



HEADING GUIDANCE



HEADLINES:

- **No heading in training in the foundation phase** (primary school children)
- **Graduated approach to heading for children in the development phase U12-U16**
- **U18 heading drills should be reduced, to take into consideration the heading exposure in matches**
- **Don't over inflate the footballs: use the lowest pressure authorised by the Laws of the Game**

Age Group	Heading frequency
U7, U8, U9, U10, U11	Heading should not be introduced in training sessions at this age
U12	Heading remains a low priority – 1 session per month & max 5 headers
U13	Heading remains a low priority – 1 session per week & max 5 headers
U14,U15, U16	Heading remains a low priority – 1 session per week & max 10 headers
U18	Heading drills should be reduced as far as possible, taking into consideration the heading exposure in matches

U6

BALL SIZE

3

FORMAT

N/A

Frequency of heading in any one training session

Heading should not be introduced in training sessions at this age.

Game context

The Foundation Phase DNA aims to provide an enjoyable and memorable experience for young children.

Priority at this age is fun, engagement and the mastery of both the body and the ball.

In today's modern game, children will play on smaller pitches, with less players and with the retreat line rule to encourage players to play through the thirds.

There is now a greater emphasis at all levels to retain and love the ball and you will see very few headers in the game of Mini Soccer.

Coaches should use the time they have with players to maximise enjoyment and development of other skills, particularly the fundamentals of working with the ball in their hands and feet.

Focus should be on learning to master the ball and the body through fun activities.

U7

BALL SIZE

3

FORMAT

Up to 5v5

Frequency of heading in any one training session

Heading should not be introduced in training sessions at this age.

Game context

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Coaches should use the time they have with players to maximise enjoyment and development of other skills, particularly the fundamentals of working with the ball in their hands and feet.

Focus should be on learning to master the ball and the body through fun activities.

U8

BALL SIZE

3

FORMAT

Up to 5v5

Frequency of heading in any one training session

Heading should not be introduced in training sessions at this age.

Game context

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In today's modern game, children will play on smaller pitches, with less players and with the retreat line rule to encourage players to play through the thirds.

There is now a greater emphasis at all levels to retain and love the ball and you will see very few headers in the game of Mini Soccer.

Coaches should use the time they have with players to maximise enjoyment and development of other skills, particularly the fundamentals of working with the ball in their hands and feet.

Focus should be on learning to master the ball and the body through fun activities.

U9

BALL SIZE

3

FORMAT

Up to 7v7

Frequency of heading in any one training session

Heading should not be introduced in training sessions at this age.

Game context

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In today's modern game, children will play on smaller pitches, with less players and with the retreat line rule to encourage players to play through the thirds.

There is now a greater emphasis at all levels to retain and love the ball and you will see very few headers in the game of Mini Soccer.

Coaches should use the time they have with players to maximise enjoyment and development of other skills, particularly the fundamentals of working with the ball in their hands and feet.

Focus should be on learning to master the ball and the body through fun activities.

U10

BALL SIZE

3
from 1/6/2020

FORMAT

Up to 7v7

Frequency of heading in any one training session

Heading should not be introduced in training sessions at this age.

Game context

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Priority at this age is fun, engagement and the mastery of both the body and the ball.

In today's modern game, children will play on smaller pitches, with less players and with the retreat line rule to encourage players to play through the thirds.

There is now a greater emphasis at all levels to retain and love the ball and you will see very few headers in the game of Mini Soccer.

Coaches should use the time they have with players to maximise enjoyment and development of other skills, particularly the fundamentals of working with the ball in their hands and feet.

Focus should be on learning to master the ball and the body through fun activities.

U11

BALL SIZE

4

FORMAT

Up to 9v9

Frequency of heading in any one training session

Heading should not be introduced in training sessions at this age.

Game context

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In today's modern game, children will play on smaller pitches, with less players and with the retreat line rule to encourage players to play through the thirds.

There is now a greater emphasis at all levels to retain and love the ball and you will see very few headers in the game of Mini Soccer.

Coaches should use the time they have with players to maximise enjoyment and development of other skills, particularly the fundamentals of working with the ball in their hands and feet.

Focus should be on learning to master the ball and the body through fun activities.

U12

BALL SIZE

4

FORMAT

Up to 9v9

Frequency of heading in any one training session

Heading remains a low priority and our expectation is that heading should not be introduced at this stage.

However, if coaches feel it necessary to introduce the technique of heading, due to the increased heading activity in the game, we strongly advise a maximum of **one session per month** with light balls, limited repetition of a maximum of **five headers**, using self-serve or short distances. These limited sessions should introduce the technique of heading and should always be unopposed.

Game context

The Youth Development Phase DNA continues to provide an enjoyable and memorable experience for young players.

The priority as players get older is still fun, engagement and mastery of both the body and the ball.

Players at this age are ready to cope with more decision making, which is reflected in the challenges provided in both training and games. This will still be done within an environment that is both supportive and positive.

While there may be a small increase in the number of headers seen in the game at this age group, it will remain a low priority when compared to other technical aspects of the game.

Coaches should continue to use the time they have with players to maximise the development of other key skills seen more regularly in the game at this age.

U13

BALL SIZE

4

FORMAT

Up to 11v11

Frequency of heading in any one training session

Heading remains a low priority and our expectation is that heading should not be introduced at this stage.

However, if coaches feel it necessary to introduce the technique of heading, due to the increased heading activity in the game, we strongly advise a maximum of **one session per week** with light balls, limited repetition of a maximum of **five headers**, using self-serve or short distances. These limited sessions should introduce the technique of heading and should always be unopposed.

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Coaches should continue to use the time they have with players to maximise the development of other key skills seen more regularly in the game at this age.

U14

BALL SIZE

4

FORMAT

Up to 11v11

Frequency of heading in any one training session

Heading remains a low priority.

Players can be introduced to the basic concepts in training with limited repetition. Coaches should not focus on heading practice more than **one session per week** and limit the number of headers per player to **10 per session**. Coaches should use a variety of distances relative to the game at this age.

Game context

The Youth Development Phase DNA continues to provide an enjoyable and memorable experience for young players.

Priority is still fun, engagement and the mastery of both the body and the ball.

Players at this age are ready to cope with more decision making, which is reflected in the challenges provided in both training and games. This will still be done within an environment that is both supportive and positive.

As players' knowledge of the game and physical strength develops, there will be more visible tactical use of restarts, resulting in an increased number of headers.

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 start to be used, so coaches can introduce position-specific movement patterns.

U15

BALL SIZE

5

FORMAT

Up to 11v11

Frequency of heading in any one training session

Heading remains a low priority.

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Game context

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U16

BALL SIZE

5

FORMAT

Up to 11v11

Frequency of heading in any one training session

Heading remains a low priority.

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Game context

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Different types of headers will start to be used, so coaches can introduce position-specific movement patterns.

Frequency of heading in any one training session

Heading drills should be reduced as far as possible, taking into consideration the heading exposure in matches.

As the game begins to replicate the adult game coaches should use a variety of heading situations players will experience during a game. This includes the introduction of contested headers. While you may now use match balls in the session light balls can still be used in training when practising the technique of heading.

Game context

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