AGA Concise Rules of Go

AGA Rules Committee
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As authorized by the first paragraph of the official *AGA Rules of Go*.

1 The Board and Stones

Go is a game of strategy between two sides usually played on a 19x19 grid (the *board*). The game may also be played on smaller boards, 13x13 and 9x9 being the two most common variants. The board is initially vacant, unless a handicap is given (see Rule 4). The two sides, known as *Black* and *White*, are each provided with an adequate supply of playing tokens, known as *stones*, of the appropriate color.

2 Play

The players alternate in moving, with Black playing first. In handicap games, White moves first after Black has placed his or her handicap stones. A *move* consists in playing a stone of one's color on an empty intersection (including edges and corners), or in *passing*. Certain moves are *illegal* (Rules 5 and 6), but a pass is always legal (Rule 7). *Points* are awarded for controlling space in a manner described below (Rule 12). The object of the game is to end with the greater total number of points.

3 Compensation

In an even (non-handicap) game, Black gives White a compensation of 7 ½ points for the advantage of the first move. This compensation is added to White's score at the end of the game. In handicap games, Black gives White ½ point compensation. This avoids draws.

4 Handicaps

The game may be played with a *handicap* to compensate for differences in player strengths. The weaker player takes Black, and either moves first, giving only ½ point compensation to White, as in Rule 3 (this is known as a "one stone handicap"), or places from 2 to 9 stones on the board before the first White move.

If the players have agreed to use *area* counting to score the game (Rule 12), White receives an additional point of compensation for each Black handicap stone after the first. (Black would otherwise gain an additional point of area for each handicap stone.)

5 Capture

Stones of the same color are said to be *connected* if they are adjacent along horizontal or vertical–*not* diagonal–lines on the board. A string of connected stones consists of those stones which can be reached from a given stone by moving only to adjacent stones of the same color. A string of connected stones is *surrounded* by stones of the opposite color if it has no empty points horizontally or vertically–*not* diagonally–adjacent to any of its member stones. (Such adjacent empty points are known as *liberties* of the string.)

After a player moves, any stone or string of stones belonging to the opponent which is completely surrounded by the player's own stones is *captured*, and removed from the board. Such stones become *prisoners* of the capturing player. It is *illegal* for a player to move so as to create a string of his or her own stones which is completely surrounded (without liberties) after any surrounded opposing stones are captured.

6 Repeated Board Position (Ko)

It is *illegal* to play in such a way as to recreate a previous board position from the game, with the same player to play.

7 Passing

On his or her turn, a player may *pass* by handing the opponent a stone, referred to as a *pass stone*, rather than playing a stone on the board.

8 Illegal Moves

An illegal move is one violating the rules. If a player makes an illegal move–such as moving twice in a row (i.e., before the opponent has made a response), attempting to play on an occupied intersection, self-capture, or retaking a ko so as to repeat the full board position–the player must take back his or her move (*both* moves, if he or she moved twice in succession), it shall be treated as a *pass*, and a pass stone exchanged.

An illegal move must be noted as such by the opponent before he or she makes his or her move. When a player moves, he or she is tacitly accepting the opponent's previous move as valid. In particular, if it is discovered that an earlier move by one of the players was illegal, the game must nevertheless be continued *as it stands* unless both players agree to restore the earlier board position and proceed from that point.

9 Ending the Game

Two consecutive passes signal the end of the game. After two passes, the players must attempt to agree on the status of all groups of stones remaining on the board. Any stones which the players agree could not escape capture if the game continued, but which have not yet been captured and removed, are termed *dead stones*. If the players agree on the status of all such groups, they are removed from the board as prisoners of the player who could capture, and the game is scored as in Rule 12. If there is a disagreement over the status of some group or groups, *play is resumed* as specified in Rule 10.

10 Disputes

If the players disagree about the status of a group of stones left on the board after both have passed, *play is resumed*, with the opponent of the last player to pass having the move. The game is over when the players agree on the status of all groups on the board, or, failing such agreement, if both players pass *twice* in succession. In this case *any stones remaining on the board are deemed alive*. Any stone or group of stones surrounded and captured during this process is added to the capturing player's prisoners as usual.

11 The Last Move

White must make the last move; if necessary, by an additional *pass*, with a stone passed to the opponent as usual. The total number of stones played or passed by the two players during the entire game must be equal.

12 Counting

There are two methods for counting the score at the end of the game. One is based on *territory*, the other on *area*. The players should agree in advance of play which method they will use. If there is no agreement, territory counting shall be used.

Territory – Those empty points on the board which are entirely surrounded by live stones of a single color are considered the *territory* of the player of that color.

Area – All live stones of a player's color left on the board together with any points of territory surrounded by a player constitute that player's *area*.

Neutral Points – Any empty points left on the board at the end of the game which are *not* completely surrounded by either player's stones are known as *neutral points*, and are not counted toward either player's territory or area.

Counting by Territory – When counting by territory, players add up their total territory *less* any prisoners held by the opponent (including dead stones removed at the end of the game). The player with the greater total (after adjusting for any compensation offered according to Rule 3) is the winner.

Counting by Area – When counting by area, the players add up their total area. *Prisoners are ignored.* The player with the greater total area (after adjusting for any compensation offered according to Rules 3 and 4) is the winner.