 10 is an 'extension'; Black 13 'clamps' on a white stone (with the help of Black 5); White 12 is a 'connection' to prevent Black from cutting.

Figure 3- The two marked black stones and the two marked white stones are said to have no liberties and are captured by White 20 and Black 21 respectively.

Figure 4- Captured stones are removed from the board. Terminology: White 22 is a throw-in move.

Figure 5- Repeated capturing at Black 23 and White B will lead to an endless game (with no progression of board position). Therefore, the third rule requires the board position not to be repeated. Terminology: intermittent capturing at Black 23 and White B is known as a 'ko' fight; the move which prevents the repetition of board position is called a 'ko-threat'.

Figure 6- When White plays at 24, Black could have ignored White and eliminated the ko fight by connecting at B (Figure 5). In this example, Black chose to answer White 24 by playing at 25. White thus captures at 26 putting the black stones under atari. After Black captures at 27, White eliminates the ko fight by connecting at 28. Note: After Black 25, White is forbidden to play at 27, because it is a suicide move (White has no liberties)!

Figure 7- After filling in all the neutral points (e.g., Black 29), the game ends with both sides passing. Dead stones (e.g., the marked stone) are then removed from the board. The Black group and the White group are alive because they cannot be captured. In order for White to capture Black, he has to eliminate Black's liberties at C and D simultaneously. Since each side can only make one move at a time, the black group can never be captured. The same is true if Black tries to capture White. Note: Any group with at least two separated eyes (e.g., C and D for Black; E and F for White) is alive. Terminology: the endgame is known as 'yose'; neutral points are called 'dames'; liberties that cannot be eliminated are called 'eyes'.

Figure 8- Instead of filling in stones from both sides, one can simply fill in stones from one side only. For example Black has 12 points in the example, and there are 25 total points on the board; 5x5=25. Thus White has 25-12=13 points, and wins the game by one point. Likewise, it takes at least 25 points to win in a 7x7 game; 41 points to win a 9x9 game; 61 points to win an 11x11 game….Note: In even games, compensation points are usually deducted from Black's score for playing first. Compensation points for a 19x19 game are usually 5.5 points. Terminology: compensation points are known as 'komi'.

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