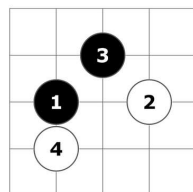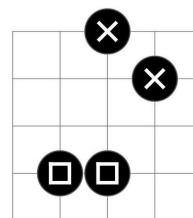# TURNS

Players take Turns placing Stones on empty intersections.
Black Goes first.

CONNECTION

Stones connected directly along lines are treated as a Group, as if they were a single stone.

The first four Turns of a sample 5x5 game.

□'s are connected to each other.
*X's aren't connected*

CAPTURE

Stones are captured if they have no open, adjacent intersections next to them ("Liberties"). If multiple stones form a Group, they are captured together.
Set Stones captured aside as "Prisoners" and keep count of them.
The person who placed the Stone captures their opponent's Stones first in the case of a tie (see moves 3 and 4 in the diagrams on the right).
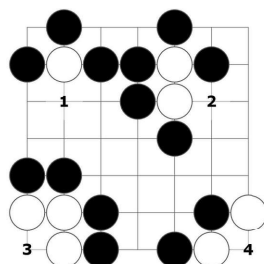
Black plays example moves 1, 2, 3, or 4. on the left.
The result is the corresponding White Stones with X's being removed as Prisoners on the right
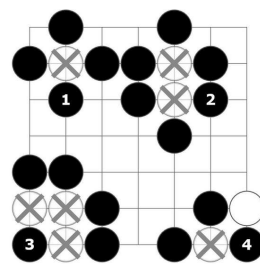
ILLEGAL MOVES

Placing a Stone on the board must create a new Board Position. If the resulting Board Position would be identical to a previous one, it cannot be played.

The diagrams on the right show the most common Illegal Move situation.
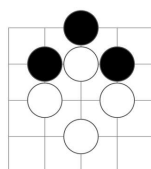***Most Illegal Moves would create an infinite loop***

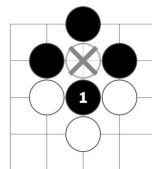**Diagram A**
Black to Play, Initial Posiion

Diagram B
Black plays at 1, captures and removes the X White stone as a Prisoner
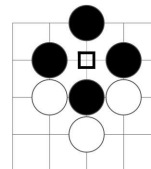
Diagram C
White cannot play at □ next Turn because it will recreate the Board Position in Diagram A

WIN CONDITION

Win by playing a move that does both of the following:
(1) **Captures 2 or more Stones.** Single Stone captures cannot be decisive.
(2) Meets or exceeds the **Lead Threshold**. This is how many *more* Prisoners you have than your opponent.
The default Lead Threshold on a 9x9 board is 7 Prisoners
A player also wins if their Opponent has no Legal Moves

Winning on Different Board Sizes

Stones by default is played on a 9x9 grid. However, bigger and smaller board sizes can be played. Below are the default Lead Thresholds for each board size, but you can also agree on a custom setting with your Opponent!

Board Size	7x7 *& smaller*	**9x9**	13x13	19x19
Lead Threshold	5	**7**	11	15

COMPENSATION

Black has a large advantage by playing first. To offset this, start White with 6 black Prisoners and adjust the Lead Threshold for each player by this amount. For instance, the initial Threshold is 7, White starts with 6, White must reach a 13 Prisoner lead or Black a 1 Prisoner lead. Or: **7 ± 6**

6 is proper Compensation for any board size and gives Black and White near even winning chances

PRISONER RETURN

If a player has more Prisoners than their opponent, they can give a Prisoner to their opponent instead of placing a Stone.
Use this when space is low, you're ahead, and every move on the board would result in greater loss
*A Prisoner Return counts as a new Board Position.*

GROUP STAKING

While a player has **only** Groups with 2 or fewer Liberties, they may place a Stone off the board next to one of those Liberties (once for each) instead of placing a Stone on the board. If the Staked Group is captured, these Stones are captured with it.
Staking counts as a new Board Position.

On the right, Black has only one Group and it has 2 Liberties, so black can Stake them as a legal move. White has Groups with more than 2 Liberties cannot Stake anything yet.

Black can Stake the Liberties marked △ to a side of the board as shown, one per Turn.
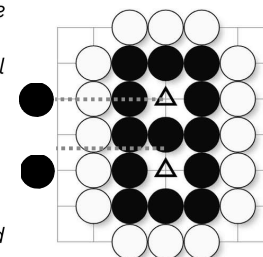
Typically, it is obvious what is being Staked, as you can place the Stone right next to the Liberty or Group. If the Group is floating in the middle of the board like above, point or communicate to your opponent where the Stake stone is pointing to.

Putting it All Together

Black to Play:

Let's look at an endgame that uses all of the Rules.
Black and White both cannot place any more Stones on the board that don't result in loss the next Turn.
*Black and White **Stake** their Groups with moves 1 through 5 instead. Move 6, White has ran out of Liberties to Stake. White uses **Prisoner Return** to delay again, tying Prisoner count at five each.*

Black's Prisoners (5)

White's Prisoners (6)

Move 6
White returns this Stone as a Prisoner Return move
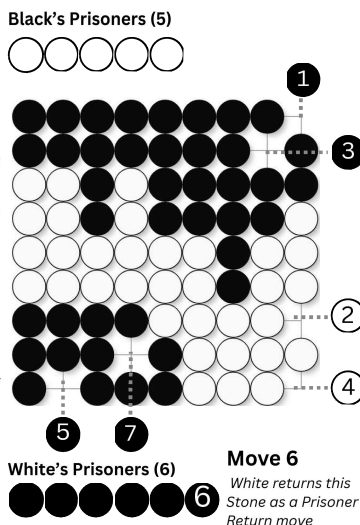
Black has one more Liberty to Stake at 7. Next move, White has only two legal moves, filling in one of the Liberties they Staked with 2 and 4. This results in Black being able to play the other and capture every White Stone on their next Turn!

Black Wins!

But it was razor-thin! If White had one more Liberty or one more Prisoner to Return, White would have won instead!

FAQ and More Info

Need more explanations or diagrams for a Rule?
Need to settle disputes with friends?
Want more information on why the Rules have been set up the way they have?
Want to know more about Stones in general?
Follow the link below to take a more in-depth look!

https://iowago.club/Stones-faq

Why Learn Stones?

Go is simple in nature, but can be hard to learn in the beginning, and even harder to teach others until a player is very skilled! When, why, and how to end the game properly is particularly tricky for quite a while.

Stones preserves all of the main strategic elements of Go, repackaged in a way that players can confidently play right away and, most importantly, *teach* others correctly as quickly as they learned!
Stones guides players towards the correct concepts of Go, when they are ready, without requiring them to play and finish a game in a satisfying manner from the very beginning.

Moving on to Go

Stones is a fully functional game in its own right, and Go and Stones almost always decide the same winner in different manners, with slightly different endgames. Improving at one will make you better at the other.
Players might eventually want to learn traditional Go, especially if they move to larger board sizes. Determining a winner on a larger board can be done more elegantly with advanced knowledge. Then, they can play whichever way suits their opponent best.
Follow the links below to learn more:

AMERICAN GO ASSOCIATION

The governing body of play in the United States and hub for Go activity. They have plenty of Go resources!

https://usgo.org

American Go Foundation

A non-profit dedicated to spreading Go, providing cheap and free materials to qualifying programs.

www.agfgo.org

STONES
A Simple Go Variant

IOWA GO SOCIETY

https://iowago.club