

ROOM AND PILLAR

by Mark Steere

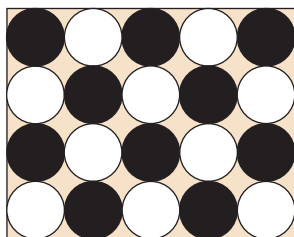


Figure 1
Initial setup

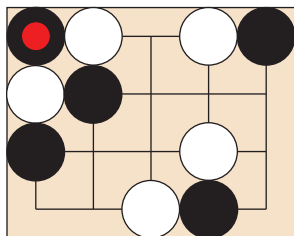


Figure 2
Illegal removal

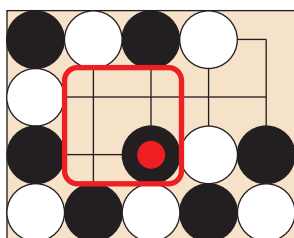


Figure 3
Illegal removal

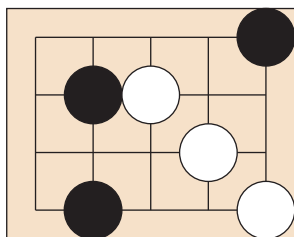


Figure 4
Black has lost

INTRODUCTION

Room and Pillar is played on a Kōnane board. That is, a rectangular grid of pits that can hold one stone each. The grid can be any size, with at least one even dimension. The board is initially filled with a checkerboard pattern of black and white stones. **Figure 1** shows a 5x4 grid. Mark Steere designed Room and Pillar in August 2026.

PLAY

The two players, Black and White, take turns **removing a stone of their own color**, one stone per turn, starting with Black. Passing is not allowed. Room and Pillar uses the pie rule. White, on his first turn, has the option of switching colors and becoming Black, claiming the first move (removal) as his own, instead of removing a white stone.

LEGAL MOVES

After the first removal, **every subsequent removal must be orthogonally (horizontally or vertically) adjacent to an empty point**. In **Figure 2**, Black must not remove the black stone marked with a red dot, because it isn't orthogonally adjacent to an empty point.

Your removal must never create a 2x2 area of empty pits. In **Figure 3**, Black must not remove the black stone marked with a red dot, because doing so would create the 2x2 empty area marked with a red square.

OBJECT OF THE GAME

The goal is to be the last player to remove a stone. In other words, if you don't have a removal available, you lose. In **Figure 4**, it's Black's turn, but he can't remove a black stone without creating a 2x2 area of empty pits. So Black has lost, and White has won.

DESIGN NOTES

Room and Pillar was inspired by the ancient, Hawaiian game of Kōnane. True to the spirit of Kōnane, Room and Pillar begins with a checkerboard pattern of stones, and is very simple. Room and Pillar was also inspired by the room and pillar mining process, in which ore is removed from a "room", and "pillars" of ore are left in place to hold up the ceiling. The pillars can't be too widely spaced, or the ceiling will collapse.

There is also Inverse Room and Pillar. Exactly the same idea, but you start with an empty checkerboard, and the two players, Red and Blue, take turns adding neutral stones onto squares of their own color. You must place your stone orthogonally adjacent to another stone, and you must not form a 2x2 group of stones.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Feel free to publish this rule sheet and to program the game of Room and Pillar. No licensing fee or royalties are expected. However, please don't change the name or the rules, and please attribute the game to me, Mark Steere. My other games can be found at marksteeregames.com.