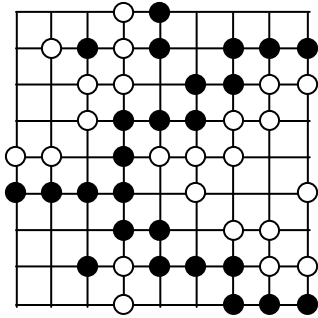


Introduction to Go (Wei-qi)



Brief History:

The game of Wei-qi originated in China, possibly as early as the second millennium B.C. By the sixth century AD it had reached Japan, where it is called Go (or Igo). It continues to be a popular game in both countries as well as around the world. I found no evidence of it reaching Europe during the time periods covered by the SCA, but it remains a possibility because there was contact with both China and Japan. It is interesting to note that the game play as not changed much through the centuries. The rule presented here will follow the Japanese methods of play.

Play:

Go is a two player game played on a grid of 19 x 19 lines. The game is played on the intersections of the lines, not the spaces between them. It can also be played on 13 x 13 and 9 x 9 boards for a shorter game. The 9 x 9 board is recommended for players who are just starting out. One player will use the black stones, while the other plays the white one.

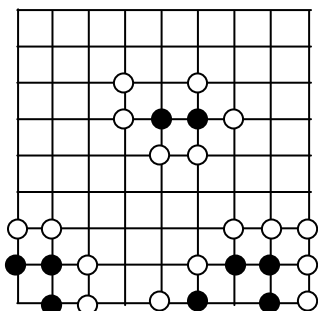
The object of the game is to control territory and capture enemy stones. On the smaller board, capturing stones is the primary focus, while on the larger boards the control of territory comes more into play. Both will affect the final score no matter what size board you are playing on.

Players take turns placing one of their stones onto an intersection; this includes the edge - where three lines come together, and the corners - where just two lines come together. The person playing black goes first.

A player's stones which are directly adjacent to each other (horizontally or vertically along the lines) are treated as a single group and live or die together. A group can have any number of stones, including just one.

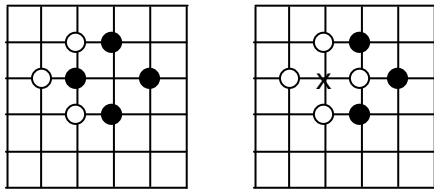
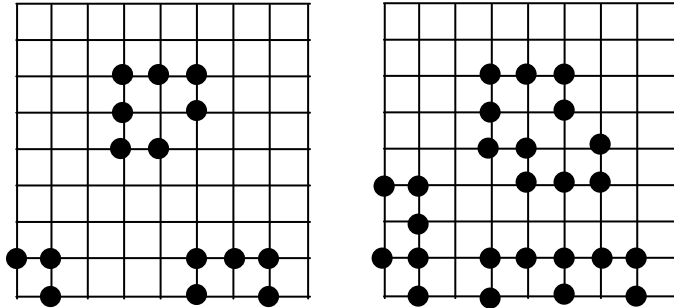
Open spaces which are surrounded by one color of stones (or one color of stones and the edge of the board), are considered to be controlled by that player. Those spaces will score one point each. *Note:* spaces with a stone do not score any points for anyone, so filling in territory that you control will just lose you points.

Open spaces adjacent to (including inside) a group are called that group's *liberties*. A group needs to have at least one liberty to remain alive. Once a group has lost it last liberty the group is captured by the opposing player. Captured stones are removed from the board and held by the captor. Each captured stone is worth one point. It is illegal to place a stone onto a space where it will have no liberties - unless in doing so you capture one or more of your opponent's stones and gain liberties.



Life/Death: A group of stones is considered dead if it can easily be captured (for example: any group with only one liberty left). Unless they pose a threat, dead groups do not need to be captured and can left for the end of the game. On the board to the left, all of the groups of black stones are dead.

Eyes: A liberty, usually inside of a group that can not be taken unless it is the last liberty of the group is called an eye. A group with two eyes can never be taken. The first board to the right shows groups with one eye, and the second one shows groups with two eyes.



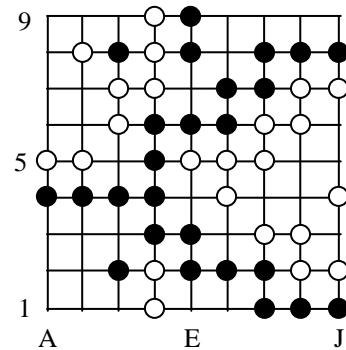
Ko: A stone that captures cannot be immediately recaptured by the opponent, if this results in a repetition of the board position. At least one play must be made elsewhere on the board before a recapture may be made. In the example to the left, white plays and captures black. On his next turn, black may not play where the “x” is, since that would return the board to the first picture.

Passing and ending the game: If a player is unable or does not wish to make a move they may pass. The game ends when both players pass, usually because there is nothing more to gain by playing stones.

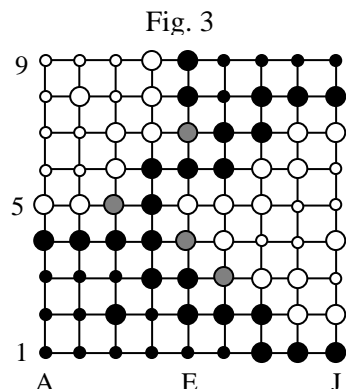
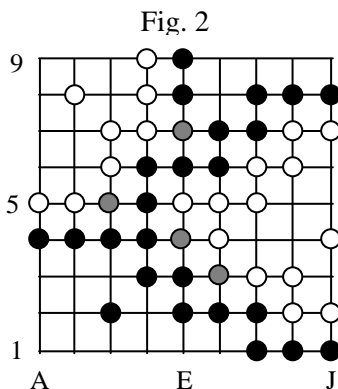
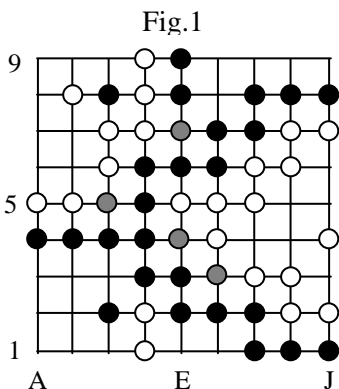
Scoring:

To score the game, first identify all the dead groups (groups that were not captured but could easily be captured). Any dead groups are conceded and removed, the stones going to the opponent as captured. Next, fill in any neutral points (not controlled by either player) with some extra stones (or just play into the neutral points before passing). A player's score is the number of open points that are surrounded by their stones minus the number of stones their opponent captured.

For example look at the board to the right. Let's say that during play black took 7 prisoners and white took 6.



- E7, C5, E4, and F3 are neutral and should be filled in with an extra stones. (Fig. 1 below)
- C8 is dead. It is removed and given to the white player. (Fig. 2) Now white has 7 prisoners.
- D2 and D1 are also dead. They are given to the black player. (Fig. 2) Now black has 9 prisoners.
- The remaining points are counted. Black has 17 points plus 9 prisoners for a total of 26. White has 15 points plus 7 prisoners for a total of 22. (Fig. 3) Black wins by 4.



Komi:

In Go, there is an advantage to the player who goes first, and so it is common to award some points to the white player. This is referred to as Komi. The value of Komi is different in different parts of the world and has also changed over time. In Japan, the value is currently 6.5 (the fractional point prevents ties) when playing on the full 19x19 board. On the smaller boards the value would be less.

Handicaps:

When two players of different skill levels play, the stronger player can give handicap stones to the other player. The number of stones varies depending on the board size and the skill difference. On a full size board between ranked players it is usually 1 stone per difference in rank. Black will place the handicap stones onto the board and then white will make the first play. The handicap stones are usually placed on the star points, which are marked on the board with dots. On the 19 × 19 board, there are nine star points: at the four 4-4 points in the corners, at the four 4-10 points along the sides, and one at the center of the board. The 13 × 13 has 9 star points: at the 4-4 points, 4-7 points, and the center. The 9 × 9 board has only 5 points: the 3-3 points and the center. Handicapped games can award a Komi of 0.5 to white to prevent ties.

Sources:

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Parlett, David

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Links:

American Go Association

<http://www.usgo.org/>

Internet Go Server

<http://www.pandanet.co.jp/English/>

Kiseido - Go books, supplies and game server

<http://www.kiseido.com/>

Go Problems

<http://www.goproblems.com/>

Go Teaching Ladder

<http://gtl.xmp.net/>

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