

Chapter Three

Close Range Play 1

Imagine you move to a large city. To begin with, you go everywhere by car or on foot. After a while you discover how to use public transport, and your life becomes a little easier if less individualistic. It is part of the experience of coming to belong, in your urban environment.

This chapter and the two that follow it are at the heart of our conception of shape. After that, in Chapters 6 to 12, we look at special topics that relate to particular kinds of fight. But first we try to lay down the basic principles of close range play. In order to feel 'at home' as a go player, one has to learn gradually the underlying map of the way stones interact. As our metaphor suggests, this may be a slow process depending on changing some habits and conforming more to the usual patterns.

The idea of fighting used in Chapter 2 needs expansion to show how shape really works. In this chapter we concentrate on monochrome (same colour) aspects of development of stones. These are of two kinds:

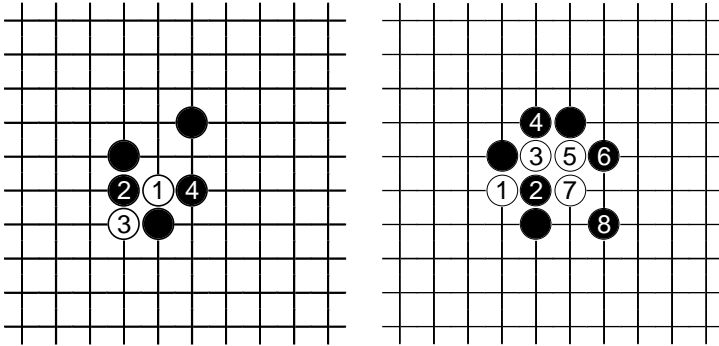
- one-dimensional, i.e. stretch further while remaining connected;
- two-dimensional development, which includes future eye shape but also shape for guarding indirectly against cuts, bends and bulges, and territory-forming shapes.

In Chapter 4 the emphasis is on plays at key points of the opponent's shape (*hane* plays, the centre of three stones, angle plays as spoilers of eye shape). If you consistently occupy these points, or rather if your opponent allows you to have them, you will gain great advantage in local fighting without having to capture, or even cut. Unless the two players' knowledge of these vital points is comparable, the game may quickly look like a mismatch with one player's formations bent back on themselves, and short of liberties and eyes; in short, like a handicap game.

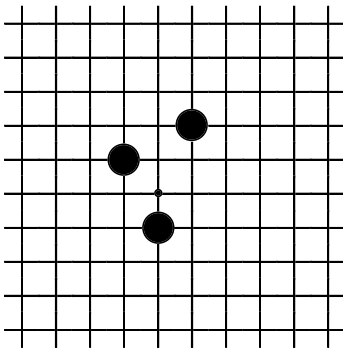
Chapter 5 picks up on shapes after the main types of contact plays. It is normal for contact fights to settle matters quickly, but there are many ways. We emphasise getting off to a good start in such fights.

3.1 Tactical aspects of connections

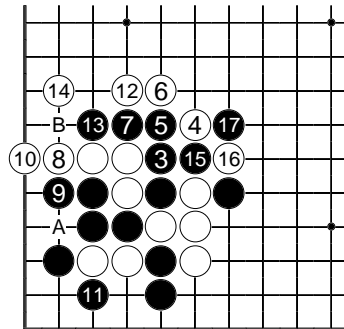
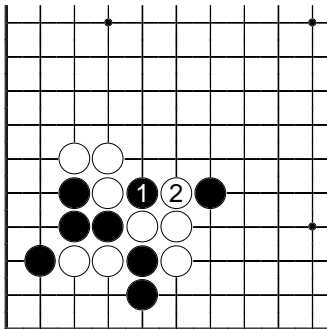
This chapter goes into problems of developing your stones, taking into account short range effects. When it comes to ladders, loose ladders or nets, ‘close range’ has to be taken with a pinch of salt.



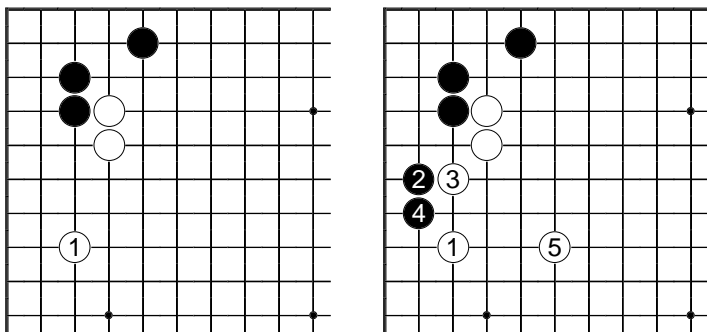
In these simple cases, attempted cutting plays fail to basic tactics.



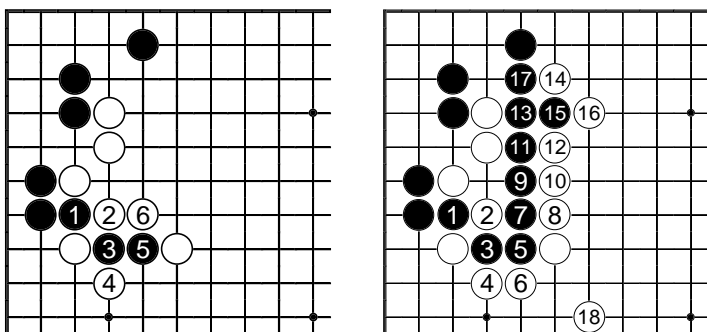
If you look, this shape is made up of two pairs of stones a knight's move apart. A single knight's move may be cut, depending on a ladder. The examples above show that the third stone in the formation is well placed for these ladders (which become a very short ladder, and a net). There are further cuts to try, of course.



Sometimes much deeper reading is required. In this example, does Black 1 work? **(Right)** There are two important variations to take into account. Black must answer White 8 at 9, not A or else White can capture in a loose ladder with 12 and B. White 10 requires a response since it threatens White A. In the end Black survives and White is indeed cut.



An example of the sort of idea professionals use to ‘work their stones harder’, to push for efficiency. This is another possible 3-3 variation, building in a different direction from sequences shown in the Introduction (White 1 jumps the other way, along the top side, in the main variation). White here has central influence and a chance to control the left-hand side. But how sound a play is 5?



There is a ladder (**left**) that White might use if Black tries to cut. White’s play, however, doesn’t strictly depend on any ladder. If Black cuts White has in mind the possible sacrifice sequence (**right**), if the ladder is bad. So much central strength for White would completely change the middlegame. This is a one-way street; it is natural for Black to push out with 15 to leave cutting points for later. Of course Black 17 can’t be omitted, and then White makes good shape with 18.

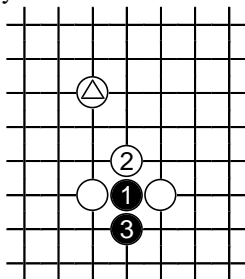
Being able to see such sequences makes for much more flexibility; for example White needn’t worry so much about a ladder-breaker. They may involve ladders, loose ladders, nets and netting plays that turn into squeezes. In that sense fundamental capture tactics interlock with with the fundamental shape question of 2.5, “how do I connect?”

The next section looks at a complex example of this kind.

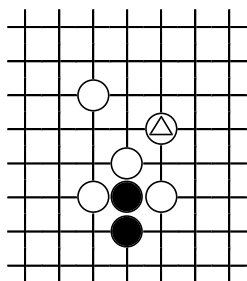
3.2 One-point jump: an extended study

Questions of breadth of choice come up, just as much as depth of reading. The complexity of go isn't all of one piece. If you find it irritating to be told 'good shape is intuitive', you may find the detailed analysis helpful.

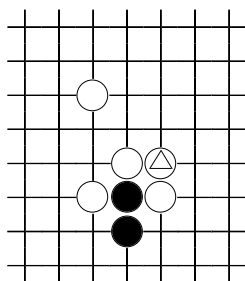
Here is fairly full discussion over three pages of a position arising from the wedge weakness in the one-point jump. Ladders, nets, squeezes and sacrifices, choice of connection, anti-squeeze tactics and questions of direction are all on display.



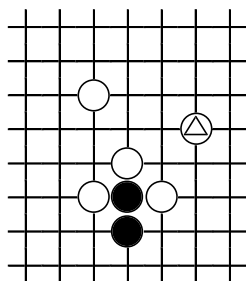
This is our text. White has the stone marked here in support, and Black tries the wedge. There is quite a range of replies to be tried for White 4. Even with the restriction we shall make to White playing *atari* from above, there are half-a-dozen to consider.



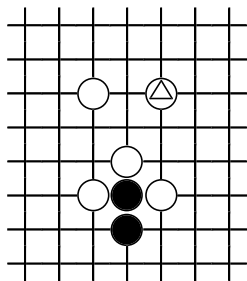
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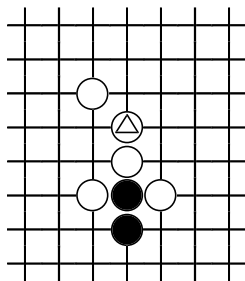
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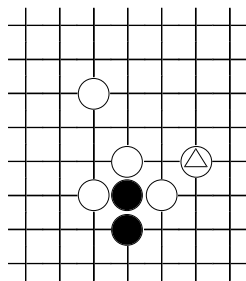
C



D

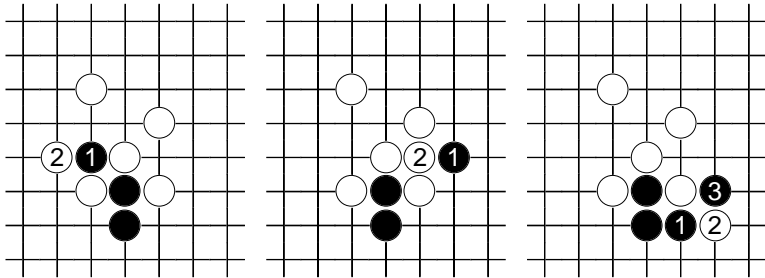


E

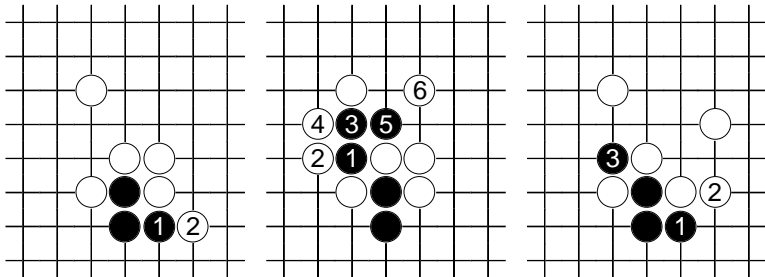


F

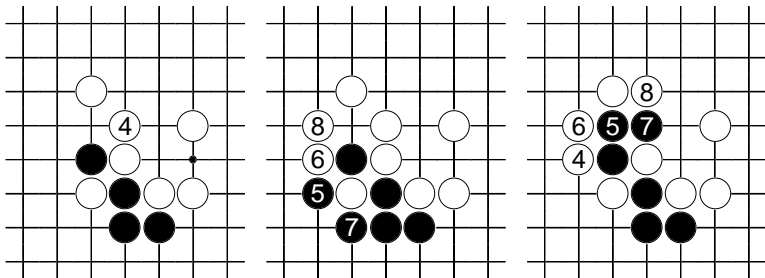
White can imagine playing any one of A to F, when it comes to covering the two cutting points.



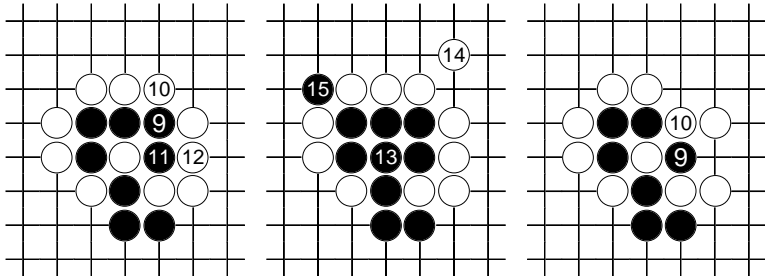
(Left) This cut fails against A. **(Centre)** However this peep is useful for Black. **(Right)** If Black pushes to the right, A is not well placed.



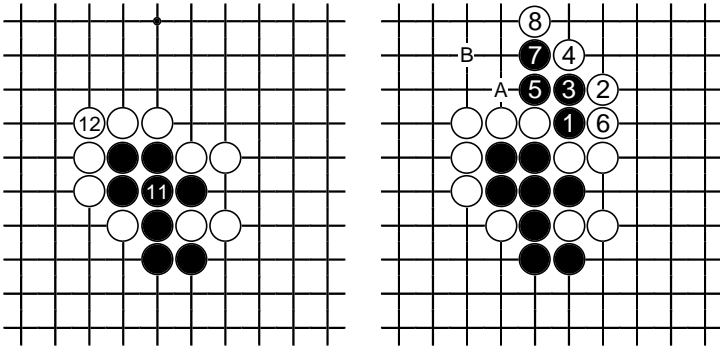
(Left) B is better placed to resist Black's push 1. **(Centre)** It also covers the cut at 1 here, with a net. **(Right)** C is an interesting study after 1 and 3.



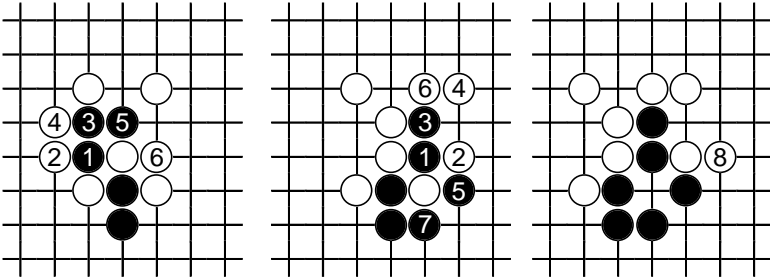
(Left) Avoiding a ladder, White can make a strong shape, aiming to sacrifice (centre). **(Right)** White can also plan to squeeze Black, for influence.



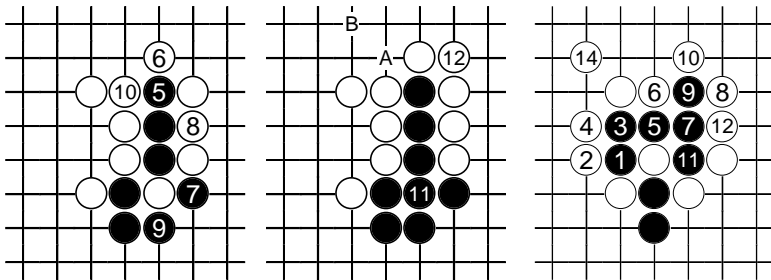
(Left, centre) Black 9 here helps White build an outside wall. **(Right)** It should be better for Black to capture with 9, considering White's defects.



White can connect at 12 in the position from the previous page. What if Black cuts at 1 in the right-hand diagram, to spoil White's influence? After 2 and 4 White can connect at 6 and fight hard. There is also White 6 at 7, Black A, White B to consider. In that variation White is able to build solid thickness by sacrificing stones, but will lose the initiative.



(Left) Case D: Black's cut at 1 runs into a net already seen. **(Centre)** White at E leads to a further pair of squeezes. First we look at Black 5 here. **(Right)** White gets at least an adequate result with 8. In fact capturing one white stone hasn't achieved so much for Black.



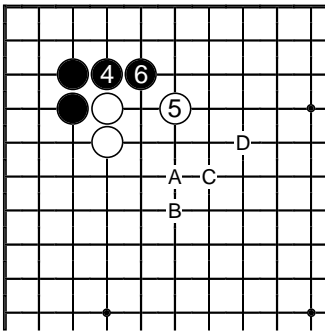
(Left) Black 5 here is required, leading **(centre)** to another position in which the cut at A is covered by a ladder or squeeze with B. **(Right)** White at F, leading to a further squeeze, but with serious cutting points for White.

The 20 variations given do not perhaps exhaust the position. Can one give a summary? The box on the next page gives the story as seen on a purely shape basis, to compare with all this tactical analysis.

In Brief The shapes B and C have the most to recommend them. They have the potential to become the table shapes shown here.

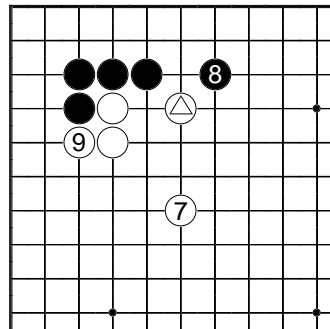
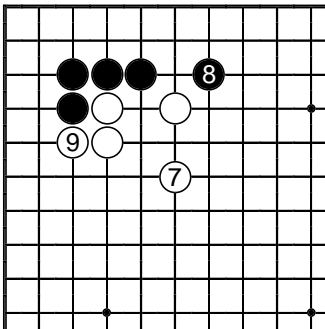
3.3 A study in direction of play

This example is in some ways similar to the one in 3.2, but this time we look at it in the broader context.

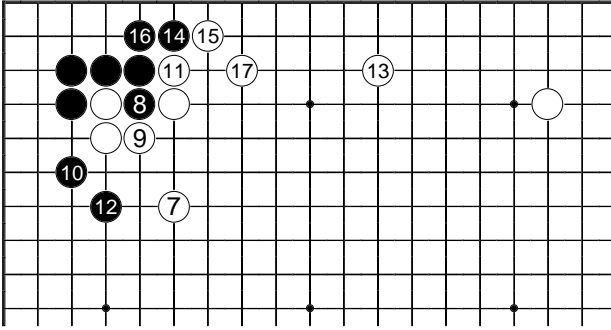


It is reasonable to assume, when Black 4 is played, that White 5 and Black 6 (a *bulge* point if White plays there) will follow: proverbially *my opponent's vital point is my vital point*. Now the ball is in White's court. An efficient play such as one of A to D is called for, before White blocks Black on either side.

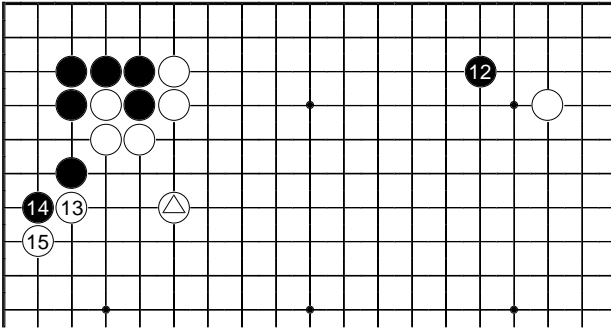
See 3.5G, 4.4 for more on the bulge.



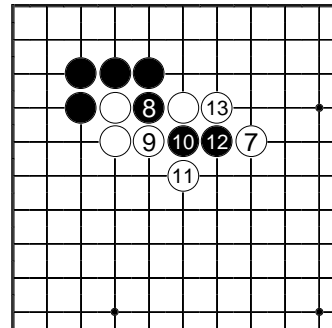
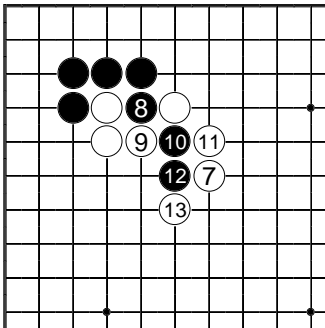
White 7 forms the table shape A (**left**), which was discussed in Chapter 1. Here it seems slightly less efficient than B (**right**), if Black continues in just the same way. There 7 is apparently less solid, but is a one-line gain in enclosing the left side, made by treating the triangle stone lightly. Black has the choice of jumping out on the left side to prevent 9, too (next page).



We've seen that B is the interesting choice. Black 8 for White 9 tests White's attachment to the two stones before playing 10 (see 13.6 for this concept). Later on White might instead sacrifice them. Black 12 is good shape on the left side, and the corner is large. Where to play 13 is tricky, taking into account the endgame play Black 14. This is an example of 'living go'.

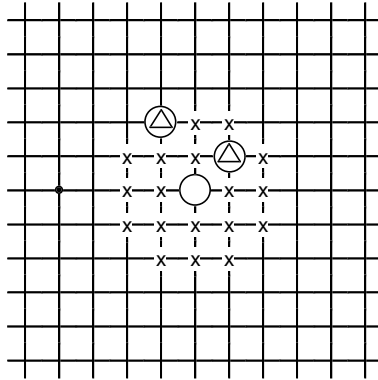


This is another lively variation, with Black 12 a challenge to White. With 13 and 15 White will be able to close off the left-hand side. The marked stone in the centre makes this strong tactic possible for White.



The other choices, C and D, have in common that they protect against the cut by means of ladders, one short range and the other long. They look to block on one side or the other. The choice between them cannot be made on local considerations alone.

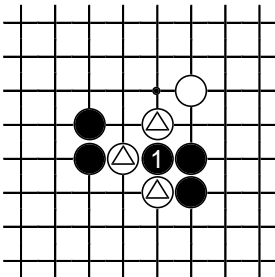
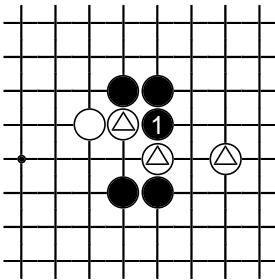
3.4 Compound shapes



Imagine a single stone sitting in the middle of the board somewhere. The most important friendly and enemy stones as far as it is concerned are those as close as the two marked ones, or on the other 'x' points.

What we call a *compound shape* is a shape of three stones of the same colour, not containing any solid connection, that can be made by adding two plays such as the marked ones to the central stone. All 15 types are listed in the next section, to refer to at need.

Rote learning disasters

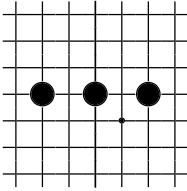


There are some elementary tactical hazards involved in learning compound shapes as connected or not.

In these examples, an underlying White shape (the marked stones) is properly connected, unless Black is strong nearby. White presumably made them when that was true, and simply failed to check that later developments hadn't changed the tactical position.

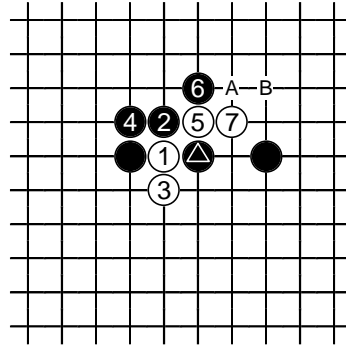
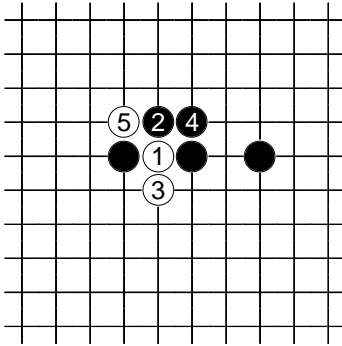
In fact the plays Black 1, when put in place, clearly do cut White. This sort of mistake by White is quite common.

3.5 Compound shapes reference collection

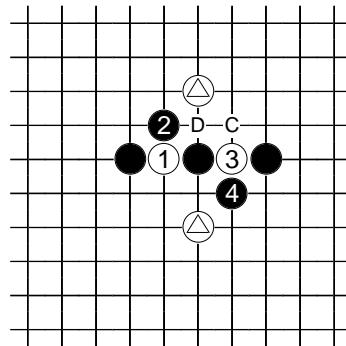
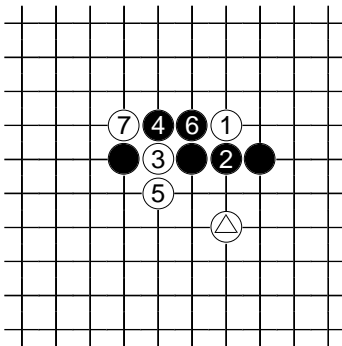


A: Two one-point jumps

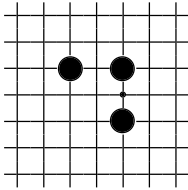
This is the most common shape for running out into the centre. The formation has hidden depths.



There are quite a number of cutting tactics to consider in this shape. Generally White can hope to succeed with one of them only if supported by other stones in this area. **(Left)** Black can respond to the wedge play White 1 with 2 and 4, on the side of Black's choice. Normally one way to play 2 works well for Black. Therefore White has to examine both cross-cut fights started by a play 5. **(Right)** Black has the further option of sacrificing the marked stone and continuing with A, or B for a net and squeeze.

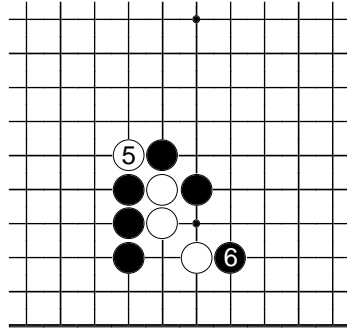
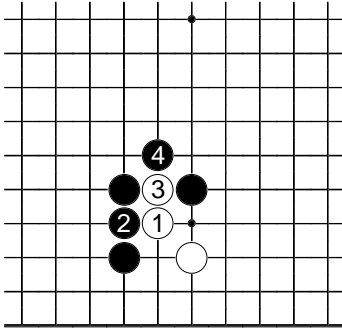


If we add stones for White the range of possible strong-arm tactics expands. **(Left)** With this extra marked stone, White will be able to cut somewhere with more support. **(Right)** The double wedge 1 and 3 may be severe, provided cutting Black is worth a trade for a *ponnuki*. In this case White's two marked stones mean White can plan for Black 4 (if Black plays on the other side with C, White D is a spectacular cut).

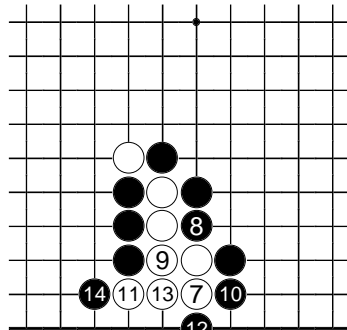
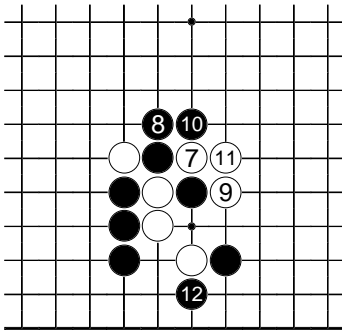


B: The big bend

The other way to combine two one-point jumps. It is very often seen with a White stone at the fourth corner of the square.

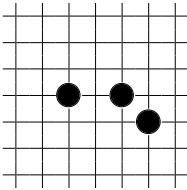


The obvious flaw in this shape is the double peeping play White 1. When this position occurs on the side of the board, Black has the tactical resource at 6. White then may find it impossible to gain from the cut at 5.



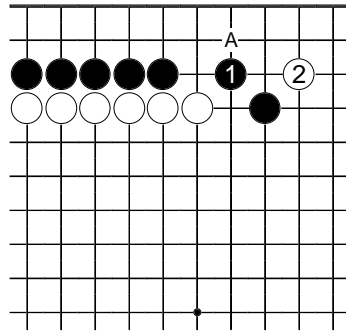
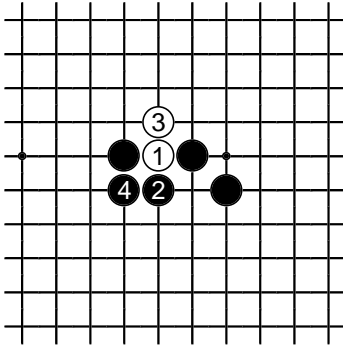
(Left) If White moves out in the centre with 7 and 9, Black can bridge under with 12. Normally this fight will go well for Black. **(Right)** Outright resistance with White 7 in this diagram is a simple failure.

The bend itself, such as Black 1 in this diagram, is a basic shape learned early in everyone's go career. It can make a large change both in territorial terms, and in the balance of influence.

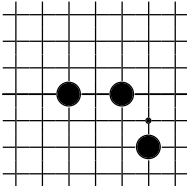


C: The diagonal play protection against the wedge

Adding a diagonal play normally covers the wedge weakness in the one-point jump, and also allows a switch of direction. But this shape isn't always good.

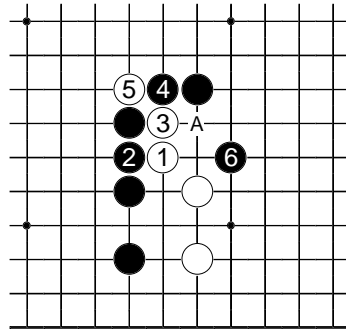
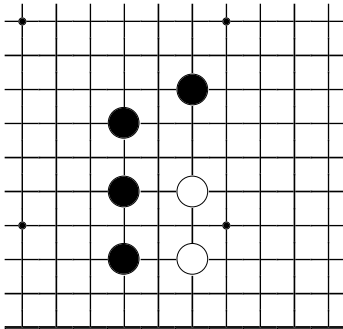


(Left) This is the fundamental pattern behind the addition of a diagonal play to a one-point jump. Black remains connected up to 4. (Right) However in this case Black 1 is inferior to Black at A (see shape J). White can play at 2, on the key *angle* point. Next White at A is good, or peep one to the left.

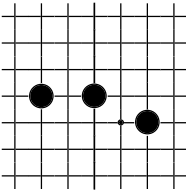


D: Adding the knight's move cover

This is not a shape generally recommended; but it has a special use as an alternative to the big bend (B).

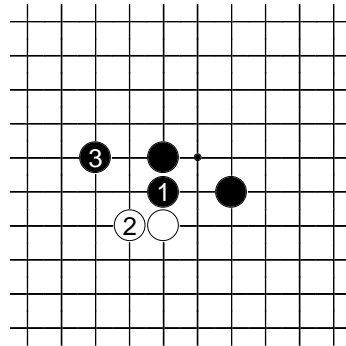
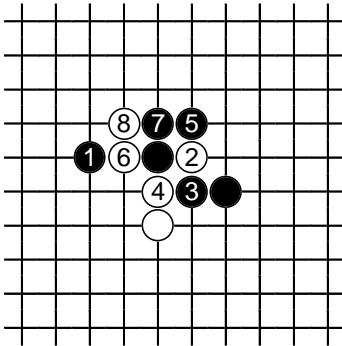


Here is a useful point about fighting in the centre. White can peep, and then cut Black. However Black's knight's move has the advantage that Black 4 is connected to the stone next to it, which is therefore better placed where it stands rather than at A. After Black 6 it is a hard fight, but Black is doing well. White cannot immediately expect to push through at A and cut.

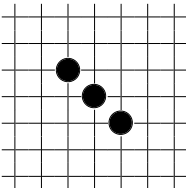


E: The light knight's move extension

This shape is easily cut. Whether it is a success or not will depend on foresight about that happening.

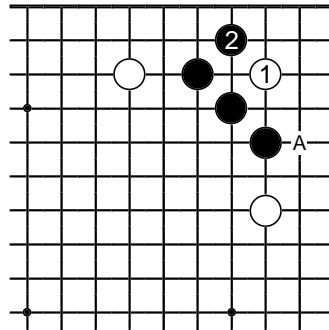
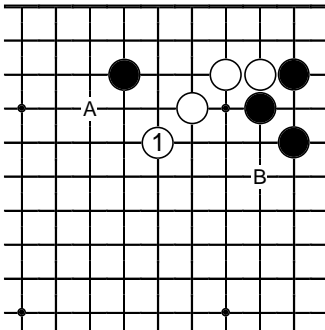


It is usually disastrous for Black to be cut as in the left-hand diagram. White 2 follows the proverb of 7.5, striking at the waist of the knight's move. Black can reinforce (**right**), but the exchange of 1 for 2 there is a loss (see 5.4). Compare with shape I.

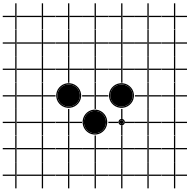


F: Two diagonal plays for running out

This is a conservative play for running in the centre.

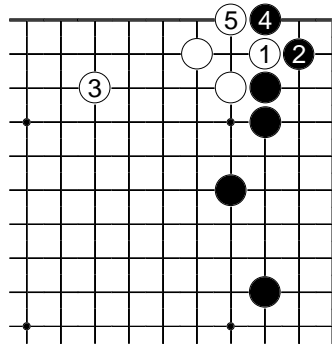
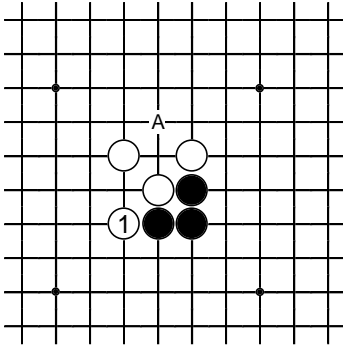


(**Left**) White 1 comes out into the centre. Black has developed on both sides, but White will be able to play next at A or B. (**Right**) This *three crow's* formation in the corner has a weak point at the 3-3 point. After Black 2 White A is a big *sente* endgame play; Black finds it hard to resist. This is an example of a large corner that may be slightly too large for comfort.

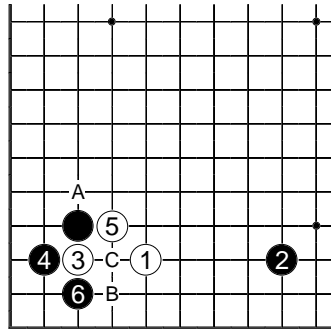
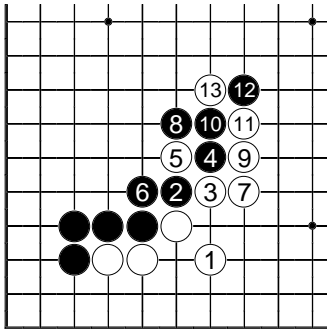


G: The bulge

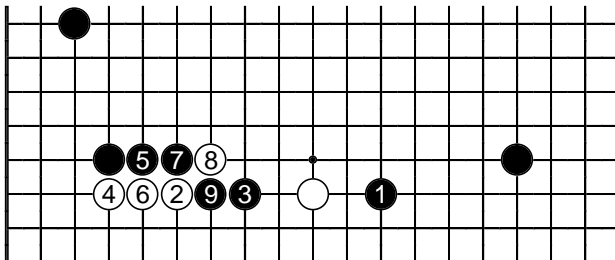
This shape is powerful in one direction, but has an obvious weakness in the other, at the point completing the potential eye. Its orientation relative to the edge may matter. Called also 'the cat's face'.



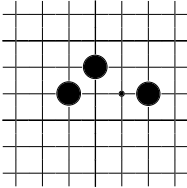
This shape is 75% of a *ponnuki*, but that doesn't imply it should be developed into one. **(Left)** Here White 1 is good, even though Black can then peep at A. **(Right)** White 1 and 3 make a resilient shape to fight *ko* with 5.



(Left) This hanging connection White 1 is excellent shape as a prelude to a pushing battle in the centre. **(Right)** White 5 creates the bulge shape. White will answer Black 6 at A or B, avoiding White C and an empty triangle.

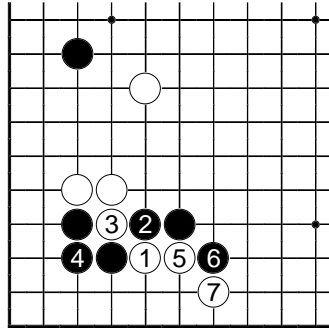
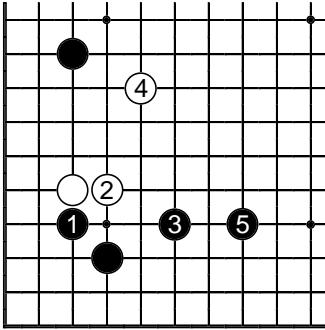


Black 5 here is powerful, preventing White forming a bulge shape (from a game Sakata-Takemiya).



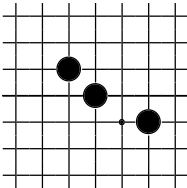
H: Maximum shape

This is a thin but efficient shape that may be used for a maximum attack based on the diagonal attachment.



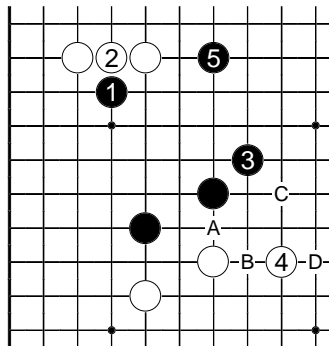
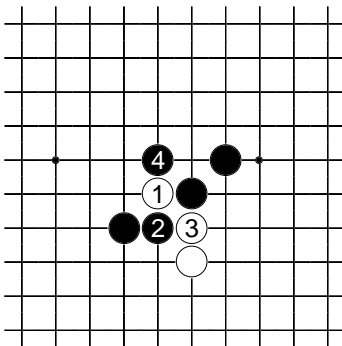
Black attacks White, making use of the pincer stone on the left side. The reinforcement at 5 prevents the cut White 1 in the right-hand diagram.

NB: ‘Maximum’ means best for taking territory while attacking, not to kill.

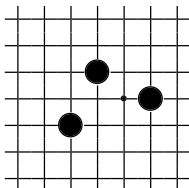


I: Diagonal connection to the running knight’s move

This shape has a common use in running fights, as a corrected version of shape E.

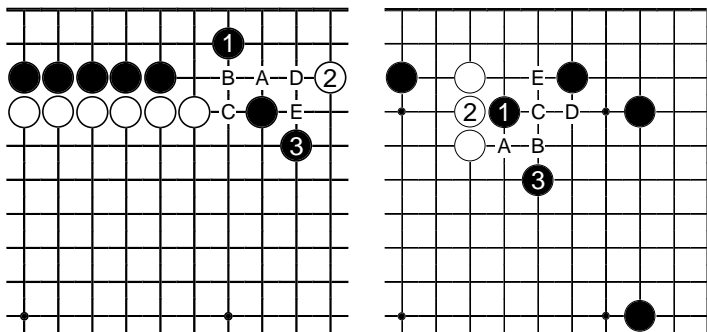


The left-hand diagram shows that the cut is defended by a ladder. The diagonal play is advantageous here, compared to shape E. **(Right)** Black plays 1 to set up a ladder covering the cut shown in the left-hand diagram. This shape works well in such a context, provided Black can attack on the left side. It is better than the sequence Black A, White B, Black C, White D to cover the cut, that was mentioned under shape E.



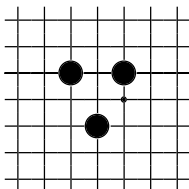
J: The big bulge

Of the patterns formed from two knight's moves, this is the only one that is a versatile good shape.



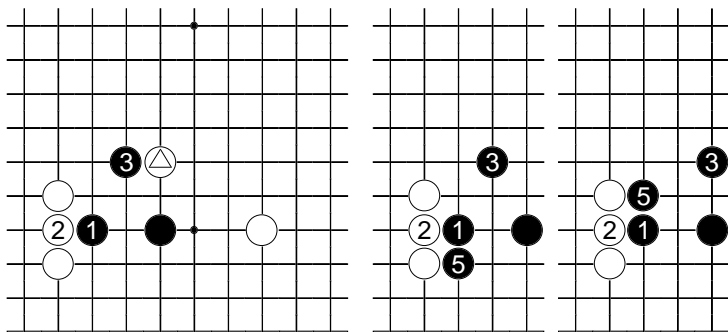
(Left) The correct way to connect under here. White 2 may threaten White A to Black E, but Black 3 (just seen under I) is good. Compare with C.

(Right) A good way to take territory while attacking. Black can sacrifice one stone with B and then D after White A.

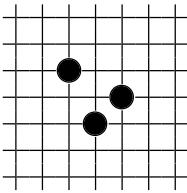


K: The dog's face

Known also as the sake bottle, looked at the other way up. It is well connected but worse than the big bend for eye shape. (By the way the progression of faces goes cat, dog, horse, Loch Ness monster ...)

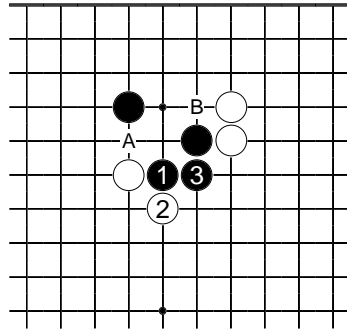
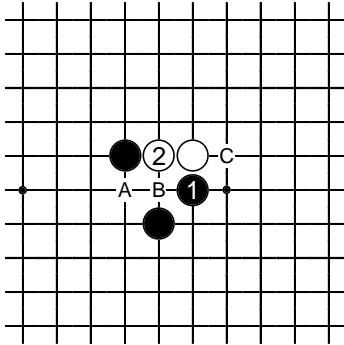


(Left) When Black is capped by White's marked stone, the combination of the peep at 1 and the contact play at 3 is a good way to fight. More material of this kind in 9.2. **(Right pair)** How to play when Black isn't capped? An interesting shape issue. After 1, playing 3 as the dog's face will become good shape if Black plays 5 on the third line; jumping out if Black 5 is on the fifth line. Usually though Black should omit the peep, jumping out first.

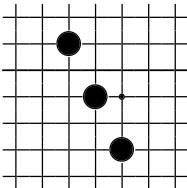


L: The odd diagonal

A special purpose shape. It tends to concede something in the way of key points, so requires a local justification.

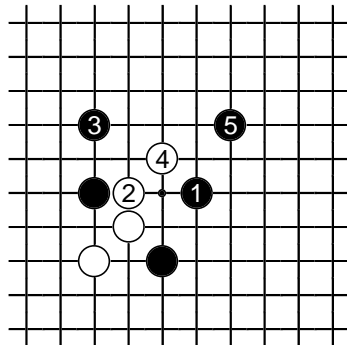
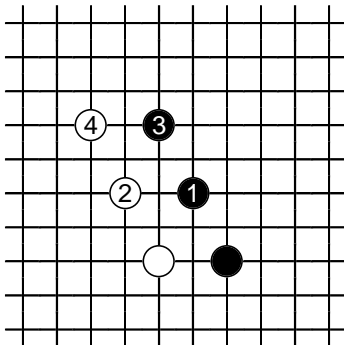


The reason for the name is shown in the left-hand diagram. After White 2 none of A, B, or C is a perfect shape for Black. **(Right)** A very common example. Black emerges into the centre with the *arrowhead* shape 3. If White 2 is at A instead, Black B is good.



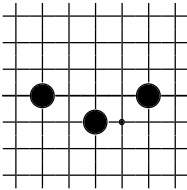
M: Attack with the knight's move

This is the classic attacking pattern, in cases when the opponent has no time to cut through.



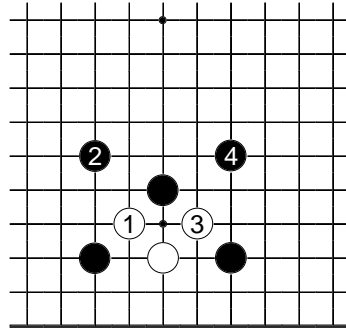
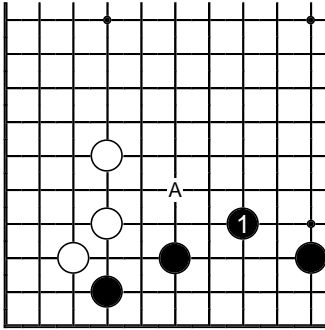
There are in fact two ways of leaning in such an attack. **(Left)** Black builds a framework to the right by direct pressure. **(Right)** Black may appear to be falling back, but is actually attacking by keeping ahead of White (cf. 4.9).

Rapid attacks like these naturally leave behind some weaknesses for Black.

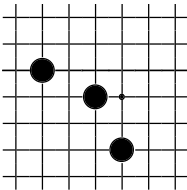


N: The flying V

Normally this is just a territorial shape in the bulge family, but it has an attacking reputation based on Bruce Wilcox's teachings.

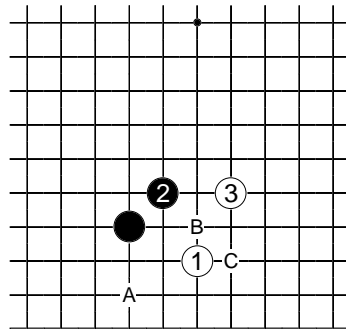
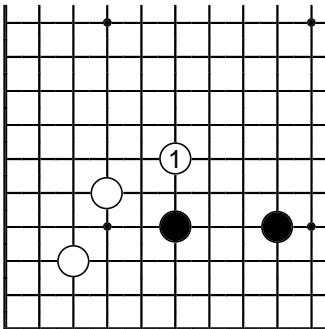


(Left) Here 1, not A, is correct shape – it completes territory and stabilises a group. **(Right)** The start of the flying V, which may later be extended on both sides as in pattern M.



O: The anonymous shape

This one completes the list; it isn't much seen in fighting.



(Left) This is a play at a key point, the focus of two frameworks. **(Right)** A common development on the side during a running fight. White's next play round here would be at A, rather than anything else. This shape can be cut by Black B. But normally it is good enough for White to run back at C in reply.