

HEADING GUIDELINES

FOR SMALL SIDED, JUNIOR AND YOUTH PLAYERS



The aim of these guidelines is to limit the amount of heading young players are subjected to during training and games. It also details how and when to introduce heading drills to junior and youth players and how to manage the header burden. These guidelines will be continually reviewed to help ensure the safety of our players. The table below details the specificities according to each age group.

Age Group	Ball size	Heading Specific Guidelines	Technical Focus in Training	Technical Focus in Games	Additional Information
U6 & U7	3	Heading should not be introduced in training sessions at this age.	<p>Coaches should aim for 70-80% ball rolling time in any coaching session, with a focus on players enjoyment, with limited interventions. Girls and boys should focus on mastering the ball.</p> <p>50% of all sessions should comprise of small sided games 2v2-4v4 (without goalkeepers).</p>	<p>Heading is very rarely seen in Small sided football, (average 2 headers per game), with greater emphasis on retaining the ball and building from the back.</p> <p>Throw-ins are replaced with a pass-in to avoid heading. When performing a pass-in the ball must not be kicked overhead height.</p>	<p>Further detail associated to developmental considerations see the FAW National Syllabus:</p> <p>https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CfBizetDxELmt6MGgQFtGLiqoSYBXGZt/view</p>
U8 & U9	3	Heading should not be introduced in training sessions at this age.	<p>Coaches should aim for 70-80% ball rolling time in any coaching session, with a focus on players enjoyment, with limited interventions. Girls and boys should focus on mastering the ball.</p> <p>50% of all sessions should comprise of small sided games 2v2-5v5 (with or without goalkeepers).</p>	<p>Heading is very rarely seen in Small sided football, (average 2 headers per game), with greater emphasis on retaining the ball and building from the back.</p> <p>Throw-ins are replaced with a pass-in to avoid heading. When performing a pass-in the ball must not be kicked overhead height.</p>	<p>Further detail associated to developmental considerations see the FAW National Syllabus:</p> <p>https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CfBizetDxELmt6MGgQFtGLiqoSYBXGZt/view</p>

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				Goal keepers are not able to kick the ball out of their hands (nor drop kick) thus reducing the frequency the ball is in the air.	
U10 & U11	4	Heading should not be introduced in training sessions at this age.	Coaches should aim for 70-80% ball rolling time in any coaching session, with a focus on players enjoyment, with limited interventions. Girls and boys should focus on mastering the ball and transferring technique into skill (opposed practice). 50% of all sessions should comprise of small sided games 2v2-7v7 (with or without goalkeepers).	Heading is very rarely seen in Small sided football, (average 2 headers per game), with greater emphasis on retaining the ball and building from the back. Goal keepers are not able to kick the ball out of their hands (nor drop kick) thus reducing the frequency the ball is in the air.	Further detail associated to developmental considerations see the FAW National Syllabus: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CfBizetDxELmt6MGgQFtGLiqoSYBXGZt/view
U12 & U13	4	Heading is a low priority and the following guidelines are recommendations However, when introducing the specific technique of heading, The FAW would advise: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Maximum 10 minutes of any duration training session.- A maximum of 4 headers in one bout, using self-serve over short distances <8-10 steps between players.	Technical Points: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Eyes on the ball- Mouth closed- Read the flight of the ball.- Attack the ball at the highest point.- Head the ball with forehead.	Evidence suggests there will be small increase in the number of headers per game, it will remain a low priority when compared to other technical aspects of the game. Please refer to Small sided football regulations for guidance on throw-ins during games. https://www.fawtrust.cymru/grassroots/small-sided-	Further detail associated to developmental considerations see the FAW National Syllabus: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CfBizetDxELmt6MGgQFtGLiqoSYBXGZt/view

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - These limited sessions should introduce the technique of heading and should always be unopposed. - Light balls should be used in training when practicing the technique of heading. 		football/small-sided-football-regulations/	
U14	5	<p>As the players transition into 11v11 there will be a greater exposure to heading situations. The FAW would advise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Maximum of 10 minutes of practice in any duration training session. - Coaches can introduce contested headers to build capacity to deal with pressure when heading the ball. - Ball pressure should be monitored at all times. (8.5 psi and max 15.6 psi). 	<p>Technical Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eyes on the ball - Mouth closed - Read the flight of the ball. - Attack the ball at the highest point. - Head the ball with forehead. - Specific types of defending and attacking headers. 	<p>Evidence suggests as players physical strength evolves there will be a greater focus on restarts and set pieces. In turn there will be a greater frequency of aerial duels in matches. However, heading still remains a low priority when compared to other technical aspects of the game.</p>	<p>Further detail associated to developmental considerations see the FAW National Syllabus:</p> <p>https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CfBizetDxELmt6MGgQFtGLiqoSYBXGZt/view</p>
U15- U18	5	<p>As the players transition into 11v11 there will be more greater exposure to heading situations. The FAW would advise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Maximum of 10 minutes of practice in any duration training session. - Coaches can introduce contested headers to build capacity to deal 	<p>Technical Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eyes on the ball - Mouth closed - Read the flight of the ball. - Attack the ball at the highest point. - Head the ball with forehead. - Specific types of defending and attacking headers. 	<p>Evidence suggests as players physical strength evolves there will be a greater focus on restarts and set pieces. In turn there will be a greater frequency of aerial duels in matches. However, heading still remains a low priority when compared to other technical aspects of the game.</p>	<p>Further detail associated to developmental considerations see the FAW National Syllabus:</p> <p>https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CfBizetDxELmt6MGgQFtGLiqoSYBXGZt/view</p>

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		with pressure when heading the ball, and varied game specific distances. - Ball pressure should be monitored at all times. (8.5 psi and max 15.6 psi)			
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Concussion:

If a player sustains a head injury, or suspected head injury, through a collision or heading drill, they must not be permitted to return to the pitch and the coach must advise the parent/guardian to seek medical advice. Concussion symptoms may vary and can include dizziness, headache, or unsteadiness. Please refer to the UK Concussion Guidelines for Non-Elite (Grassroots) Sport that will help you identify, manage and prevent concussion affecting players in grassroots football: <https://www.faw.cymru/files/7516/8268/1261/f22123e47579be0d5261cff90091938e-compressed.pdf> . A player can only return to football activities (not before day 21) as long as they are symptom free at rest for 14 days.