

13144 Go Boards

Go is an ancient Chinese game which is played in a board with a grid of 19×19 lines. Two players can place white or black “stones” in the intersections of the lines, and there are some simple rules to capture the opponent’s pieces by surrounding them. Only recently, in 2016, a computer program has been able to beat a leading professional go player. Also in 2016, the number of legal positions in a 19×19 go board has been calculated and it is a bit larger than 2.08×10^{170} .

That number represents less than 1.2% of the ways that you can setup a go board if you are allowed to place as many black or white stones in as many (or as few) intersections of the board, regardless of the legality of the resulting position according to the actual rules of go. I have decided to count that number exactly, and for doing that I have a go board and a lot of stones of each color. My plan is to produce each of the possible positions following a systematic order to avoid repeating any.



A sample go board of 19×19 lines. (Extracted from Wikimedia Commons)

Five months ago, I started with an empty board. I took a photo of it, and called it “Position number 1”. Then, I placed a white stone in the top-left intersection, took another photo, and called it “Position number 2”. Then, I removed the white stone and placed a black one in its place, and that was “Position number 3”. Then, I removed the black stone and put a white stone again, but now in the position just to the right of the top-left, and I named the corresponding photo as “Position number 4”. Positions 5 and 6 were like position 4 but with an additional white or black stone in the top-left position, respectively. At this point I noticed that taking photos was not really necessary and that skipping that step would make the process faster, so I stopped. For position 7, I removed the two stones and placed a single black one in the intersection just to the right of the top-left. Position 8 was like position 7 but with an additional white stone in the top-left position, and position 9 had two black stones, one in the top-left intersection and another in the one to its right. Positions 10 to 18 were like positions from 1 to 9 but with an additional white stone in the second position to the right of the top-left, and positions 19 to

