

Japanese: Igo
Chinese: Weiqi
Korean: Baduk

The name means the “encircling” or “surrounding” game.

Go is a game of simple rules, but from which emerge a truly profound complexity. There are more possible game variations than atoms in the known universe. Till recently, this complexity was too vast for computers to handle, and the strongest computer players still couldn't beat the best professional human players.

Go has been shown to improve cognitive development and strategic competence. Go requires whole-brain thinking, relying heavily on analytic reading, pattern recognition and aesthetic judgement.

If you are old enough to know you shouldn't eat the pieces, you are old enough to learn to play.

There is a good handicap system, so you can play fairly with players both stronger and weaker than yourself.

“When I was young, . . . I wanted to be the world's best Go player.”

– Bill Gates

Go is one of the oldest board games still played today. It is thought to have been invented some two to four thousand years ago. Originally invented in China, it was regarded as one of the four essential arts of the Chinese scholar. It spread to Japan and Korea, and from Japan to the West. It was in Japan that state sponsored schools studied the game intensely and made many advancements in strategy.

It is very popular in Asia, with professional certifications in Japan, Korea, China and Taiwan. Japan, China and Korea all have TV channels dedicated to the game. Top professionals in Asia can earn as much as \$1 million a year.

America started a professional certification programme in 2012, and a European professional system was started in 2014.

The first club in South Africa was founded in Johannesburg in the 1970s and the South African Go Association in the early 1990s. While there are still relatively few players, the skill level ranges from absolute beginners to very strong amateurs. Cape Town and Johannesburg currently have the most active clubs, along with intermittently active clubs in Pretoria and Stellenbosch

“If there is intelligent life elsewhere in the universe, possibly they have discovered chess — certainly, they have discovered Go.”

– Chess grandmaster Emanuel Lasker

Links:

Stellenbosch Go Club

<http://www.sagoclubs.co.za/stellenbosch-club/>

Cape Town Go Club on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/457963447550346/>



The Interactive Way To Go

<http://playgo.to/iwtg/en/>



Wikis

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Go_\(game\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Go_(game))

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

Play online

<http://www.gokgs.com/> (look for the SA room too)

<http://pandanet-igs.com/communities/pandanet>

"The Surrounding Game" documentary

<http://www.surroundinggamemovie.com/en>

AlphaGo - The first computer Go program to beat a professional player

<https://deepmind.com/alpha-go.html>



Capture Go

This is a simplified version of the game, designed to get you familiar with the basics before moving on to regular Go.

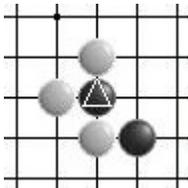
Go is played by two players alternatingly placing black or white pieces, called stones, on the intersections of a grid of 9x9, 13x13 or 19x19 lines. The smallest board is best for learning, while regular Go is normally played on the biggest board.

Once a stone is placed, it is not moved. The points vertically and horizontally, but not diagonally, adjacent to the stone are called its liberties. If all the liberties of a stone are filled by the opponent, the stone is captured and removed from the board.

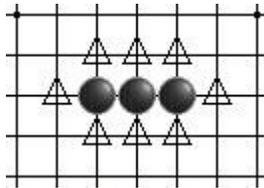
Any stones of the same colour that are vertically or horizontally, but not diagonally, adjacent, form a group. Groups share liberties, and when all the liberties of a group are filled, the group is captured.

A stone may not be played where it has no liberties, unless playing on that point captures a stone or group of stones, as the capture will give the played stone liberties.

To play Capture Go, simply play with these rules until the first stone is captured. The player to capture the first stone is the winner.



Left: The marked black stone is about to be captured. The second black stone does not form a group with the first.



Right: The black stones form a group, with their shared liberties marked.

"Gentlemen should not waste their time on trivial games -- they should study Go."

– Confucius, The Analects, ca. 500 B.C.E.

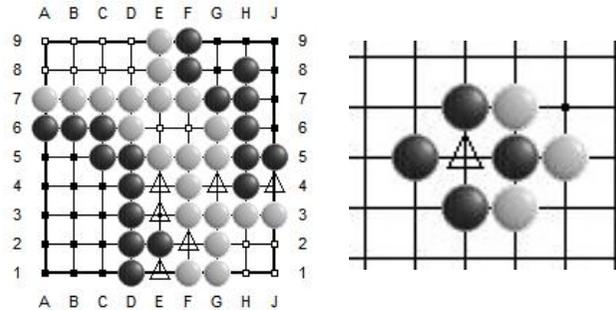
Regular Go

In regular Go, the aim of the game is to surround more territory. All the points surrounded by only your own stones are your territory. Points surrounded by both your stones and your opponents stones are called 'dame', and they are not counted. At the end of the game, both players count their territory and add their captures, and the player with the highest score wins.

The rules for Capture Go still apply, but here are some more rules for regular Go:

Stones that have not been captured, but that cannot avoid capture, are called 'dead' stones. At the end of the game (assuming both players agree that the stones cannot avoid capture) they will be counted as captured.

Sometimes capturing a stone creates a situation such that your stone can be captured immediately, and once your stone has been captured, the board is back where it started. This board position is called a 'ko'. If you both kept re-capturing each other's stones, the game would never end. To prevent this happening, once the first person has captured, the opponent is not allowed to capture immediately. He must play a move somewhere else first.



Left: A finished game with territory and neutral 'dame' marked.

Right: A ko.

"Just one game,' they said, and started to play -- that was yesterday."

– Chinese proverb

GO

THE SURROUNDING GAME



South African Go Association

<http://www.sagoclubs.co.za/>

