Elementary Go Series, Volume 1

IN THE BEGINNING

THE OPENING IN THE GAME OF GO

by Ikuro Ishigure

Kiseido Publishing Company

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The opening is theoretically the hardest part of the game of go. To professional players, it is the hardest part in practice, as well; in championship games that last two days, for instance, the first day is usually spent playing and thinking about the first 50 moves, and the second day is spent finishing all the rest. Such is the consistency of professional play in the middle game and endgame that if a player comes out of the opening with a bad position, it is almost impossible for him to catch up. Amateurs sometimes rush through their initial moves, saving their powers for the fighting later, but this is more an indication that they do not understand the opening than a sign of talent.
The number of possibilities in any opening position is so vast that a player must rely on his feeling for the game rather than on rigorous analysis for guidance. Here he has the greatest chance to use his imagination, play creatively, and develop a personal style. This is the one phase of go that has shown any significant evolution during the past few centuries, and it still defies absolute comprehension.
No book can develop a person's imagination or personal style, and this one does not make the attempt. In a sense, therefore, it is very incomplete: the reader will not find a prescription for every situation and in actual play he will have to make his own choices most of the time. What we have tried to give him is a basis to start from: some sound moves, some useful ideas, some good examples. If we have succeeded, the following pages will help him to increase both his skill at and enjoyment of the game.

In the Beginning Details

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Jdl says

While I feel that "Opening Theory Made Easy" is a better book than this one, I still read "In the Beginning" twice. There is a lot of fundamental information to be gained from it. It's well written, with clear examples.

It ends with a series of 10 problems which are graded on a sliding scale. You can get partial credit for playing 2nd- or 3rd- best moves, which are all explained.

Joy says

Great book for those who've mastered the basic rules and concepts of go/baduk/weiqi. Once you've read this, you'll feel a lot less confused about where to place your next stone on that giant empty board; it offers basic principles and has lots of illuminating examples.

Brandon says

Exactly what I was hoping for: not a detailed analysis of joseki but a more general overview of basic principles of the opening. Recommended.

Serge Pierro says

Between this and "Opening Theory Made Easy", the beginner/intermediate student of Go would have a solid foundation as to the moves and thought process of the opening of a game of Go. Covering all of the vital opening points, such as 3-3, 3-4, 4-4 etc. in detail, as to the ideas behind them, the book then goes on to extensions, pincers, shimari, kakari, etc. There is a section of 10 test positions that the student can choose the move they would make and then turn to see how they would score... with annotations for all of the main moves.

Steve says

GO

Chloe Adeline says

This and Kageyama's Fundamentals were my first Go books. I read this as a 15-20k. Much of it was beyond my ability at the time, but I still got a lot out of it! I've revisited it a few times, and will continue to. A

wonderful book.

Glen says

I just finished reading it cover-to-cover, working most of the examples out on a board and playing games in between. I still failed most of the 10 problems at the end. I could read it again in a few weeks and get almost as much out of it the second time.

Before this book, I would play on star points, then connect some of my groups or just start fighting because I had no idea what I was doing. After this book, I'm establishing bases, extending along the side, and playing for territory more successfully. I think I still lose most games against skilled opponents between move 10 and 25, but I've improved as a result of this and will continue to improve. Re-reading the first few of the "Nine Concepts" before a game seems to really help me.

Definitely worthwhile. I might give it a fourth star if rereading it continues to help me improve.

Jeff says

Opening is an abstract concept that few amateurs really understand. This is certainly a good book on opening theory. I'd say it's well-written enough that advanced beginners (about 10k) can follow it. However, it's probably useful into the low dan levels.

David says

Is there a perfect go book? I haven't found one yet, but so far I learn a little bit from each one, and *In the Beginning* covers a lot of fundamentals relating to the beginning of the game: how to play in the corners, with follow-up moves (shimari and kakari), then some discussion of extending along the sides, into the center, invasions, and pincer attacks. Then, a list of nine concepts for improving your opening game:

Make Your Stones Work Together
Efficiency
Play Away from Strength
Thickness and Walls
Open at the Bottom
The Third Line and the Fourth
Reverse Strategy
Light and Heavy
Attack and Defense

Most go books seem to present some sort of list like this, with examples to illustrate the concept. They all make perfect sense to me — I am at the level where I can understand everything the author says (at least for these low-kyu-level books). It's so obvious once he points it out! Then I go play a game, and somehow none

of these lessons seem to materialize in my own game.

Ishigure ends the book with ten opening set-ups in which the reader is asked where black or white should play next. Turn the page, and Ishigure has rated a variety of possible points to play, from 5 (reasonable choice, but not very good) to 10 (the best play). I usually got somewhere in the area of Ishigure's best choice, though I rarely chose the exact best spot.

In the Beginning is definitely a book I will have to revisit; like Kageyama's Lessons in the Fundamentals of Go, there is too much for a beginner to take in the first time around.

This is definitely a book a beginning player should read. But man, go books are expensive — it's a tiny little volume for the price. I guess that's because most of the best go books are translated imports. Whenever I go to Barnes & Noble or any other bookstore, I can find a couple shelves full of chess books, but I have yet to find a single go book. :(

Steve Paulson says

An excellent book to follow introductory books by Shotwell, Cho Chikun and Kaoru Iwamoto.

I finished a second reading a few months ago and am now near the end of a 3rd. Each time a grasp a bit more and look forward to a 'full' understanding in a few years and 3-4 more readings.

Lennart says

I really enjoyed this book and I think it improved my game. I immediately wanted to re-read the book once I finished it!

Othy says

A fairly good book for the beginning igo player. I picked it up from the local library in pure joy of actually seeing a go book on the shelf, and I must note that I'm about 5kyu in level. Thus this book is not for me to begin with (though I still think I can give something of an adequate review of it). I think Ishigure starts off well and explains things that a lot of beginners need to know, but I think that he doesn't continue as long as he should. Many of the complaints I got from beginners I was trying to teach was that they didn't know why certain moves are good. I, as something of a beginner myself, was never really able to describe well why a certain move was better than another and so we usually played them out. Ishigure does this now and again but (at least for the beginner English-speaking player) is too founded in what is right and wrong and assumes a lot. Maybe it's his Japanese diction (which is fun to read for someone who knows Japanese) or maybe it's just his style, but I felt like he was just glossing over too many things. But, again, I'm not the target audience, so my opinion needs to be taken with a grain of salt.

Valentyn Danylchuk says

Nice. Another beginner-friendly perspective on Go opening, and some associated attack and defense theory. I especially liked the self-test problems with multiple possible solutions ranked in points, and with detailed explanations.

Sighris says

Good book, but not for beginners!