

The Rules of Go

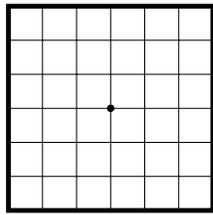
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1. THE GO BOARD (RULE I)



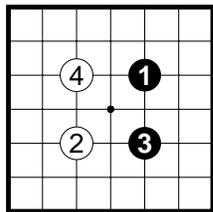
A 7x7 Go board

Go is played on a square board consisting of any number of crossing lines. The usual board sizes are 9x9, 13x13 or 19x19 lines, the latter being the official tournament size.

To explain you the rules of the game we will use a 7x7 board since that will be more than sufficient for this purpose.

You start the game with an empty board (but see section *handicap* below). The dark spot in the middle of the board is used both for orientation and indication (see section *handicap* below).

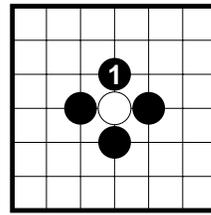
2. LEGAL MOVES (RULE II)



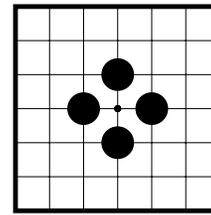
Move 1 - 4

A Go move is played on the intersections of the lines. This is different from what you are used to from other games like chess and checkers. In the figure we show you the first four moves of an instruction game. The moves are numbered to indicate the order in which they were played. That's right, in Go the black player moves first! Another legal move, hard to display in a figure, is *pass*. When both players pass the game is finished.

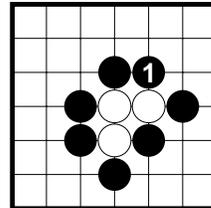
3. CAPTURING STONES (RULE III)



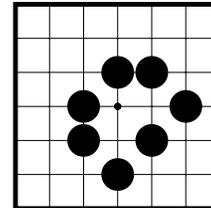
One stone



Result



Three stones

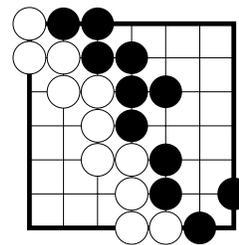


Result

During a Go game one or more stones can be captured by completely surrounding them, i.e. filling all empty points around them. We show two examples: the top figure a one stone capture, the bottom figure a three stone capture. After black has played his move at 1 he removes the captured white stones from the board leading to the right board positions.

Note: Needless to say that being captured usually is bad. There are lots of situations though where one sacrifices one or more stones to gain advantage elsewhere.

4. THE AIM OF THE GAME (RULE IV)

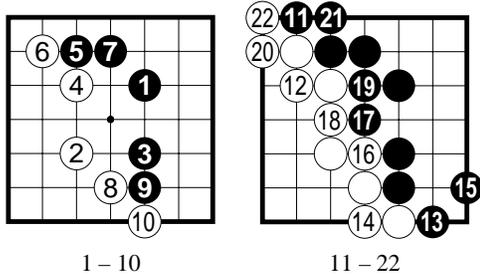


Conquer the board

The purpose of Go is to conquer a larger part of the board than your opponent. The conquered part exists of the stones placed on the board plus the stones which could be added safely, i.e. inside your own walls. The figure shows a

final position. The score for this game would be: black has 11 stones on the board and could add 16 stones inside his own walls, white has 11 stones on the board and could add 11 stones inside his own walls, so the score is $11+16 - 11+11$ is 5 points for black. Black won this game.

5. AN INSTRUCTION GAME



We show you an instruction game on the 7x7 board. To avoid having too many numbers in one figure we have split the moves in two figures. The first figure shows the first 10 moves, the second figure shows the final 12 moves (11-22). The first four moves you have seen before in the figure of section *Legal moves*. With move 5 black tries to enlarge his claim of the board meanwhile reducing white's claimed area. With 8 white applies this same strategy. After all borders have been clearly defined the game is over. As we already have verified in section *The aim of the game* black won this game by five points.

6. KOMI (RULE V)

You might argue that it is not fair that black won the game because he had the advantage of moving first. You are right about that. That's why the white player receives compensation for the fact that he moves second. This compensation is called *komi* (Japanese). Funny enough, the komi hardly depends on the board size. According to Japanese professional Go players the komi should be 5.5 points for the board sizes 9x9, 13x13 and 19x19. In the above game we played on a 7x7 board. Let's assume that the komi would still be 5.5 points, then white would have won the above game with .5 point, the smallest margin possible.

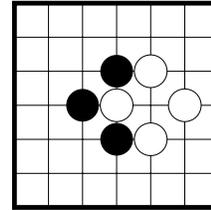
Note 1: The amount of komi can differ between different countries. It can even differ between

different tournaments. Basically it is up to the organizer to decide with how much komi the game is played.

Note 2: The fact that the komi includes half a point (5.5) ensures that the game can't end in a draw.

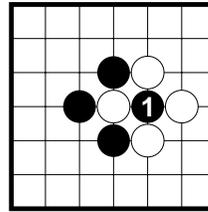
7. KO (RULE VI)

Imagine we have the following situation with black to move:

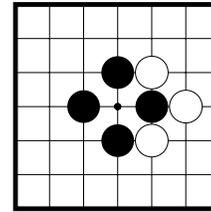


Black to move

Black could decide to capture one white stone:

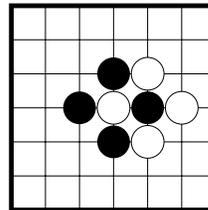


Black takes

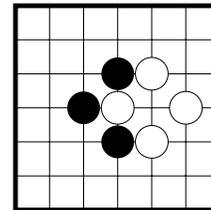


Result

But in the resulting position white is to move and could in his/her turn decide to capture a stone:



White takes



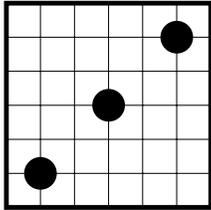
Result

The final position is the same as the starting position. This implies that the move sequence 1-2 could repeat itself endlessly. To avoid this to happen the game has a special rule, the *ko* (Japanese) rule. The ko rule prohibits that the same position (i.e. the *whole board!*) repeats itself.

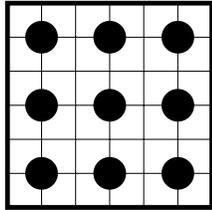
So in the diagram sequence white 2 is prohibited because of the ko rule.

8. HANDICAP (RULE VII)

One of the (many) nice features of Go is that you don't need an opponent of equal strength/experience to have an exciting game. The Go game allows you to equalize the players chances to win by adding some initial stones on the board:



Handicap 3



Handicap 9

The larger the strength difference the more stones you would add. These stones are called handicap stones. These stones are usually placed on predestinated points, indicated on the Go board by a thick spot.

We showed you two examples: a handicap 3 and a handicap 9 game. The latter is usually considered the maximum for 19x19 Go and (as you can see from the figure) is far more than reasonable for 7x7.