

# PREFACE

To build your club, you need to attract new players. To do that you have to find ways to tell your community about the wonders of go.

If the only thing that's stopping you is that you don't know what to say, this sample script may help. Think of it as a template, a first draft. Add, cut, change around as you wish. Think of it as a starting point for preparing a presentation aimed at the total non-player.

Many chapters are building their membership by giving public presentations. A common venue is the local Barnes and Noble or Border's bookstore's author and lecture series. Work with the store to stock up in go books beforehand. Other clubs set up demonstrations at local festivals, street fairs and flea markets. Civic groups, cable TV shows, school assemblies are among the many other venues for telling your neighbors about go.

To conduct a successful demonstration you will need several items of equipment. A demonstration board is essential. Contact your local chapter to borrow one, or the Vice-President of your region may be able to help. You will also want to show your audience the best playing equipment you can come up with, especially shell and slate stones, which you can pass around to good effect.

*Go World* magazine, with its lavish reproductions of historic go-related art, makes a good impression. Specific back issues, with cover art that comes with entertaining stories, are recommended at appropriate points during the presentation. To order back issues send e-mail to [sales@kiseido.com](mailto:sales@kiseido.com).

You will also need handouts about your club's meeting times. You can also download posters, brochures and other materials that from our Web site

[www.usgo.org/resources/index](http://www.usgo.org/resources/index)

Feel free to print them out and make them available.

You can get plenty of help from your local and regional AGA people. Good luck building a thriving go scene in your area.

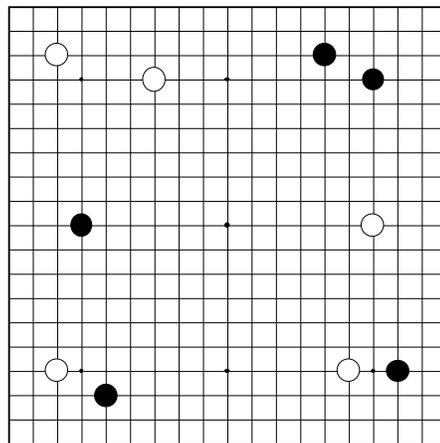
Roy Laird, President  
New York, NY  
October 2001

# THE GREAT GO SPIEL

By Peter Shotwell and Barbara Calhoun  
©2001 The American Go Association

Hello. We are here from the \_\_\_\_\_ Go Club to talk about the mysterious game we play, while the \_\_\_\_\_ bookstore hopes this talk will encourage you to buy some introductory go books. You might have heard about go from articles in *The New York Times* (or if there was publicity for the talk), or books like *Shibumi* by Trevanian, TV shows like *Ally McBeal* or from movies like *Pi*. Or maybe you haven't heard about it at all.

Go is one of the simplest games in the world and millions of people play it both in the Orient, Europe and here. (At the demo board) You play it with lens-shaped *stones* like this, putting them on the intersections like this.



*Give a quick demonstration of placement of stones, preferably on a stand up magnetic board.*

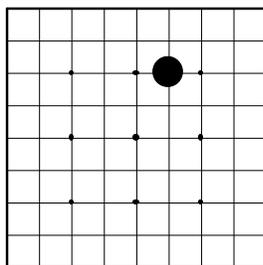
Unlike chess—which eliminates—go accumulates. It is a game that builds territory by surrounding. This gets complicated, however, since, while you are surrounding territory, your opponent might be surrounding you! In fact, it becomes so complicated that the best computer programs can only beat weak amateurs. On the other hand, it takes only five minutes to learn how to play. At the end of this talk, we can even play some games, if you like.

This game is based on one simple rule, the essence of simplicity. A few unusual situations call for special handling, but when you know this one rule, you understand everything you need to get started.

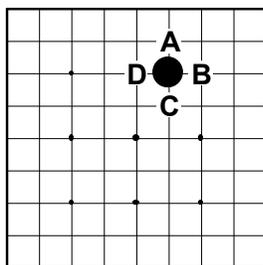
**The Rule: If you are completely surrounded, off you come from the playing board!**

*(We are switching to 9x9 diagrams now. You can use either a 9x9 or a 19x19 demo board here)*

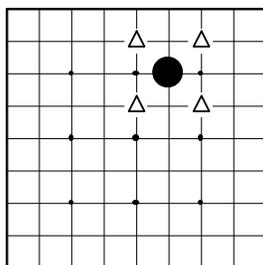
Notice how the stones are always placed on the intersections and not in the spaces.



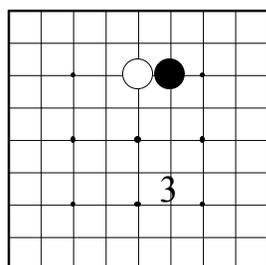
This stone has what we might call four 'liberties.' You can think of these liberties as being in the North, the South, the East and the West.



The diagonals are not liberties:

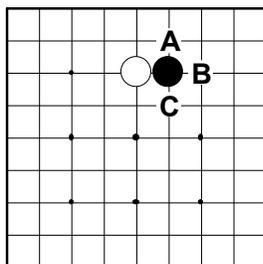


Now lets put a White stone next to the Black one.



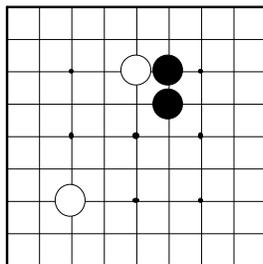
Now, how many liberties do the Black stone have?

If you guessed three, you are right.



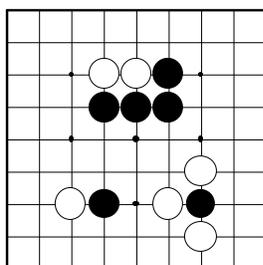
It is also easy to see that White also has three. If you think of go as a fight for liberties you are on the right track.

Suppose White plays somewhere else and black plays like this:

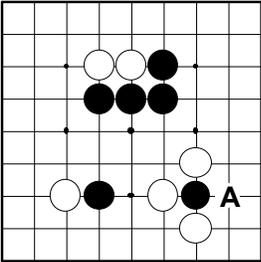


Black now has five liberties. Can you count them?

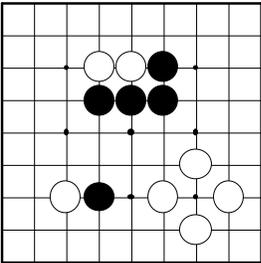
Let's skip ahead. A game is now in progress and a situation comes up in the bottom right-hand corner:



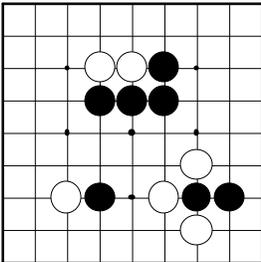
How many liberties does the Black stone have? One, of course. To describe this situation we can use a Japanese word, 'atari.' 'Atari' means something like 'check' in chess. If White puts a stone at 'A'



It is good-bye for Black!

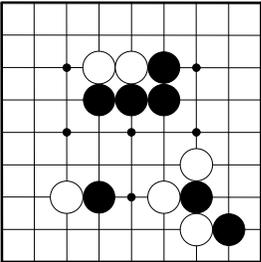


So what is a good strategy for Black if he or she— or 'it' if a computer is playing—doesn't want to lose that stone? Like the old Chinese proverb: 'of the 36 Strategies, the 37th is the best!'

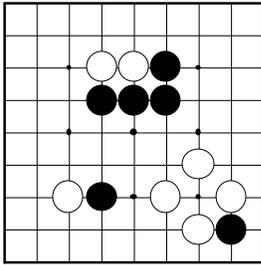


Black runs away.

Let's go back for a minute to review. Instead of running away, what if Black does this in the lower right hand corner?



Whoops! Remember, diagonal connections don't count:



I think you can begin to see why, simple as this principle of surrounding is, go becomes at the highest levels of professional play, the world's most complicated board game.

Go is also the oldest game that is still being played—its age is from two to perhaps four thousand years.

Early legends of its founding involved mythical emperors of early China at around 2000 BC. There are literary records that date from about 700 BC.

So why has this game intrigued so many people for so long? For a game to survive over this many years, anthropologists and common sense tell us that parents must have thought it was something worthwhile to teach their children.

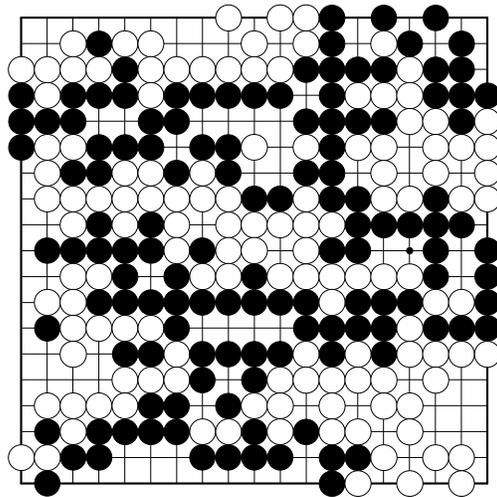
However, cultural interests have changed not only over the centuries, but also over the generations. Many games our parents were enthusiastic about are doomed to be only footnotes in the March of Time. Has anyone played a game of Parcheesi recently? Or Canasta?

Go has appealed to all these different people for many different reasons. Today, in any go club and now on the Internet, you will find artists playing mathematicians, Americans playing Chinese, computer people playing politicians, Russians playing Koreans, children playing parents, the rich playing the poor . . .

I would like to illustrate this by talking about the history of go in China and Japan for a few minutes. Go is in one sense a competitive game, but in another sense, it gives vital lessons in harmony. Greed—the desire to have everything—will not get you very far on the go board. In China, the ancient Taoists saw the principals of the balance of Yin and Yang at work.

*Show the Yin-Yang symbol.*

Now here is a game that is nearly finished.



This looks complicated but it really isn't. White has surrounded territory in the upper left and in the lower right. You can see Black has some territory on the bottom. Other territories for both are entwined with each other like—Yin and Yang.

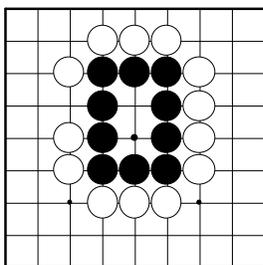
The rivals to the Taoists—the Confucians—thought go playing was a waste of time—this was in 500 BC. Yet, a thousand years later, about 5- or 600 AD, it was the Confucians who were the most enthusiastic players. They were calling the game 'hand-talk' and go was considered one of the 'Five Great Accomplishments' of any cultured gentleman, along with music, poetry, calligraphy and art. Not only that, but Emperors often gave rulerships to good players. They believed that if someone could control the 'microcosm,' they could certainly control the 'macrocosm.'

Alongside Taoism and Confucianism, the third great Chinese religion—Buddhism—swept over China by the third, fourth and fifth centuries AD. Those who achieved its Understanding saw in the flow and patterns of a go game a mirror of the universe. Playing go was one technique used to lift off the '27 Veils of Ignorance.' By this, of course, the Buddhists meant 'spiritual' ignorance—not ignorance of the world and its mundane activities. With this knowledge, one could become immortal, like the Buddha.

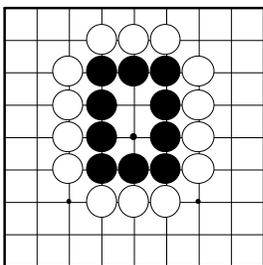
Watch for a moment to see how groups on the go board become immortal.

In the last example of our game on the small board, we saw what looked like various groups of connected stones chasing each other around.

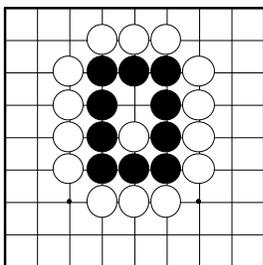
There is one theory that the first go players were children. Like we play marbles, they may have chased each other around on the go board, capturing stones and maybe pocketing the spoils. Eventually, however, someone got chased around in circle and the following happened:



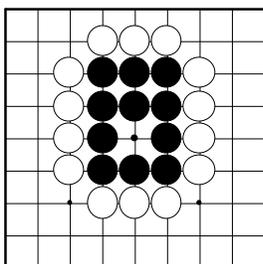
How many liberties does Black have now? If you guessed three, you are right. Next, White closes the circle.



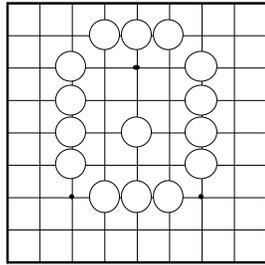
Black now has two liberties, right? Now, what if White plays here?



Black takes the White stone:



Black is down to one liberty. He or she is in atari! Next—Poof!

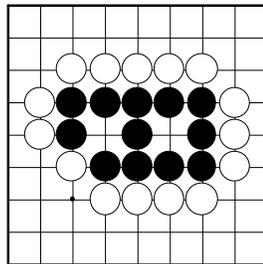


White suddenly has a lot of stones in his or her pocket!

Does Black have a way to prevent this?

*Usually no one guesses this, but occasionally there will be someone who does—i.e. let the audience participate as much as possible!*

What about this kind of group? How many liberties does it have?



No matter what White does, Black will always have one liberty—forever. Right?

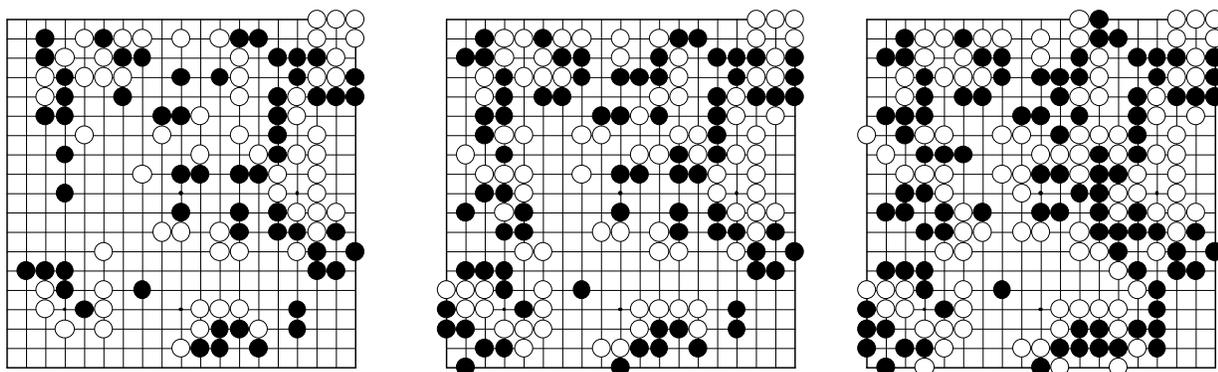
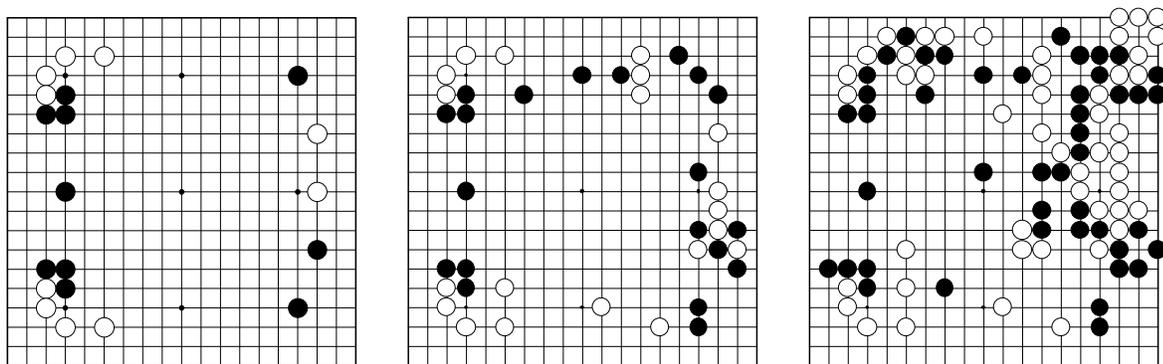
This becomes extremely important since remember that anything connected to the North, South, East or West of this living group is also alive—forever. That includes territory that those stones surround. In this case, black has two very solid points.

Do you begin to see some of the Magic of go?

About the time that chess was being 'invented' in India or Persia—around 5-700 AD—go had already spread from China to Japan and Korea. The Japanese enthusiastically incorporated it into their social system, seeing its mental gymnastics as invaluable for their warriors, philosophers, monks, princes, princesses and emperors.

In fact, the Japanese Emperors valued it so much that they founded four so-called 'go houses' to do nothing but raise the level of expertise. For four

hundred years during the Edo period—from about 1500 to early 1900—the members of these houses competed against each other. To perpetuate themselves, the members scoured the countryside for budding young talent whom they would then adopt into their house. Needless to say, play substantially improved. We can chart this progress from game records. This is a game from around 1600. One can almost hear the soft clicking through the centuries of the original stones being played on a fall afternoon in the sacred recesses of the temple where this game was played.



*(This is just a Go Seigen game — which could be blown up to lecture size.)*

Meanwhile, go became a regular feature of literature, poetry, plays and pictures. There were also many beautiful poems written by Chinese, Koreans and Japanese about go.

In typical Japanese manner, not only was every detail of go playing thoroughly analyzed and improved but also the aesthetic qualities were gone over in great detail. For example, Japanese go boards were elongated slightly so that allowances for depth were made by the eye and the board appears square to the players. The traditional boards the aristocrats played on were 9 ½ inches thick and the players sat opposite on the floor.

The white stones were cut from only certain parts of certain clamshells from a certain beach. These so-called 'stones' were always played with the grain side up. The black stones were made from special shale dug from only one mine.

*Pass some clamshell and slate stones around.*

The stones are just slightly larger than the distance between the intersections to conform to the Japanese ideal of slight disorder within order. Of course the wood of the boards was special, too. Only certain cuts from certain sections of at least 500-year-old *kaya* trees were used. The 'just-so' yellowish color of the

*Kaya* wood showed off the white and black stones to special effect. Just as important, it was so the stones—which are shaped like lozenges and held like this between the fingers . . .

*Demonstrate.*

. . . would make a special 'thunk' when played on the board.

*Demonstrate.*

This equipment is still made today but obviously, it can be fairly expensive. Fortunately, you can buy a perfectly adequate set for 20 or 30 dollars. Or you easily make one yourself. Beginning boards and cardboard stones come in some of the books on sale here.

*Show ordinary boards and stones*

Not everyone has the time to play like they sometimes did in the Edo Period—games in those days often lasted for two or three days. In fact, one championship game lasted nine days and one of the players died afterwards from exhaustion.

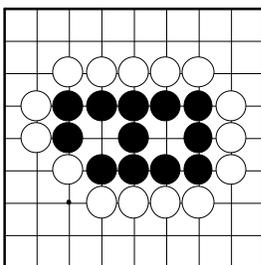
On the other hand, normal, ordinary games usually last less than an hour—slightly longer than a chess game. Nevertheless, when the classic civilizations collapsed in China and Japan, go almost disappeared.

But then some curious things happened.

Japanese businessmen noticed there was something special about how one's thinking tends to change after learning the principles of the game. As I said, go is a game of balance and harmony. Just as in business markets, you cannot

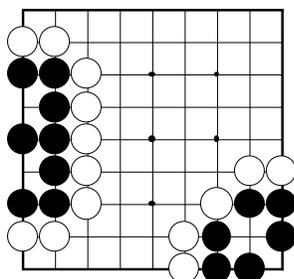
control *all* the territory all the time. In fact, you will fail miserably if you try to do this. Professional players talk constantly of 'harmony,' both within themselves and with the world as being necessary for success on the board. Go is a game that cannot be won with aggressive tactics—for what you get, you must give up something. If you take early profit, you lose later influence. And vice-versa. If you try to take too much or too soon, your weaknesses will destroy you.

But there is more to go than harmony. We go players like to use the word 'efficiency.' Efficiency in go can mean a lot of things. For example, in our immortally living group . . .



. . . notice how many stones it took Black to secure two points. Eleven.

Now look at these two examples of living groups on the side and in the corner.



It took only eight stones to make what we call two 'eyes' on the side; and only six in the corner. That is efficiency!

We mentioned 'influence' and 'profit' before and the idea that one generally one comes at the expense of the other. Look at the result above. Black has four points but he, she or it is confined to the edges—I think you can see that White controls much more potential territory than Black since it will be hard for Black to build a 'living' group in the center without being captured.

There are other concepts, too, that we often use.

There is 'good shape' and 'bad shape.' Since it is often impossible to read out a sequence to see if a group is alive or not, we develop 'feelings' for good shapes.

These kinds of feelings are especially important in the openings when so much is un-determined and fluid. (One calculation has it that there are more possible games of go than there are atoms in the universe since the board is 19x19 lines. You can work that one out yourself.)

In that fluid, open state when so much of the board is empty, some psychologists have suggested that we might be using our right brain's artistic functions—our 'feelings'. In the end game—where calculations are being made on a smaller scale—we might be using more of our left brain. This is one reason why rote memorization is not a big factor in go success.

On the other hand, with all this complexity, there is a handicap system that can make everyone equal without distorting the game. We will show you more of that when it is time to play.

I'd like to continue with the history of go in the twentieth century for a few more minutes before we play, because there are some interesting things that happened in that time period.

*(Depending on the attention-span of the audience, some of this can be of course cut down considerably)*

With the end of the Edo and the disintegration of the old order, go playing declined in the early 1900s. However, the modernized Navy that defeated the Russians in 1905 kept on playing since the principles of go are the same as those of the martial arts and Eastern ideas about war. If Sun Tze—who wrote the 'Art of War' in 500 BC—and Mao Tse Tung—who liberated China in the 1940's—and a professional go player from today all sat down in the same room and had a talk about strategies, they would understand each other completely.

*Show Go World cover of naval commander waiting to go into battle until the go game is finished. (GW# 42: Winter 1985-86) Here you might also want to show some other GW covers and tell the associated stories:*

*GW# 62: Raiko and the Ground Spider*

*GW# 73: Sato Sadanobu fighting off his opponents with a go board*

*GW# 76: The courtesan of hell dreams of skeletons*

Then in the 1920s mass-market newspapers discovered there was a new large-scale audience for go in the rapidly growing moneyed business classes. A professional league was organized. Famous players became household names.

Most important for go was the development of new ideas about the openings. The new science of air warfare encouraged players to for opportunities in the center of the board rather than on the sides and corners.

*Point to the center of the board and imitate bombs being dropped on the sides and corners*

Even today, new opening styles are constantly being invented and many new 'josekis'—4 and 5 move combinations that are used in the openings—are being discovered every year.

Meanwhile, in war-traumatized China, go languished but came back in a strong fashion after World War II, when it was declared the Chinese national game. In Japan, the effects of World War II democratized go—there is a powerful book by Nobel Prize winner, Yasunari Kawabata . . .

*Show a copy of 'The Master of Go.'*

This is a hypnotic book about the last game of an old traditional champion as he tried to hold his own against a new, young professional. This book is still in print and available in this bookstore.

That book was written in the 1940's but now there is an even newer generation. If our parents thought things were speeding up too quickly, what about us?

Yet go has grown even more in the computer age. In fact, since the defeat of Kasparov by Deep Blue, go has become *the* game for computers to try to beat. There is a million-dollar prize for a computer program that will beat an average professional. However, as I mentioned before, although there is some value in them for teaching purposes, the most advanced computer programs can be beaten by anyone who spends only a few months playing the game.

*Show the 7/29/97NY Times Science Section article, "To Test a Powerful Computer, Play an Ancient Game" by George Johnson. Available from the NY Times Web site for \$2.50.*

So today, for the large part, go is still played between people. It has spread out over the world and membership in American and European go organizations has doubled every few years for the last several decades. You can now watch or play at any time of the day or night on the Internet with people in China, Japan, Korea, Russia, and Europe. There is also an Internet news group for go.

All this information is on the fliers at the table along with copies of the NYTimes article.

People play go for many reasons. I have played go for xx years and particularly love it because \_\_\_\_\_. My friends here play because \_\_\_\_\_. We are members of the local go club, which is located at \_\_\_\_\_, and it meets on \_\_\_\_\_. We invite you to come down for a visit. We have a beginner's night every \_\_\_\_\_ and children's classes every \_\_\_\_\_. All the information is on these handouts. If you are interested in having some literature sent to you or any of your friends, there is a sign-up sheet on the table here.

We have donated our time here, but the reason the bookstore has invited us is, of course, to sell books. These are the introductory books that this store carries and we would like you to take a look at them. They are all good; they, like people, are all different, but they can all teach you how to play go. Some have been in print for decades, others are newer. Once you know a few basics, there are computer programs that can be bought (*or are on sale here???*) and some of these programs can be played on the Internet. This store also carries more advanced books for when you reach a higher level.

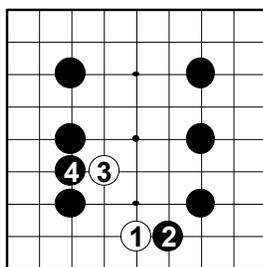
Thank you for coming. Do you have any questions?

*Encourage questions (a few 'plants' will liven things up!) The most obvious question will be about the diagonal connections in the small board double-eye groups—this can be explained as an example of 'efficiency'—i.e. you can explain to them that 'if you don't need it, you shouldn't waste time playing it.' Of course, you should explain that it helps to be right in one's calculations! Another common question will be about the star points.*

*Inevitably, comparisons with chess will crop up. Most teachers have said that it doesn't help go to trivialize chess. You can explain that they are just different games and let them make their own conclusions.*

*A quick demonstration game also might be played between a newer player from the club and a better player, depending on time and interest.*

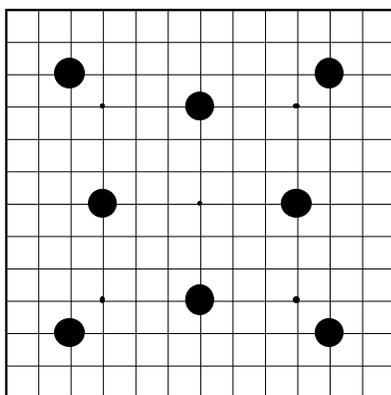
*Beginning with a six stone handicap on a 9x9 board offers excitement for everyone. 9x9 is, after all, still larger than a chess board. Make sure the beginner knows that it is to Black's advantage to make 'fat' shapes, and to keep White 'thin' by using the sides and corners.*



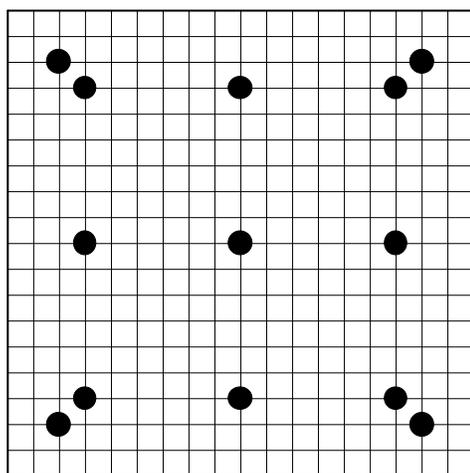
*After the game, you can explain how Black 2 is 'efficient'—meaning it has many meanings—protecting the corner, putting pressure on White, etc.*

*Beginners often lose the first game, but win the second. If you move on to five stones, after they win at five one time, then you can go to four (unless it was a real fluke win). After they win at four stones two times, go to 13x13 (which is four times the size of a chessboard). If they lose, they stay at the same handicap until they win. In the meantime, keep rigorous track of liberties and wait until they make a mistake.*

*The 13x13 board is about twice the size of the 9x9 so if they can handle you at four stones on the 9x9, it means that an 8 or 9 stone handicap is appropriate on the 13x13.*



*Note the corner stones at the 3-3 points. The purpose of moving to the 13x13 is to allow them to learn about the center, which was not as possible on the 9x9 board. They should understand the corners by now. After they win at 6 stones, you can move the corner stones to the 4-4 points or else go on to 19x19 with 13 stone handicaps (the regular 9 points plus the 3-3 points) since the 19x19 is about twice the size of the 13x13.*



*A few closing recommendations for games with beginners:*

- 1. If you play more than one game with a beginner, change the handicap every game.*
- 2. Don't kill everything on the board, although you probably can. If you want a real challenge, try to win by exactly one point!*

*. . . . .*

*Publicity for the talk is everything. Contact with the local newspapers, radio talk show, TV news, etc. is vital! If all goes well, the store will probably welcome you back a few times a year. Several go clubs meet in the coffee shop of their local bookstores every week.*

*This talk could also be used in game and puzzle stores, as well as school classrooms or assemblies. More and more businesses are interested in the Asian market, and go can be a way to understand and connect with these markets. See [Go: An Asian Paradigm for Business Strategy](#) by Y. Miura for more details on this theme.*

*You can download and print "giveaways" like the AGA brochure and other materials. Contact the AGA for other types of support.*