1. Give a complete description of the winning strategy for the stones game under the “last stone loses” rule, and explain why it works, as I did for the “last stone wins” game.

2. In the “stones” game in which “consecutive position” is important, we’ve seen that the first player can win by splitting the line into two equal pieces, then playing a “mirror” strategy, if “last stone wins”. The first player can also win the “last stone loses” game by initially following the same strategy, if the game starts with more than one stone.

Following the strategy as if last stone wins, the game eventually contains exactly one small group of more than one consecutive stones, just after the second player has moved. At that point, the game will look like this:

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The dots represent stones that are not consecutive with any others; the black bar represents a small group of consecutive stones. The hollow bar exactly matched the black bar just before player two moved; the hollow bar currently contains zero, one, or two isolated stones.

The black bar must contain two, three, four or five consecutive stones. In all possible cases, explain exactly how the first player can move so that player two will take the last stone.