



Heading Guidance

ADULT AMATEUR FOOTBALL

Up to and including Step 5 of the NLS & Tier 3 of the Women's Pyramid

Ball size

5

Format

11v11

GUIDANCE FOR COACHES

It is acknowledged there is a significant amount of further research required which will inform further iterations of this guidance. The aim of this guidance is to reduce overall exposure to heading without compromising development of technique and the role heading plays in the (English) game. The role of the coach in supporting players' skill development for heading is to ensure a safe and controlled technique. It is recommended when designing heading related activities these points are considered:

- What is it that occurs in the game that you are preparing the players to do? What is the best way to prepare the players to do this?
- How often do the various types of heading occur in the context that your players play?
- Quality v Quantity - Ensure you focus is on the technique of heading, rather than the volume of headers.
- Different types of headers results in different impacts on the head. The focus for the coach is to support their players in developing safe and controlled technique for both attacking and defensive headers, including contested and uncontested headers.
- A recent study in the professional game observed that headers completed following a longball and cross (over 35-45m distance) were likely to result in the highest loads on a player's head. Therefore, coaches should consider this when practicing set plays such as corners and final 3rd free-kicks and attacking play.
 - Wherever possible limit the number of headers carried out when a player takes more than three steps and runs onto a ball or dives for a ball.
 - Practice technique using thrown passes to reduce the potential load on the head.
- It is important to ensure that the balls used are appropriate in terms of "wear and tear", ensuring the surfaces are smooth and no water is being held, which would make the ball heavier.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Use the following videos to help understand our guidance on heading.

- [Youth heading guidance video](#)
- [Adult heading guidance video](#)

We also recommend you take a look at the [FA Concussion guidelines](#).

GAME CONTEXT

It is recognised that in Adult football there will be a more visible tactical use of restarts, resulting in potentially an increased number of headers. Please consider how you plan these activities limiting the opportunity for repetitive heading of certain players.

There are key factors to consider when introducing the technique of heading as part of a balanced programme, which include:

- Judge and adjust to the flight of the ball
- Attack the ball at optimum point
- Head contact and ball contact to control direction and distance of the ball

Different types of headers will be more prevalent in certain positions, so coaches should introduce position specific training and support. Players playing in certain positions will head the ball more often, coaches should be aware of this and therefore plan accordingly to ensure players aren't exposed to long periods of repetitive heading.

RECOMMENDATION

LIMITING HEADING IN TRAINING

These recommendations have been developed to protect players welfare. As further research is undertaken this guidance will be reviewed and updated to reflect increased understanding.

It is recommended that heading practice is limited to 10 headers per session and only one session a week where heading practice is included. Players should be responsible for monitoring their own heading activity.

MEN'S NATIONAL LEAGUE SYSTEM STEPS 1-4 AND WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

If you are playing or coaching in the NLS Steps 1-4 or Women's Championship the professional game guidance provides further detail and information for consideration.

- [Women's Championship](#)
- [Men's NLS Steps 1-4](#)