

The Ultimate Sprouts Pre-Move Checklist

Keep this guide handy to avoid common mistakes and play a smarter game. Go through these checks on every turn to sharpen your skills and frustrate your opponent.

Phase 1 Before You Draw a Line

- **Scan the Entire Board:** Don't get tunnel vision. Look at the whole playing field, not just one area. Where are the opportunities? Where are the dangers?
- **Count All Liberties:** Mentally (or lightly in pencil if allowed) update the liberty count for all relevant spots. Are there any spots with only one liberty left? These are your targets and your weaknesses.
- **Identify Your Opponent's Biggest Threat:** What is the best possible move your opponent can make right now? Your primary goal might be to block that move.
- **Formulate a Goal:** What do you want to achieve with this move?
 - Limit the opponent's options? (Best Goal)
 - Create a safe region for yourself?
 - Connect two vulnerable spots?

Phase 2 As You Plan Your Move

- **Check the Path:** Is the line you plan to draw *absolutely* clear? Trace it with your finger. Look for tiny, hidden lines that would cause an illegal crossing.
- **Evaluate the Outcome:** After you draw the line and add a new spot, what will the board look like?
 - How many liberties will the two connected spots have left?
 - How many liberties will your new spot have?
 - Does this move give your opponent an obvious and powerful counter-move?
- **Think Defensively:** Ask yourself, "How can my opponent use this new line and spot against me?" If the answer is "easily," reconsider your move.

Phase 3 The Final Check

- **Confirm the Two Steps:** Is your move complete?
 2. A valid line is drawn from/between spots with liberties.
 3. A new spot is placed on that line.
 - Forgetting step 2 is an illegal move and a wasted turn.
- **Is This the *Best* Move?** Is there a simpler, safer, or more restrictive move available? Don't rush. The best move is often not the most obvious one.