

A brief history

Go is one of the oldest board games in the world. Its true origins are unknown, but it almost certainly originated in China over 2500 years ago.

Go first flourished in Japan. Introduced before the 8th century, it gained popularity at the imperial court and, from this auspicious beginning, took root in Japanese culture. In the 17th century the four great Japanese Go schools were founded with state funding and, over the next 250 years, the intense rivalry between them drove Go skills to new heights.

Since then, China and Korea have fought back. In the modern Go scene these three countries compete on equal terms, with national and international tournaments attracting major corporate sponsorship and a large public following. [In Korea Go is known as Baduk and in China it is known as Wei-qi.]

It was only in the 20th century that Go spread widely in the West, but it is now well established all over the world. More than 60 countries compete in the annual World Amateur Go Championship, and American Michael Redmond has reached the top level of professional Go in Japan.

Starting with Beijing in 2008, the World Mind Sports Games has included Go along with Chess and Bridge.



What makes Go special?



As mental exercise, Go is outstanding. The rules are very simple, yet the strategy is complex and the patterns that emerge are intricate and beautiful.

The board starts empty and gradually fills up, as the pieces (stones) don't move once played. You can also capture and remove your opponent's stones by surrounding them.

The object is to surround more territory than your opponent. The winner is the player who does this more efficiently, by finding the right balance of aggression with prudence, and of intuition with logic.

Each game of Go quickly takes on its own character thanks to the large board. A setback in one or two areas often isn't fatal; you can still fight back and win. While Go has its opening strategies, repeating many of the same plays in the same order as a previous game is rare, so players can become strong without memorising complicated openings.

Go also has a very effective handicapping system, allowing players of widely differing skill levels to play on equal terms without distorting the character of the game.

Only very recently, after many years of effort, has a computer played Go at the same level as in Chess and defeated one of the top human experts.

See <http://www.britgo.org/about.html> for more about the game and the rules.

Abbreviated rules

1. Start with an empty board: 9x9, 13x13 or 19x19 lines.
2. Starting with Black, then alternating with White, play a piece (stone) on an empty intersection of the board. Once played, stones don't move.
3. A stone is captured and removed from the board when all intersections directly adjacent (not diagonally) are occupied by the opponent. Solidly connected strings of stones are captured as a whole.

Diagram 1 a, b and c show some captured White stones, prior to removal.

4. Playing a stone so that your stone (or string) has no empty adjacent intersections is illegal, *unless* you capture some opponent's stones as a result.
5. Repeating a former board position is illegal. You must play elsewhere first. This normally occurs when you capture a single stone, and your opponent could capture this one stone back.

Diagram 1 shows an example at **d**. After Black captures by playing at 1, White cannot recapture immediately.

6. When there are no useful plays left, you may pass, handing over a stone as a capture.
7. The game ends when there are two or three consecutive passes, with White passing last.
8. Stones that cannot evade capture, but are not totally surrounded, are removed and treated like other captures. If you can't agree which stones are in this state then just continue playing.
9. The player with the greater number of empty points surrounded plus stones captured is the winner.

Diagram 2 shows the end of a game, during which Black captured one stone at **a**. Black has surrounded 15 points, 10 in the lower right, including the point **a**, and 5 towards the top. Adding his capture, Black has 16 points. White has 17 points, so White wins by one point.

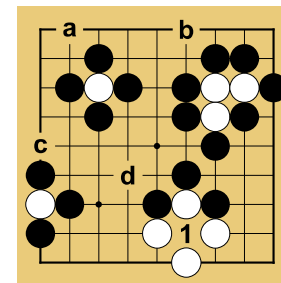


Diagram 1

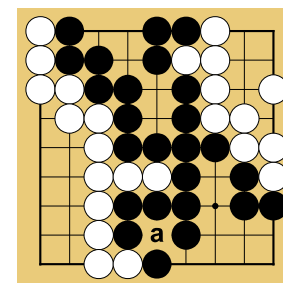


Diagram 2

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British Go Association

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For further information about how to play Go
or find your local club visit

www.britgo.org

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