

Faust (by Corey L. Clark)

Faust is an intense game of annihilation for two players, White and Black. Just as in Mark Steere's Oust, in Faust two players enter, one leaves; the board starts empty and ends with just one player's pieces remaining. Faust makes a remarkable use of board space, and its quite easy for a game of Faust to have 150% as many moves as there are spaces on the board, especially as you scale up to larger sizes. Not only is it impossible for a game of Faust to end in a draw, a game of Faust played to its conclusion will generally end with a, quite satisfying (for the victor that is), blanket of discs spanning the entire board. Faust was invented by Corey L. Clark in 2020.

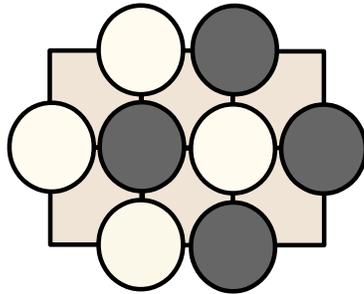
Rules

Materials: A square board of any size as well as a set of discs with white on one side and black on the other (or any other two colors). There must be as many discs as the number of spaces on the board. Go stones can be used instead of double-sided discs but players will have to replace stones instead of flipping discs while capturing. Due to the high level of recycling of space, 19X19 is only recommended to the most seasoned Faust adherents, with a whole evening to spare playing a game of Faust. As a maximum size 15x15 is recommended. 8X8 is a good minimum size and allows Faust to be played with reversi equipment, by playing on the cells instead of the intersections.

Objective: The objective of Faust is annihilation; to wipe your opponent's discs completely off the board.

Gameplay: The game is played on the intersections of the board. Starting with Black, on a turn a player may place a disc with his color showing on any intersection of the board. He may alternatively capture 1 or more enemy stones according to one of two conventions.

A) If this pattern of stones (or any of its rotations) is embedded somewhere on the board, then either player may capture all enemy stones in the embedded pattern on his turn. Note: the unoccupied corners are not part of the pattern and can contain stones of any color.



B) Flip a rectangle of discs consisting purely of enemy discs, if the following qualifications are met

- The rectangle is entirely bounded by single-colored walls on all 4 of its sides
- the player owns the majority of the perimeter created by these walls
- the rectangle is not part of a larger rectangle meeting these criteria.

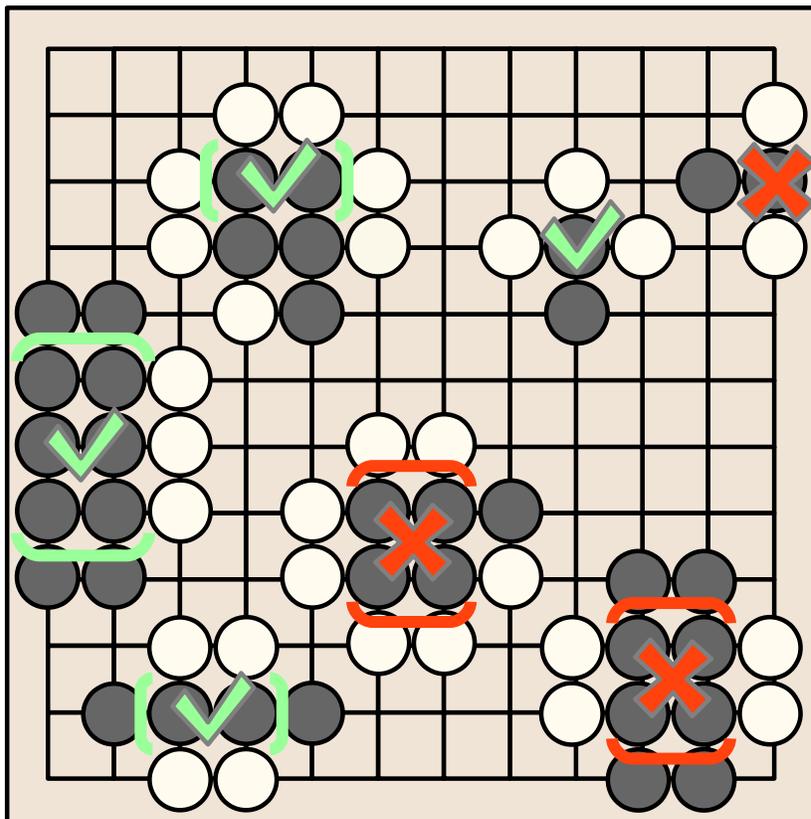


fig 1. Here we can see some legal and illegal captures for White on his turn. Top right is the simplest form of capture, majority ownership of the walls of a single bounded disc. The two examples on the right below it show cases of equally bounded squares (the edge is owned by black). In the center is an example of a rectangle which is not bounded properly for capture as its right wall has both colors in it, however the example in top left corner demonstrates that a subset of the same rectangle could be legally captured. Finally the two leftmost examples show opportunities where white can cut through by having ownership of the longer walls of oblong rectangles

Edge rule: If one or more of the walls bounding a rectangle are board edges these will take on the color of the parallel walls opposite to them. If a rectangle is bounded by two opposite board edges then these are considered to be neutral walls.

Forced passing: You automatically pass your turn if no legal move is available for you on your turn. Otherwise passing is not permitted

Pie: This rule is used in order to reduce the advantage of Black having an extra disc on the board. After the first move, the second player may choose to switch colors instead of playing a disc of his color for his first move.



Strategy

Faust has some remarkable emergent properties giving it a diverse set of strategic elements. Faust is surprisingly as much of a connection game as it is a game of territory (which might also not be obvious). This is because if a player connects two opposite corners, he might just live outright unconditionally no matter what happens on the rest of the board, depending on whether there are any vulnerabilities in the linking chain. Therefore it is a good strategy to threaten to connect opposite corners in the opening, though in most cases any such attempt will be ultimately frustrated. The other aspect of the opening is to create territory. But unlike most other games involving territory acquisition, straight walls will not do much to secure it. Therefore Faust becomes a game of creating winding, wiggling formations to defend territory with. In the mid-game you will want to start making eyes. Just like in Go, eyes are invulnerable formations. When you form a 1x1 eye, you secure the surrounding discs from active attacks by your opponent. In the late game, you'll want to start taking stock of tempo (how many more moves you have than your opponent) as well as dividing your territory into as many tiny regions possible. Once the board has been filled the game is still not over, because now you must strategically decide which territories and eyes to start filling in to avoid creating large rectangles your opponent may scoop up. This is 4 layers of heuristics without even needing to play the game to find them!