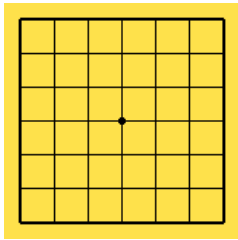


1. THE GO BOARD
(RULE I)



A 7 x 7 Go board

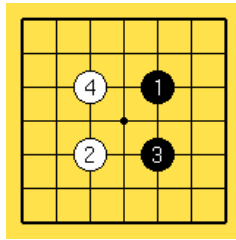
Go is played on a square board printed with a grid of any size. The most common board sizes have either 9x9, 13x13 or 19x19 lines. The 19x19 grid is the official tournament size.

The simplest way to explain the rules of the game is to look at a 7x7 board, however the rules are the same for all sizes of board.

The game begins with an empty board*. The dark spot in the middle of the board is used both for orientation and as a marker for the placement of pieces in handicapped games (cf. section 7).

* With the exception of handicap games; see section 7 below.

2. LEGAL MOVES
(RULE II)



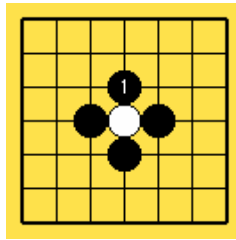
Moves 1 – 4

A Go move involves placing a stone on one of the *intersections* on the board, as opposed to other games like chess and checkers, where pieces are placed in the spaces between the lines. In the figure above you will see the first four moves of an instruction game. The moves are numbered to indicate the order in which they were played.

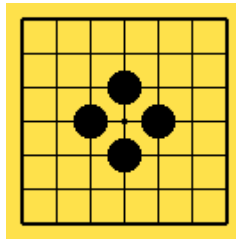
... that's right; in Go the black player moves first!

Another legal move, which is difficult to illustrate, is a *pass*, where one player chooses to miss a turn. Once both players have passed consecutively the game ends.

3. CAPTURING STONES
(RULE III)

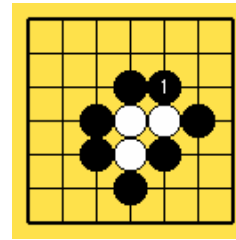


One stone is captured

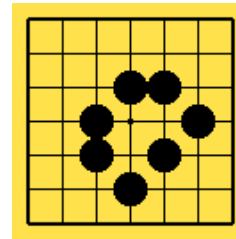


... and removed

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: in the above figure a one stone capture, in the figure below a three stone capture.



Three stones are captured

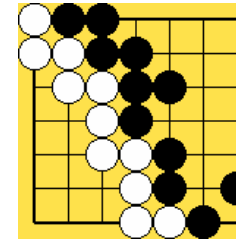


... and removed

After black has played his move at 1 in both figures he removes the captured white stones from the board as illustrated

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

4. THE AIM OF GO
(RULE IV)



Conquering 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. KOMI
(RULE V)

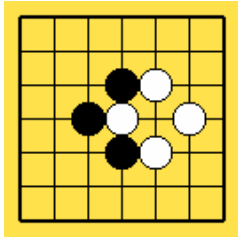
You might argue that it is not fair that black won the game because he had the advantage of moving first. This is why the white player receives a compensation for the fact that he moves second, called the *komi* (Japanese). Funnily enough, the *komi* hardly depends on the board size. According to Japanese 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. If we assume that the *komi* was 5.5 points, white would have won by 1/2 point, the smallest possible margin.

Note 1: The *komi* value differs 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 *komi* includes half a point (5.5) to ensure that the game cannot end in a draw.

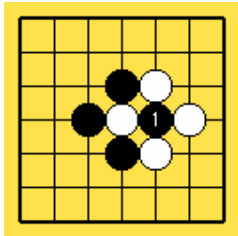
6. Ko (RULE VI)

Imagine we have the following situation with black to move:

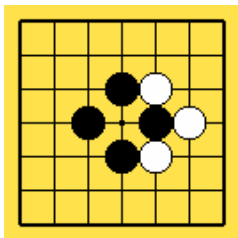


Black to move

Black could decide to capture one white stone:

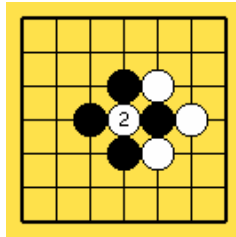


Black takes white

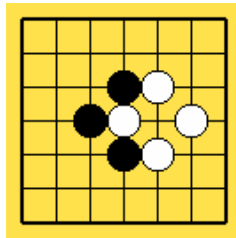


Result

However in the resulting position white is to move and could now decide to capture a black stone:



White takes black



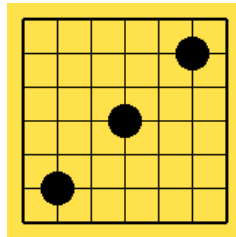
Result

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, the game has a special rule, the *ko* rule (Japanese) which prohibits the same position (i.e. the *whole board!*) repeating itself. In the diagram, white 2 would be prohibited by the *ko* rule.

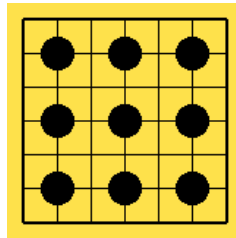
7. HANDICAP (RULE VII)

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 predefined points, indicated on the Go board by a thick spot.

Above you will see 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.

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THE RULES OF GO

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*Adapted with kind permission of:
Jan van der Steen, Amsterdam,
The Netherlands, 28/02/95*

For further information - <http://gobase.org>