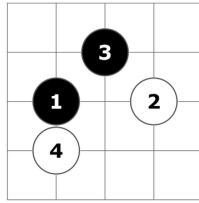


TURNS

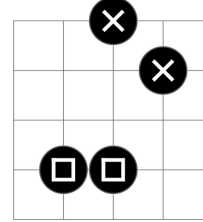
Players take Turns placing Stones on empty intersections.
Black Goes first.

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.

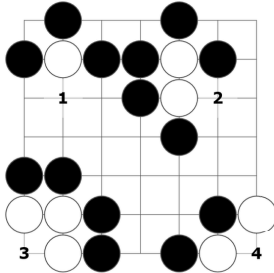


□'s are connected to each other.
X's aren't connected

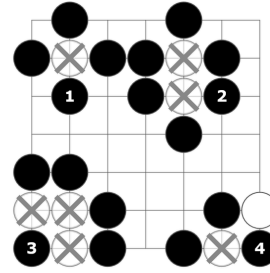
CAPTURE

Stones are captured if they have no open, adjacent intersections next to them ("Liberties"). If multiple stones form a Group, they are captured together. Captured Stones aside as Prisoners - 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

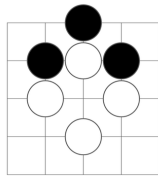


Diagram A
Black to Play,
Initial Position

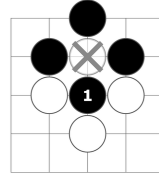


Diagram B
Black plays at 1,
captures and
removes the X White
stone as a Prisoner

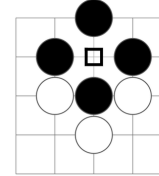


Diagram C
White cannot play at
□ next Turn because
it will recreate the
Board Position in
Diagram A

WINNING THE GAME

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

THAT'S ALL YOU NEED TO START!

Master the basics, then move on to the next page!

ADD THESE RULES TO BALANCE GAMEPLAY

Add in the order they appear or all at once.

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.

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

STAKING

In very close games, Group counts can decide the winner. Staking accounts for this.

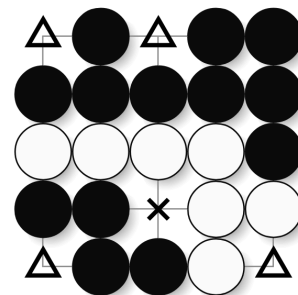
If a player has only Groups with 2 or fewer Liberties, a player may **Stake** their Groups in the following way:

- Select one of your Liberties that **does not** touch your Opponent's Stones.
- Place a Stone off the board near or in line with that Liberty (point to the Liberty the Stone is connected to if it is not obvious) to **Stake** it.
- Each Liberty as described above can have one **Stake Stone**. If the Group(s) touching the Liberty is Captured, remove its **Stake Stones**.

Staking counts as a new Board Position.

The board is almost full. All Groups have 2 Liberties and placing a stone anywhere would lead to Capture next turn.

Liberties marked □ can be **Staked** by the color they touch. The X cannot be Staked because it touches opposing Stones.



Putting it All Together

Black to Play:

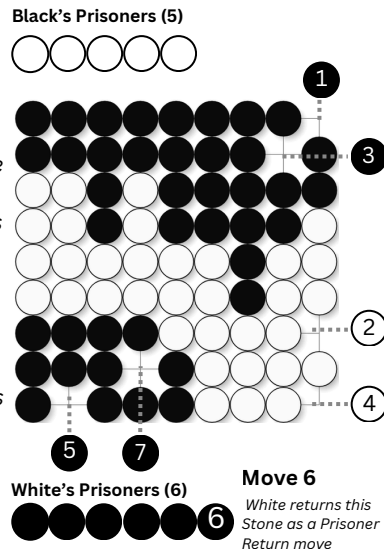
Let's look at an endgame that uses all of the Rules.

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 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

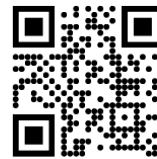
Stones is a fully functional game in its own right, and Go and Stones almost always decide the same winner in different manners, with slightly different endgames. Improving at one will make you better at the other.

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



<https://iowago.club>

