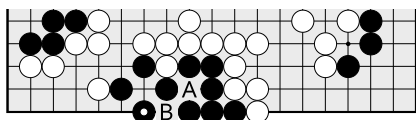


Over cautious play

Lacking the confidence that experience supplies, many mid-kyu players adopt an overly-cautious approach. This is never more evident than when confronted by a stronger player. Remember that playing that extra, 'safe' move allows your opponent to tenuki. But be wary of the opposite weakness of overstretching – an overly ambitious approach that leaves a trail of fault lines in its wake.

1 Stretch when you can

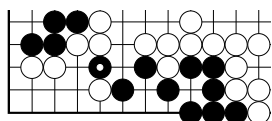
In the position below, Black has already made a live group, but still feels obliged to make sure, a typically cautious type of play:



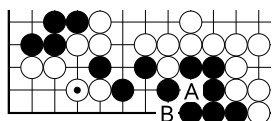
Black makes extra sure of two eyes at A and B. White cannot stop Black making the second eye at B. But if Black really wants to be sure here, he can secure his position much more effectively, *without* losing sente. (Sente is the initiative – you lead play in your next move, rather than respond to your opponent's last move).

Pressing on rather than defending

Black can tidy up his position for sure by punishing White for poor shape:



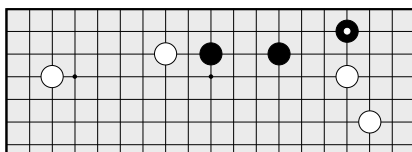
And White is obliged to defend:



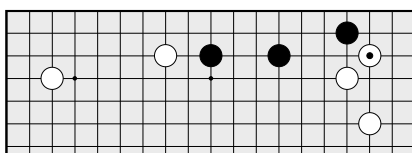
Black leaves with sente, and at no time has the second eye at B been at risk.

2 Withdraw only if necessary

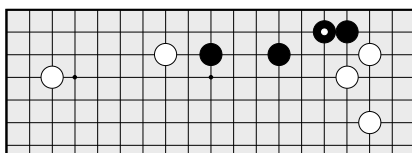
Black plays a perfect extension here, undercutting the White corner position:



White matches Black with a perfect reply:

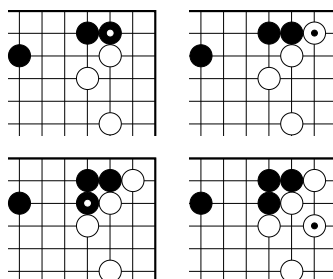


Note the solid, uncuttable shape made by the 3 White stones Black then literally hands sente on a plate to White by cautiously withdrawing here:

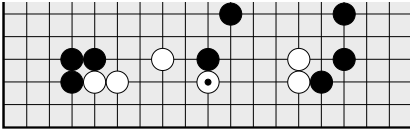


Pushing on further instead

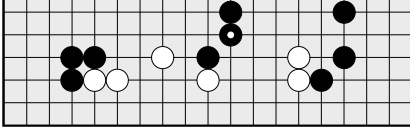
Always better to take the game to the opponent – pure defence should be played only when absolutely necessary. Instead, Black can not only weaken White a little further, but improve his shape, *without* losing sente:



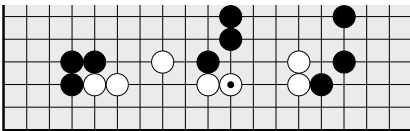
3 Do not run if you can attack



In response to White's contact play in this 9 stone handicap game, Black runs away frightened:



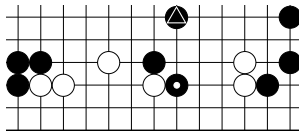
This gives white the luxury of connecting his groups:



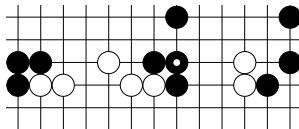
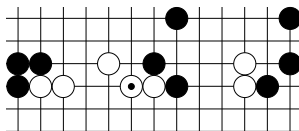
Whilst White gives Black sente, White is assured of solid profit in addition to connecting his stones – Black cannot realistically cut White apart now.

How Black could have played

As is often the case, the best move for one player is the best for the other:

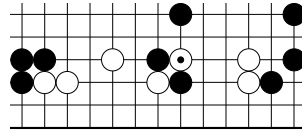


Such a move is made safe by the presence of the marked stone. When White makes shape on the left, Black joins and the two White groups are neatly cut apart:

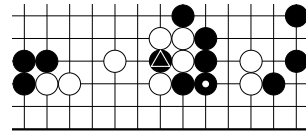
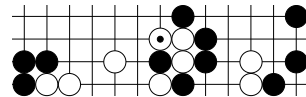
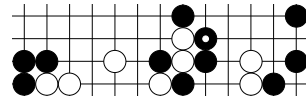
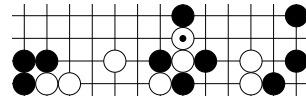
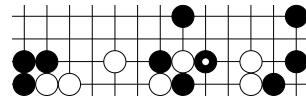


But what if White cuts?

Black may be frightened to play this kind of move because of trickery, such as with the cut here:



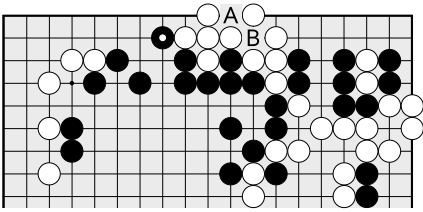
Even if a ladder capture is not possible, Black should not despair, as long as he keeps the two White groups separated, and keeps a connected shape. This can be achieved via a single stone sacrifice, for example, like this:



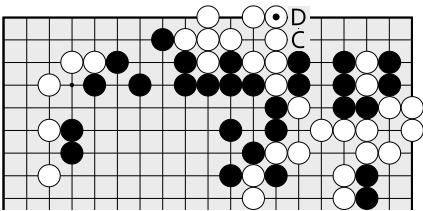
Whilst White is in a safer position than before, Black has carved out a very large lower right corner. Additionally, note that if White does not defend further, Black can later pull out the marked stone – whichever way White then ataris will make Black put White into atari in defence.

When Black connects solidly here and leaves bad aji (meaning bad feeling or shape) for White, it is a good result.

4 Push from a strong position



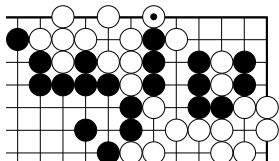
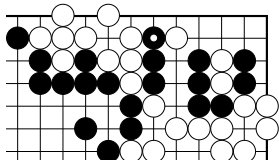
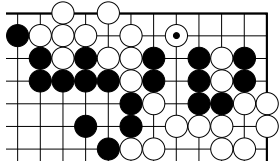
Here is another example of failing to push on from a strong position. White has eyes at A and B, yet ...



White wastes a move here absolutely securing his 2nd eye. But White could have waited until Black plays at *both* C and D before he needed to make this move.

White can be more proactive

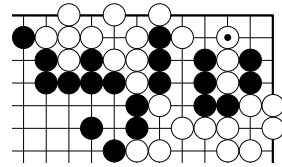
This move is perfectly safe, and gains White more, *as well* as threatening to rescue the 2 'dead' corner stones :



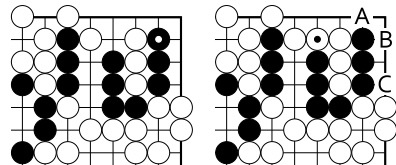
Can Black tenuki yet ?

If Black tenukis ...

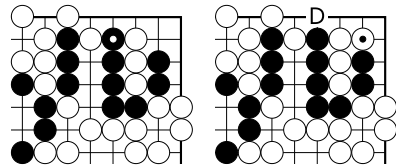
If Black decides that the corner is safe, he is in for a painful surprise :



White pulls out his 2 'dead' stones and destroys the whole Black corner. If Black tries to defend from the right :



And Black needs to play at A, B and C now to make corner life. The other route to safety also fails :



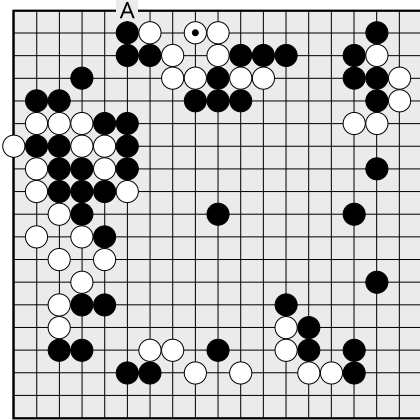
White lives by killing the 2 corner stones. The other 8 Black stones are dead in limbo.

White could have linked up underneath at D as well.

The moral of this story is to remember that a focus beyond the immediate security of your group can supply you with a **much more** dynamic way of playing. To live just by making 2 eyes should be your **very last** resort!

If you watch dan level games, you will see this repeatedly – groups virtually trapped turning the table on the would be trapper, and spilling out of confinement.

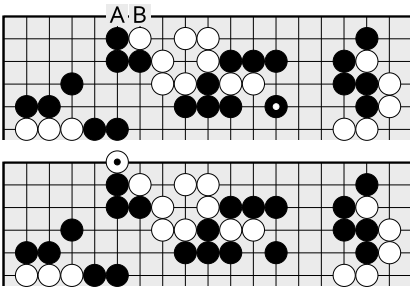
5 Attacks that do not lose sente



In a continuation of a game shown elsewhere, White has just captured a stone in a scramble for life.

As it stands, White would like to play another move around A to secure his two eyes. Doing so also then threatens an encroachment into the corner.

Alas, Black was too concerned about the safety of his surrounding stones, and lets White off the hook.



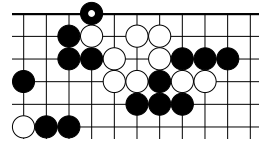
This was a waste for Black – his stones had more than enough nearby support to avoid the need for urgent defence.

And now he has to deal with an intrusion into the corner.

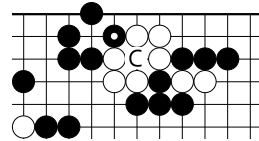
Avoiding caution here was simple for Black because White cannot ignore the atari at A as he will suffer too much.

How Black should have played

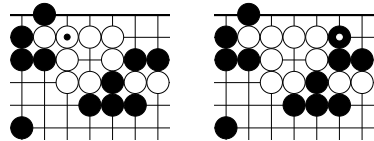
Black should atari immediately :



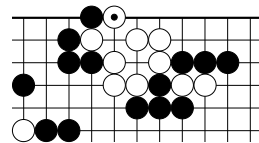
If White fails to respond, he dies :



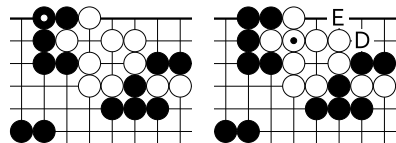
With C a false eye now, White is dead. But White also cannot join, because Black can stop him making a 2nd eye :



So White must create a ko (an unstable, repeating position) to have a hope of living :



Now if you are far ahead in the game, then it might be simply better to join, and force White to make life :



Black has protected his corner for free. He can also later play at D, forcing White to play at E.

However, when you develop your game, it is very wise to start engaging in ko fights, even if ahead, just to get the experience. Make White sweat a little!