



UEFA Heading Guidelines for youth players

UEFA Heading Guidelines

The overall aim of UEFA's Heading Guidelines is limiting the header burden in youth football to what is deemed necessary for the promotion of the game. They are intended as a recommendation on how to manage heading during training and match play in youth football and how to introduce heading drills for youth players. Opinions on this matter vary from one country to another, therefore UEFA encourages National Associations to use these guidelines as a minimum and develop their specificities according to the national circumstances (such as age groups, competition organisation, club/school infrastructure, etc.). It is acknowledged that scientific evidence at this moment does not allow for more detailed guidelines. However, under a preventative perspective, UEFA felt that it is useful to give some practical advice though.

- 1. Ball size:** Use the appropriate size and weight of balls for the age group you coach.¹
- 2. Ball pressure:** For training and matches use the lowest pressure authorised by the Laws of the Game. For the first training drills, foam balls might represent an alternative.
- 3. Heading burden:** Reduce heading drills as far as possible, taking into consideration the heading exposure at matches. This is of particular importance for the younger players. The objective to reduce headers during training and match play can be achieved by means of introducing different rule changes such as reducing the pitch size, player's number, goal height etc. Coaches should be educated about the necessity to proceed gradually with heading drills through the different age groups.
- 4. Neck strengthening:** Recent scientific evidence has demonstrated that neck strengthening exercises might be beneficial in heading drills due to a reduction of the head impact. Techniques on how to teach neck strengthening exercises should be considered for coach education and eventually included in Heading Guidelines.
- 5. Awareness for symptoms of possible concussion:** If any symptoms such as dizziness, headache, unsteadiness, etc. are reported by players following heading drills, they should fully rest for at least a week, with follow-up by a medical doctor. It is noteworthy that girls are more prone to concussions and possibly also to header burden than boys.

¹ As per the FIFA Youth Football Specification Recommendations



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