

In some countries, you can leave school at age 8 so you can play more Go.

For China and Korea, Go is so important that children take Go lessons like you would take swimming lessons. Very talented players can leave school as young as 8 to learn Go full time, where they hope to become professional players by their mid teens. Only a handful are able to pass the pro test each year.

Beating Go with Artificial Intelligence was a HUGE deal

For a long time, the mind-boggling complexity of Go meant people thought computers couldn't beat it. Even the fastest computer would take millions of years to check every possible option before it could choose the best one. After AI beat chess in 1997, it took nearly 20 more years before a program called AlphaGo beat Lee Sedol, one of the world's best Go players. It could only do this by developing new ways of 'learning'. This was a critical stepping stone towards the AI that we see today. Many people consider this an achievement similar in scale to the moon landing.

What next?

Ideally, you should pick up a cheap Go set somewhere like Amazon or Temu. However, there are a lot of places you can play and learn right now, for free!



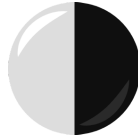
BadukPop is a fantastic app that helps to teach the rules and get you playing games. It was developed to help western players get into Go, and is great for getting started.



GoMagic.org has a ton of great interactive courses, along with the 'skill tree' - a tool filled with puzzles to teach different techniques. Has lots of free content, along with paid courses.

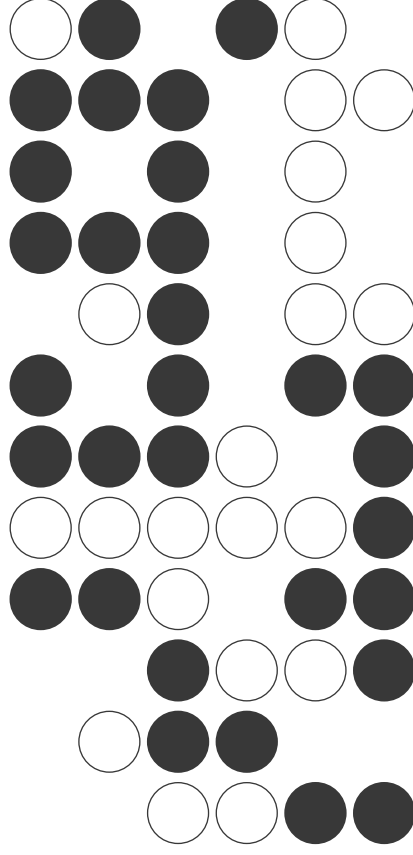


There is a lot of free content on **YouTube**, for any stage of learning. Just search for 'Go board game' or sometimes 'Baduk' (its Korean name).



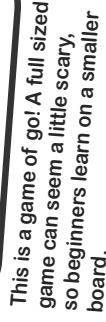
Online-go.com is the most popular place to play Go online in the west. It gives you a rank, and provides opponents. It also has lessons and other tools to help you learn!

Play the World's hardest game



Did you know?

We have evidence that Go is at least 2500 years old, but there are stories suggesting it may be up to 4000 years old. Its rules have barely changed in all that time!



There are around 60 million Go players.

There are far more ways to play a game of Go than there are atoms in the Universe.

On a standard board, the grid is 19×19 . Because you can play anywhere on that grid (so long as you aren't captured immediately), there are around 10^{360} different possible variations of a Go game. By comparison, the universe 'only' has around 10^{82} atoms. You can never 'solve' Go - you can always get better.

Atoms in the universe:

100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000

[illegible]

Possible ways to play Go:

[illegible]

Once you have played a stone, it can't be moved unless the other player captures it. You can play anywhere on the board, so long as the stone wouldn't be captured right away.

**Play on the crosses.
Don't let the enemy
surround you!**

If you surround another player's stone, you capture it! When you do, keep them in a pile next to the board - they count as bonus points at the end!

Congratulations!

You have earned the first rank in Go! You are now a 30 kyu player! If you keep playing, you can improve your rank. It's good to have a target while you learn.

Look familiar?

This system was invented for Go hundreds of years ago. Later, it was also used for nearly all Martial Arts grading (especially in Japan). You can be a Dan level Black belt in Karate, for example.

There are lots of places where you can get your rank. **For now, you can get a rank by playing at:**

online-go.com

**YOU
ARE
HERE**

9 Dan

Dan level players are considered 'expert'. It will take most people many years to reach even 1 Dan.

1 Dan

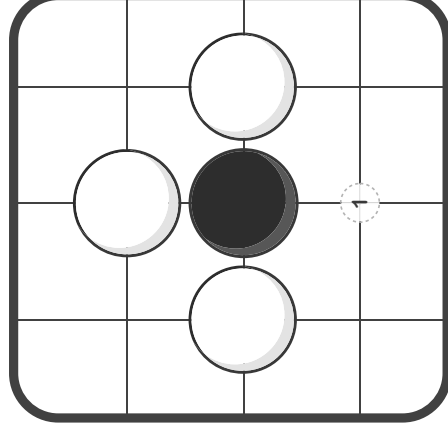
Reaching 10 kyu is a big milestone. Getting here is difficult, but achievable with effort and persistence.

10 kyu

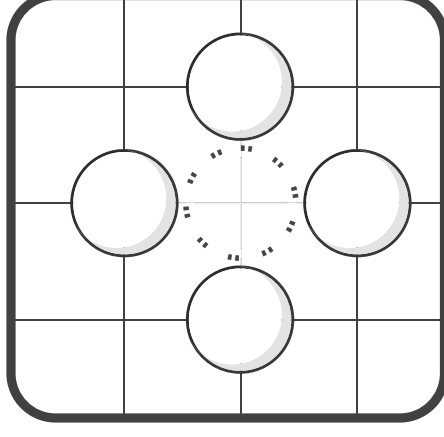
'Kyu' is what we call the standard ranks in Go. It means 'Class' in Japanese. You start at 30 kyu and work your way up to 1 kyu.

There are lots of learning materials to help you through these ranks.

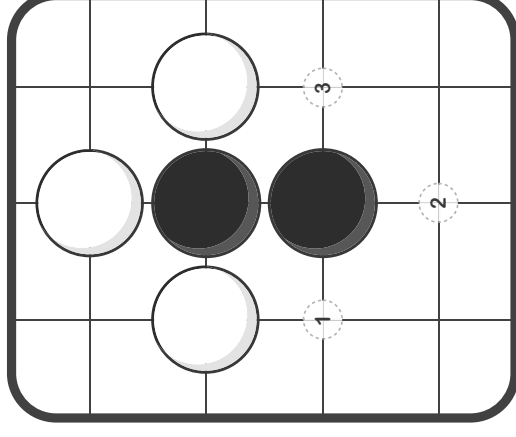
30 kyu



This black stone is nearly surrounded! It only has one free space next to it. A free space next to a stone is called a 'liberty'.



If you let white play in that liberty, they surround the black stone. It is captured!



Black can try to save the stone before it is captured by 'attaching' another friendly stone to it. Now the black group has three empty liberties around it and is safer.

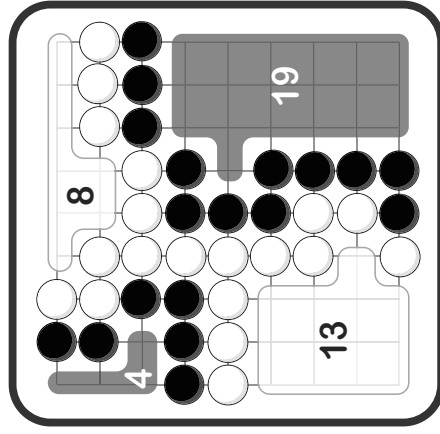
When does the game end?

If someone quits ('resigns'), they lose. Or, if you can't see any good move, simply 'pass'. If both players pass, the game is finished and they follow these steps to decide the winner:

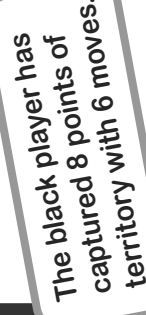
This is an example of a finished game. Each player has surrounded areas of the board. These are called 'territories'.

$8 + 13 = 21$

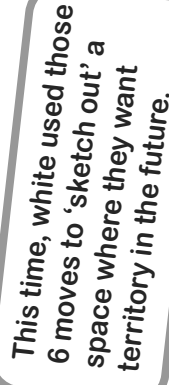
$4 + 19 = 23$



The white player has captured 2 points of territory with 6 moves.



Spread out!



The black player chose to finish a territory with the 6 moves.

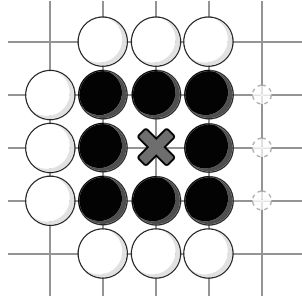
Sketch out where you want territory first. Complete it later. It won't be difficult for you to finish this large territory. Black will struggle the rest of this game!

Tips and Tricks

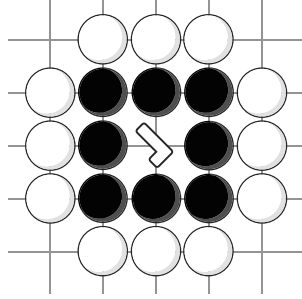
There are lots of ways to win a game of Go, and players have spent thousands of years figuring them out! Here are some basic concepts that will help.

'Eyes'

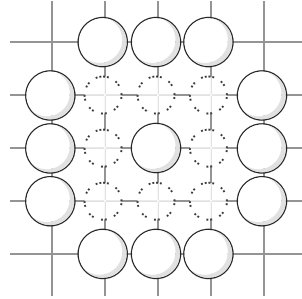
A liberty inside a group is called an 'eye'. You can capture a group with an eye by surrounding it, then playing in the middle.



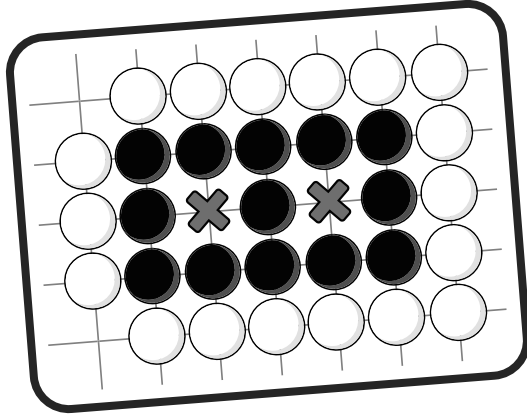
Normally, you can't play in a spot where your stone would be captured right away.



However, if it covers the last liberty for your opponent's group, you are allowed to play there.



Be careful not to let this happen to you!



If you make a group with two separate 'eyes', it is **IMMORTAL** as your opponent is not allowed to play in either spot. This means they can't take away that group's last liberty. Use this as a last resort when defending!

Step 2

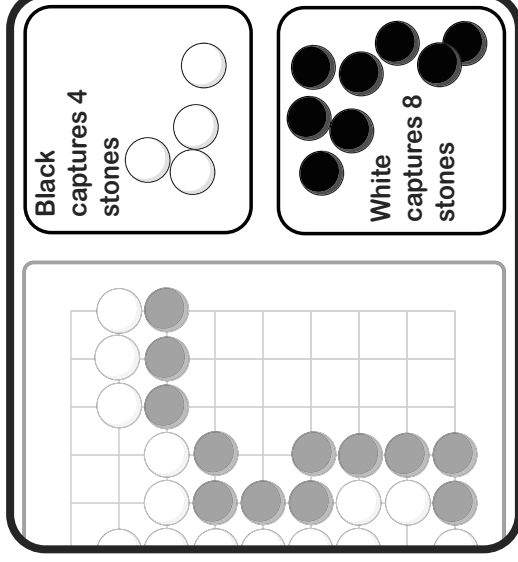
Now we count the stones that players have captured. These are bonus points!



8 points



4 points



Step 3

White gets extra points to make up for going second. You decide how many before starting a game. 5 is a good amount. We call these points 'Komi'.



5 Points for komi.

Add it all together!



Territory: 23
Captures: 4

Total

27 Points



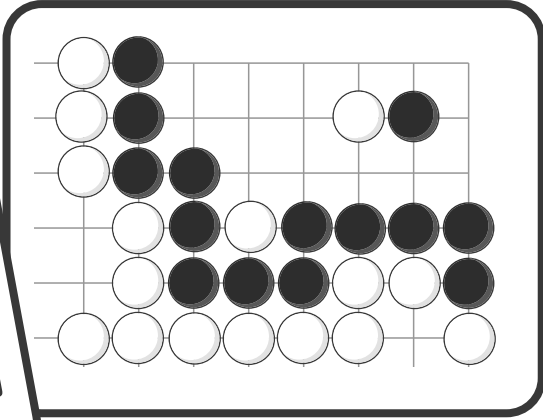
Territory: 21
Captures: 8
Komi: 5

Total

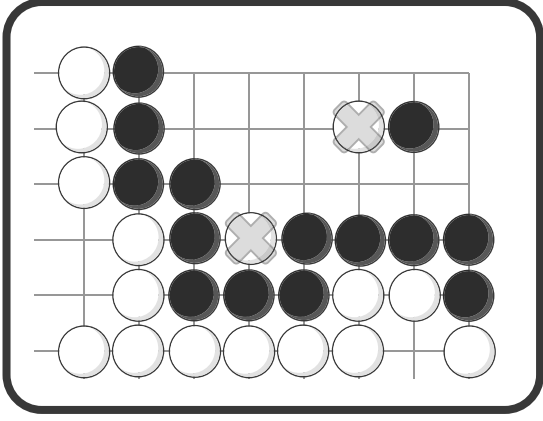
34 Points

White WINS

'Dead' stones



At the end of the game there may still be enemy stones in your territory with no hope of survival. These stones are 'dead'. It feels like a waste of time to capture them.



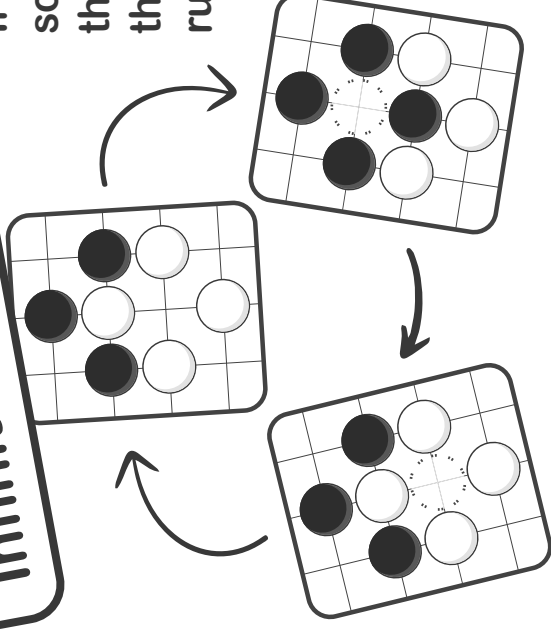
If both players agree that the stones would eventually be captured, you can simply remove them at the end of the game. They are counted as 'captured' during scoring.

! If players don't agree that stones are 'dead', you should continue playing. Prove that they can be saved!

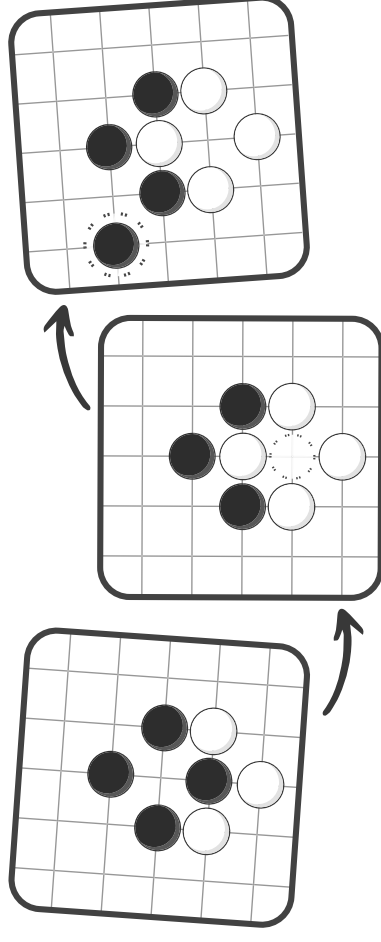
Infinite loops

If you see something like this happening, there is a special rule to stop it.

You are not allowed to play anywhere that would repeat an old board layout.



Instead, you must first play somewhere else. Below is an example. After this, the fight may continue! If white doesn't save their stone, black is now allowed to take it.



This is called the 'Ko' rule.