

Introduction

Lots of people want to become stronger at Go. One of the most commonly agreed on methods to become stronger (though not the only one) is to do lots of tsumego so that one can improve his or her reading ability and shape recognition. Reading ability is one of the most fundamental parts of Go, and knowing how to capture stones or live inside small areas can definitely turn games instantly. Not everyone likes doing tsumego, but it's similar to doing math problems or practicing scales on an instrument. Technique is important!

That said, tsumego isn't a cure-all to become stronger. Playing and reviewing games is also very important, and using what you've learned from tsumego can take you pretty far (even up to mid-dan).

This guide is going to focus on life and death, but in the future maybe I'll update it with other types of tsumego (like shape, endgame, etc.). If you have any suggestions or feedback, please let me know!

Doing Tsumego Properly

There's different schools of thought about how to do tsumego. The one that I agree with (and perhaps I'm putting my own spin on it) is that you should be doing problems close to your level (some slightly below, some slightly above) until you master them. For all of the sets below, try to do them as fast and accurately as you can, but value accuracy more than time. Don't put stones down or click around to try things, but rather try to read out and visualize everything in your head before you start clicking or turning the page to see the solution. **If you can do all of the problems in a set in under 10 seconds each (even better, at a glance) with 100% accuracy, then mark the set as mastered.** If you make mistakes or take too long, mark the set with a frowny face and move on to the next set. Once you've completed all of the sets in one of the level ranges, redo all of the sets with a frowny face from the beginning until you have mastered them. It might be hard, but it never hurts to repeat sets (more practice!). It might be helpful to start from the sets one or two level ranges below your current level. At the very least, you'll finish them very quickly and it'll be a nice review.

How I Selected the Sets

The sets listed below were selected based off a combination of what I've seen from teaching other people and my own experience from when I learned Go. It might not align with your own experience, but let me know what you think!

Recommended Tsumego Sets by Level

The rank ranges here are calibrated to KGS rankings--you can adjust depending on what server you play on. For Tygem dan ranks, go for your rank minus 2; for OGS, I think you can just go for whatever your current rank is there (although I can't speak from experience). In some sections, there's a lot of problems--you don't have to do all of them, but it's plenty of practice material!

30k-25k

You're a new adventurer so you're unarmed and have nothing to fight with but your own fists.

Honestly, you don't need to do tsumego here. Just play some games and you'll be 25k.

24k-20k

You find a wooden stick on the ground and find it useful to poke your enemies with instead of using your fists.

The sets here have some review on recognizing atari and how to make/destroy two eyes. Keep playing more games!

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Entrance Level-> Entrance 1240-> Capturing (100 problems)

Intermediate Level-> Life and Death Basic 600 (all sections, 600 problems)

19k-15k

One day while you're killing goblins, you notice one has an old chisel that you can use to sharpen your wooden stick. It's dull, so sharpening your stick is a pain, but you get a bit of work done.

The sets here focus on basic life and death shapes (bent three, T-4, bulky five, etc.), reducing eye shape, and some basic capturing tesujis.

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Entrance Level->Entrance 1240-> Capture Methods (all sections, 672 problems)

Intermediate Level-> Life and Death 1000-> (1) and (2) (total 200 problems)

(Extra Practice) Dong-Dong grouping-> (1) ~10k_6350-> (1) ~30k (all sections, 1000 problems)

14k-10k

You've been tasked with slaying a vampire and using your sharpened wooden stick (now more like a stake), you slay the vampire! In the vampire's pocket lies a sharpening rod you can use to turn your stake into a knife and a dusty old book.

These sets introduce a few more basic capturing techniques and drill in other basic capturing shapes that are likely to appear in games. Here the focus is really on getting your fundamental fighting skills down (capturing small groups of stones in close combat), which can easily turn games at this level. There's a lot of repetition (the latter two sets are more review rather than introducing new techniques), but it's good for improving your intuition and confidence so that you can read faster in games.

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Intermediate Level-> Tactic 300-> (1) (100 problems)

Dong-Dong grouping-> (1) ~10k_6350-> (2) 30k~25k (all sections, 1000 problems)

Dong-Dong grouping-> (1) ~10k_6350-> (3) 30k~25k (all sections, 1000 problems)

9k-5k

Using the sharpening rod, you've begun to sharpen your newly shaped wooden knife so that you can take on tougher opponents. You notice that the dusty old book you picked up earlier can also be used to cast spells! While casting some weak spells on chickens, you also find a slightly longer wooden stick along the way that you find might be useful for decisive strikes when given the opportunity.

Now that you're an expert at capturing small groups of stones in basic scenarios, it's time to learn some new techniques! Some of the Dong-Dong grouping sets (except maybe the last one) might seem a little easy, but they're good for review and strengthening your shape recognition.

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Intermediate Level-> Tactic 300-> (2) (100 problems)

Shiang Grouping-> 1_Lecture Notes-> (3) Basic _20k~9k-> 1_20k~9k-> 1_Close Combat (1, 4, 5, ~116 problems)

Shiang Grouping-> 1_Lecture Notes-> (3) Basic _20k~9k-> 2_20k~9k-> 1_Close Combat (1, 2, 3, 5, ~96 problems)

Shiang Grouping-> 1_Lecture Notes-> (3) Basic _20k~9k-> 2_20k~9k-> 6_End Game-> (2) Tactic (24 problems)

Shiang Grouping-> 1_Lecture Notes-> (3) Basic _20k~9k-> 3_20k~9k-> 1_Close Combat (120 problems)

Shiang Grouping-> 1_Lecture Notes-> (3) Basic _20k~9k-> 3_20k~9k-> 6_End Game-> (2) Tactic (26 problems)

Shiang Grouping-> 1_Lecture Notes-> (4) Intermediate _9k~3k-> 1_Opening-> (3) Urgent Point (24 problems)

Dong-Dong grouping-> (1) ~10k_6350-> (3) 25k~20k (all sections, 1000 problems)

Dong-Dong grouping-> (1) ~10k_6350-> (3) 20k~15k (all sections, 1000 problems)

Dong-Dong grouping-> (1) ~10k_6350-> (3) 20k~10k (all sections, 1000 problems)

Dong-Dong grouping-> (1) ~10k_6350-> (3) 15k~10k (all sections, 350 problems)

Dong-Dong grouping-> (2) 20k~10k_257 (all sections, 257 problems)

1001 Life and Death Problems (book)

4k-1k

We're getting into the meat of tesuji and life and death now! By this point your wooden tesuji knife is quite pointy, but you know it won't be sufficient forever. Now you must search for a new, sharp, steel tesuji knife.

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Intermediate Level-> Tactic 300-> (3) (100 problems)

Intermediate Level-> Comprehensive teaching 420 (all sections, 420 problems)

Shiang Grouping-> 1_Lecture Notes-> (4) Intermediate _9k~3k-> 4_Close Combat-> (4) Practice (48 problems)

Shiang Grouping-> 1_Lecture Notes-> (4) Intermediate _9k~3k-> 5_Life and Death (all sections, 108 problems)

Get Strong at Tesuji (book)

Graded Go Problems for Dan Players Volume 2: 300 Tesuji Problems (3k-3d) (book)

1d-3d

So you've obtained a small variety of knives and daggers in your arsenal now, but the world is a big place with many unknown dangers beyond your imagination. Take your first step into the true wilderness where many competent foes await! While you continue to expand your arsenal of weapons, take some time to learn some new sneaky weakening spells that could come in handy.

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Shiang Grouping-> 1_Lecture Notes-> (5) Advanced _3k~1d->1_Close combat (1,3,4,5,6, ~115 problems)

Get Strong at Endgame (just the 120 endgame tesuji problems) (book)

4d-6d

You've upgraded your arsenal of weapons from simple steel to the toughest of metals. You're a seasoned veteran who has fought many battles by now, but you still desire to become stronger and take down

those above you. To improve further, you must seek the hide of mythical creatures to craft new weapons out of. They won't be easy to take down, but if you keep practicing, surely will you succeed!

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Graded Go Problems for Dan Players Volume 4: 300 Life and Death Problems (4d-7d) (book)

Graded Go Problems for Dan Players Volume 5: 300 Tesuji Problems (4d-7d) (book)

7d+

You made it. You're on the footsteps of the realm of elite champions, or so you thought. High above in the clouds reside the most legendary of champions, and to reach them, you'll have to enchant your weapons with the most magical of runes. From here on out, continue to strive for the heavens and embrace your journey!

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Igo Hatsuyoron (book)

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