ko Go images, no Dockerfile

START HERE

`export KO_DOCKER_REPO=<registry/repo>`
Where images are pushed

`ko apply -f config/`
Resolve, then kubectl apply

`ko build ./cmd/<app>`
Build, push, print digest

`ko build --local ./cmd/<app>`
Load into local Docker

`ko run ./cmd/<app>`
Build and run in the cluster

`ko build --platform=all ./cmd/<app>`
Multi-arch image

`ko resolve -f config/`
YAML with images filled in

`ko login <registry> -u <user>`
Store registry credentials

Go package package main → `go build` → **ko** layer on base image → `push` → **KO_DOCKER_REPO** digest reference → `ko://` → `replaced` → **Kubernetes YAML** resolve / apply

ko compiles locally and pushes straight to the registry; YAML is rewritten on the way to the cluster

CONCEPTS

ko runs go build on your machine and layers the static binary onto a small base image: no Dockerfile and no Docker daemon. It suits one pure-Go binary per image.

Image names under KO_DOCKER_REPO

Flag	Resulting name
`(default)`	<repo>/<pkg>-<md5 of import path>
`-B`	<repo>/<last path element>
`-P`	<repo>/<full import path>
`--bare`	<repo> itself

Special KO_DOCKER_REPO values: ko.local loads into the local Docker daemon, kind.local loads into a kind cluster.

BUILD & PUBLISH

`ko build <importpath>`
Build, push, print image digest
The package must be package main with a func main. The binary lands at /ko-app/<name> and is the entrypoint.

`ko build -B <importpath>`
Short name, no hash suffix

`ko build -t <tag>`
Tag instead of only latest

`ko build --push=false <importpath>`
Build without pushing

`ko build --local <importpath>`
Load into local Docker daemon

`ko build --bare <importpath>`
Use KO_DOCKER_REPO as the full name

`ko build -P <importpath>`
Keep full import path in the name

`ko build --image-refs <file> <importpath>`
Write published refs to a file

`ko build --tag-only <importpath>`
Refs carry tags, not digests

`ko build --tarball <file> <importpath>`
Save image as a tarball

`ko build --oci-layout-path <dir> <importpath>`
Save as an OCI layout

BUILD & PUBLISH (cont.)

`ko build --ldflags <flags> <importpath>`
Pass ldflags to go build

`ko build --insecure-registry <importpath>`
Skip TLS verification

PLATFORMS & IMAGES

`ko build --platform=all <importpath>`
Every platform the base supports

`ko build --platform=linux/amd64,linux/arm64 <importpath>`
Chosen platforms, one index

`ko build --image-label <k>=<v> <importpath>`
Add an image label

`ko build --image-annotation <k>=<v> <importpath>`
Add an OCI manifest annotation

`ko build --sbom=none <importpath>`
Skip SBOM generation
An SPDX SBOM is built and uploaded by default.

`ko build --debug <importpath>`
Wrap app in Delve on port 40000

Platform value forms

Value	Meaning
`all`	All platforms of the base image
`linux/arm64`	os/arch
`linux/arm/v7`	os/arch/variant
`a,b`	Comma-separated list

KUBERNETES

`ko resolve -f <path>`
Print YAML with images built and pinned
Output goes to stdout. Each ko://<importpath> value is replaced by a digest reference.

`ko resolve -f <path> | kubectl apply -f -`
Resolve and apply by hand

`ko apply -f <path>`
Resolve and kubectl apply

`ko apply -f <path> -- <kubectl flags>`
Pass flags through to kubectl

`ko apply -R -f <dir>`
Recurse into subdirectories

KUBERNETES (cont.)

`ko resolve -l <key>=<value> -f <path>`
Only objects matching a label

`ko create -f <path>`
Resolve and kubectl create

`ko delete -f <path>`
kubectl delete; builds nothing
Does not remove images already pushed.

`ko run <importpath>`
Build and run as a one-off pod

`ko run <importpath> -- <app args>`
Pass arguments to the app

ko:// reference in a manifest

```
containers:
- name: app
  image: ko://github.com/<user>/<repo>/cmd/app
```

CONFIG & ENVIRONMENT

`KO_DOCKER_REPO`
Registry to push to (required)

`KO_DEFAULTBASEIMAGE`
Override the default base image
Default is cgr.dev/chainguard/static.

`KO_DEFAULTPLATFORMS`
Default platforms, comma-separated

`KO_CONFIG_PATH`
Path to the config file

`KOCACHE`
Cache dir; skips unchanged builds

`KO_DATA_PATH`
In-container path of kodata files

.ko.yaml top-level keys

Key	Sets
`defaultBaseImage`	Base image for all builds
`baseImageOverrides`	Base image per import path
`defaultPlatforms`	Target platforms
`defaultEnv / defaultFlags / defaultLdflags`	Build defaults
`builds`	Per-build id, dir, main, env, flags, ldflags

CONFIG & ENVIRONMENT (cont.)

Add a kodata/ directory next to the main package to ship static files. Read KO_DATA_PATH in code; set it yourself with go run to test locally. Symlinks in kodata are followed.

ldflags and flags in .ko.yaml accept templates such as {{.Env.VERSION}}, {{.Git.ShortCommit}} and {{.Date}}.

AUTH

`ko login <registry> -u <user> -p <pass>`
Log in to a registry

`ko login <registry> -u <user> --password-stdin`
Read the password from stdin

`ko version`
Print the ko version

ko reuses your Docker config: if docker push works, ko works. It also has built-in credential helpers for GCR, ECR, ACR and GHCR (GITHUB_TOKEN).

RECIPES

Build, push, deploy

```
export KO_DOCKER_REPO=ghcr.io/<user>/<repo>
ko apply -f config/
# manifests use image: ko://github.com/<user>/<repo>/cmd/app
```

Multi-arch release with a version tag

```
export KO_DOCKER_REPO=ghcr.io/<user>/<repo>
ko build -B -t v1.2.3 --platform=linux/amd64,linux/arm64 ./cmd/app
```

Try an image locally

```
ko build --local -B ./cmd/app
docker run --rm ko.local/app:latest
```

Render a release manifest

```
ko resolve -f config/ > release.yaml
kubectl apply -f release.yaml
```