

# IGO – RULES

A resource for travellers from [www.deanstarnes.com](http://www.deanstarnes.com) and *Roam: the Art of Travel*

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## Igo (Japan), Go (Korea) Weiqi (China).

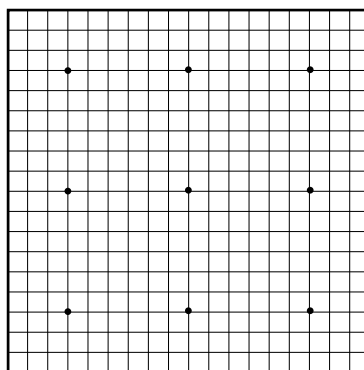
Igo is one of those games that looks hopelessly complicated until it is explained and then you realise how beautifully simple it is. Like chess, it is a strategy game in which you must think about attacking and defending simultaneously.

### The objective:

To win by controlling the most territory on the board.

### The pieces:

The game is played on a 19x19 board and each of the two players has a bowl of either black or white stones.



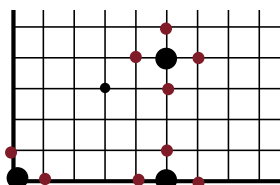
## The rules

### Getting started

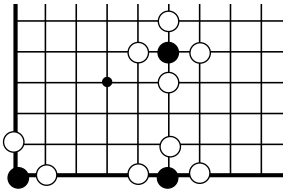
A Go game is started with the board empty. Stones are placed on the intersections of the board. The player holding black stones plays first, and each player places a stone on the board on his turn. Players are free to place their stones at any unoccupied intersections on the board. However, once the stones are placed on the board, they are not to be moved to another location.

### Taking liberties:

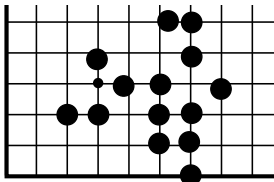
Liberties refer to the unoccupied intersections (or points) that are horizontally or vertically adjacent to the stone. Usually each stone has four liberties but those on the edges have fewer. Liberties of the three black stones are marked as a red dot on this part of the board.



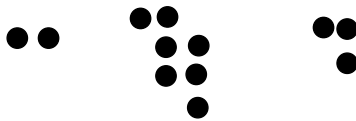
Stones without liberties must be removed from the board. To win a game of Go you must control the board and place your stones in such a way as to ensure that your own stones have liberties (to stay alive themselves) but remove the liberties of your opponents. In the next picture, white has played their stones in such a way as to remove all the liberties of the black stones and so can therefore remove them from the board and control the territory.



A chain or group consists of two or more stones that are connected to each other horizontally or vertically, but not diagonally. The liberties of a chain are counted together as a unit. Weird chains and wonderfully complex shapes arise as players desperately add stones to other stones to extend their liberties and keep them alive. The important thing to remember is that stones that lie next to each other diagonally are not connected.

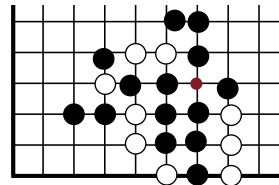


*Can you see which stones are connected? There are three groups in this diagram and two individual stones that are not connected to anyone. The groups are these stones:*

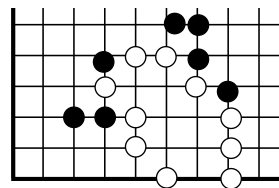


## Mass murder & suicides

To kill a group you must surround the group's liberties as if it was a single entity. In this picture the largest group has now been surrounded by white stones. It has only one liberty left in the position marked by a red dot. If white fills this position, he can remove all the black stones.

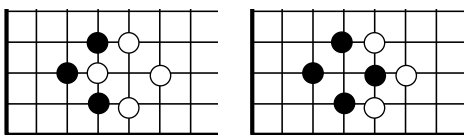


The only problem is, is that by playing onto the red dot white is itself surrounded. Can white commit suicide and mass murder on the same move? In short yes. This rule is that the player that causes stones of both players to have no liberties will have his opponent's stones remove. In this case white would play on the red dot, kill this group, remove them from the board and the board would look like this.

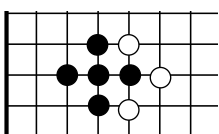


## Koh

Sometimes a situation arises when two players can take turns in playing stones in such a way a pattern arises that would go on forever. This is called koh. In the example below black can kill white by playing onto it's only open liberty but in the next turn white could do the same to black. Then however, black is back in position to kill white again and so the pattern begins.

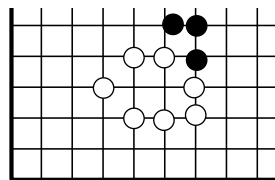


To avoid go players dying of old age and never finishing a game the rules state that white has to wait a turn before they can kill black which effectively means black has a chance to plug the hole if they want by filling the liberty themselves like this:



## Ending a game

The game ends when both parties agree the game ends. This means that once it is no longer possible to build viable groups in a space a player concedes that his opponent controls that portion of the board. While some areas of the board remain contested, players battle it out to see whose group will ultimately survive. Experienced players can see which groups are dead without playing it out. For example, the space inside the white ring of stones is too small for black to live within. If black were to play inside this white ring, white could kill the black stone easily. Black can safely conclude that white controls this territory.



## And the winner is...

The winner is the player that controls the most territory. When both parties have agreed that the game is over, place a white stone on all the territory controlled by white and a black stone on all the territory controlled by black. Leave any stones that are on the board in place. If black is the winner, then black will end up having more stones on the board in this counting process. Remember that you are now no longer taking turns but just adding stones so that the counting of territory can be achieved.