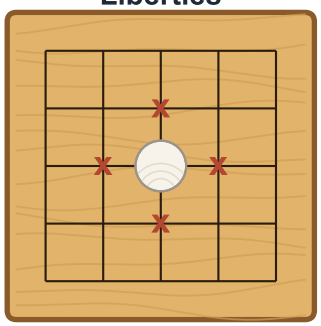
Go (Weiqi): How to Play

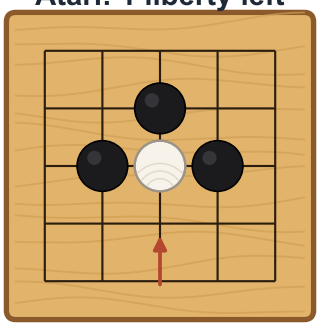
2 players · Capture Go 10 minutes, full game about 30 minutes · ages 7 and up

Liberties



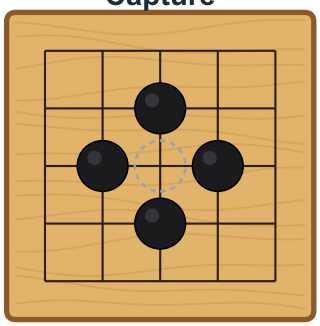
This stone has 4 liberties (x).

Atari: 1 liberty left



Black plays at the arrow...

Capture



...and the white stone is captured.

1. **Set up**
   The board starts empty. One player takes black, the other white. Black goes first. (If one player is new, let them take black.) You need about 40 stones of each color: the stone sheet, or buttons or coins.

2. **Place a stone**
   On your turn, put one stone on any empty point where two lines cross. Stones never move once they are placed. You may pass instead of playing.

3. **Liberties**
   The empty points right next to a stone, along the lines, are its liberties. Stones of one color that touch along a line are a group and share their liberties.

4. **Capture**
   When you fill the last liberty of a stone or group of the other color, take those stones off the board. Keep them as trophies: they do not count in the score.

5. **Two rules about where you may not play**
   No suicide: you may not play where your stone would have no liberties, unless that move captures. Ko: if one stone has just been captured, you may not capture back straight away when that would make the board look exactly as it did before. Play somewhere else first.

6. **Game 1: Capture Go**
   Start here. The first player to capture any stones wins. No passing in Capture Go.

7. **Game 2: the full game**
   When both players pass one after the other, the game ends. Take off any stones that both players agree are trapped (if you don't agree, keep playing until they are captured). Your score is your stones on the board plus the empty points surrounded only by your stones. White adds 7 points for going second. The higher score wins; a tie is a draw.

About these rules: Go's rules have been written down for many centuries and are the same everywhere, apart from small differences in how the score is counted. This sheet counts stones plus surrounded points, the Chinese way. Beginners start on this 9 x 9 board; the full board has 19 lines each way.