

Rules of Go

The board is initially empty.

Black plays first.

On a turn, either place a stone on a vacant intersection or pass (giving a stone to the opponent to keep as a prisoner).

Capture stones by surrounding them (occupying all adjacent empty intersections). Captured stones are taken off the board and kept as prisoners.

It is illegal to make a suicidal move.

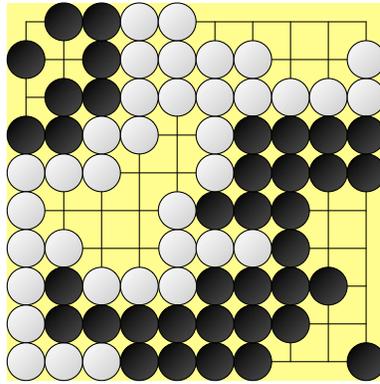
It is illegal to repeat the board position with the same color to play. (This is the *ko* rule).

Play continues until both players have passed consecutively *and white has passed last*.

At the end of the game, score one point for each intersection you have surrounded, minus one point for each of your stones held prisoner. The high score wins.

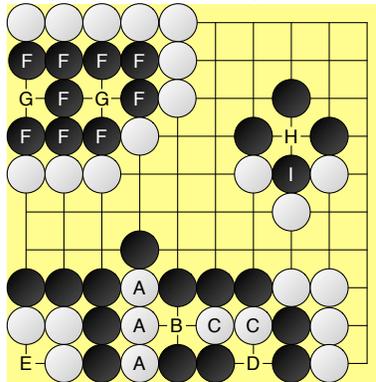
These are the American Go Association rules. Rules vary slightly from one country to another. See www.usgo.org for more information.

Scoring Example



In the diagram above, white has 8 points in the center and 7 points at the upper right. Two white stones (shown below the board) are prisoners. White's score is $8 + 7 - 2 = 13$. Black has 3 points at the upper left and 9 at the lower right. One black stone is a prisoner. Black's score is $3 + 9 - 1 = 11$. White wins.

Capturing Examples



Stones are captured in *blocks* of one or more stones. A block is a contiguous group of stones connected along the lines on the board; diagonals don't count. In the diagram above, the three stones marked A form a block.

A block is captured when there are no empty intersections (called *liberties*) next to it. Block A has one liberty, at B. If black plays at B, the three white stones are removed. The two stones labeled C are *not*

captured, because they have another liberty at D.

It would be suicidal (and hence illegal) for white to play at E, because the block of four white stones would have no liberties. Could black play at E? It looks like a suicidal move, because the black stone would have no liberties, but it would occupy the white block's last liberty at the same time; the move is legal and the white stones are captured.

The black block F can never be captured. It has two internal liberties (*eyes*) at the points marked G. To capture the block, white would have to occupy both of them, but either move would be suicidal and therefore illegal.

Suppose white plays at H, capturing the black stone at I. (Notice that H is not an eye.) Black is not allowed to play back at I, recapturing the white stone, because if this were allowed it could go back and forth forever. The *ko* rule says that a full board position can never be repeated with the same color to play. Black *could* recapture at I *on a later turn* after something had changed elsewhere on the board.

Technicalities

You can ignore these until you've played a few games.

The full board is 19x19, compared with the 9x9 board shown here.

White is given 7.5 extra points, called *komi*, as compensation for having to move second.

Between players of uneven strength, black is given some extra stones on the board at the beginning of the game. In such handicap games, white plays first and komi is reduced to 0.5 (so white wins ties).