

Rules of First Capture Go

This slightly simplified version of the game of Go can be learned in a couple of minutes and is surprisingly challenging and enjoyable.

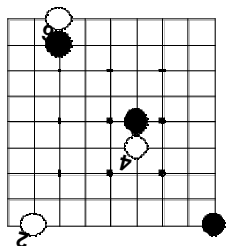
1. The game is played on a board marked with a grid of intersecting lines. Any size between 5 X 5 lines and 19 X 19 lines will work, but for beginners a 7 X 7 or 9 X 9 board is best.

2. The lens-shaped playing pieces are called stones, although they are often made of glass or plastic. The traditional colors are black and white.

3. The game is for two players or two teams.

4. Stones are played alternately by the players, and the one with the black stones goes first.

5. Stones are placed on the **intersections** of the grid, including on the edges and in the corners, and not in the squares formed by the lines. There are 81 places to place a stone on a 9 X 9 board.



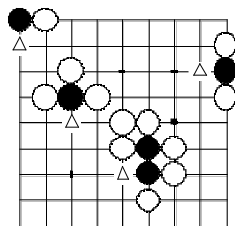
These six stones are correctly placed.

6. Once it is placed on the board, a stone does not move, although it can be captured and removed from the board. (See #8 below for the rule of capture.)

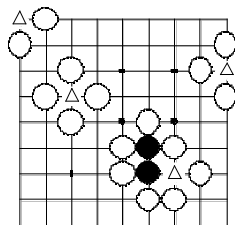
7. Stones of the same color that touch each other **along a line** form a group and function as a unit.

8. As long as a stone or a group of stones is connected **along a line** to at least one empty intersection, the stone or group remains on the board. Thus, if, during play, a stone or group of stones is completely surrounded by stones of the other color, the stone or group is captured and removed from the board. Note that you can in effect cause the immediate capture of your own stones in some situations.

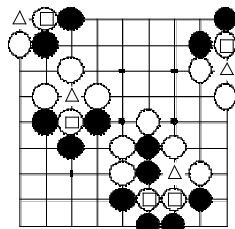
9. The winner is the first player to capture one or more stones.



White can make a capture by playing at \triangle . The black stones would then be removed. Black can avoid being captured for the moment by playing at \square , as the black stones would then be connected to more than one empty intersection.



If Black plays at \triangle in this diagram, the black stone or stones would be captured as soon as they are played because, after the play, the stones would not be connected to any empty intersections. Such a play amounts to self-capture, and the stone or stones would be removed from the board. White would win the game.



If Black plays at \square in this diagram, it would not be self-capture, because in each case the white stone or stones marked \square would be captured and removed when Black plays so that the black stones end up connected to an empty intersection.

Strategy and Tactics for Effective Play

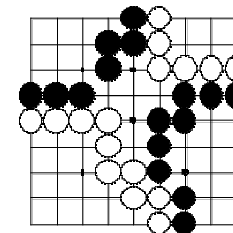
Here are some guidelines for playing First Capture Go more effectively:

1. Keep your stones connected; it makes them more difficult to capture.

2. Avoid making lots of groups; do not scatter stones around.

3. Look for weak groups, that is, groups that are connected to relatively few empty intersections. If yours, make them stronger by attaching more stones to them. If the other player's, attack the weakest group.

4. Try to surround empty intersections with walls (make "forts") so as to have more safe places to play. In this diagram both players have made forts.



5. Play outside your forts as long as you can safely do so, saving your inside places until the end.

Rules for Regular Go

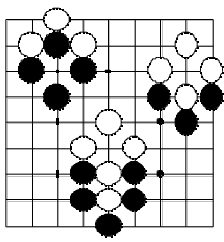
Experienced players prefer a slightly more complicated version of the game than First Capture Go. In regular Go, the first eight rules are the same. However, the rule for determining the winner is different, and there is a special rule to prevent an endlessly repetitive situation from occurring. In regular Go, a capture does not end the game, but is a tactic used in playing the game.

9. The winner is the player who controls the larger number of empty intersections at the end of play. This requires more explanation than can be given here. It is related to the idea of forts. Basically, the aim is to have more places inside your forts than the other player does; captured stones are returned and placed inside your forts.

10. You cannot play in such a way as to repeat an identical situation on the board. This is called the rule of *ko*, which is a Japanese word meaning eternity, and can be briefly explained here.

The Rule of Ko

Since the game continues after a capture in regular Go, a problem could arise as illustrated in the following diagram:



In the upper left, White can capture a black stone. However, the capturing white stone would then have only one empty intersection, so Black could capture it, resulting in a repetition of the original position. If this continues, the game could stall because of endlessly repeated capturing. Hence, the rule of ko: **If a single stone is captured and the capturing stone could be recaptured, the player whose stone was captured must play elsewhere before recapturing the capturing stone.** After the player plays elsewhere, the player who did the initial capturing could connect the capturing stone with others in such a way that it could not be captured. This rule effectively prevents an endlessly repetitive situation.

In the upper right, Black can make the initial capture, after which White must play elsewhere before recapturing. However, the situation in the lower area does not lead to ko. Black can capture **two** stones, and if White recaptures the single capturing stone the original position is not repeated. So, this is not ko, and White could recapture immediately.

11. In regular Go you pass when you cannot gain anything by playing. When both players pass, the game ends, and you count the score.

What is Go?

Go is the world's oldest board game, and it is still played just as it was thousands of years ago. Line and circle, black and white, stone and wood combine with simple rules to produce delightful subtleties that make Go the most widely played game in the world today.

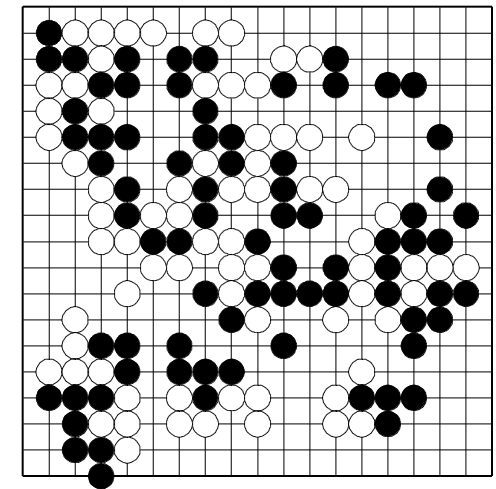
Go can be many things: an intense meditation, a mirror of your personality, an exercise in reasoning, or, when played well, a beautiful art in which black and white dance across the board in delicate balance. But most importantly, Go is challenging and fun.

Go was first played in China and eventually spread to Korea and Japan, and throughout East Asia. In the 19th century it began to get a following in the West, as well. Today the game is played by millions of people around the world, and there are hundreds of professional players who make their living playing and teaching the game, including several who live in the US. In recent times players from all over the world have begun to meet and play over the Internet.

More information can be obtained from the American Go Association's web site at www.usgo.org or from the many AGA chapters scattered around the country.

GO

An Ancient Game For the New Millennium



American Go Association
PO Box 397, Old Chelsea Station
New York, NY 10113-0397

www.usgo.org