



# CANADA SOCCER HEADING GUIDELINES

Under the guidance of the Canada Soccer Sports Medicine Committee, the following guidelines for heading in youth training and matches under the jurisdiction of Canada Soccer should be applied across the various ages and stages as outlined below. These guidelines are introduced with immediate effect and will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

AGE GROUP	GAME FORMAT	BALL SIZE	HEADING FREQUENCY FOR PRACTICE/TRAINING SESSIONS	GAME CONTEXT
U4-U5	Informal Games	3	<p><b>Heading should not be introduced in training sessions at these ages.</b></p> <p>The focus should be on fun activities and game formats to engage players with an emphasis on fundamental movement skills and learning to master the ball at their feet.</p>	Heading is rarely observed in games at this age. Coaches should encourage dribbling and passing.
U6-U7	3v3	3		Small-sided game formats are in place to increase engagement with the ball and limit balls played in the air and over distance.
U8-U9	5v5	3 or 4		Match rules are adapted to reduce the frequency of the ball in the air including the use of a retreat line to encourage players to build out from the goalkeeper using short passes and dribble-in and pass-in rather than throw-ins to reduce the frequency of the ball in the air.
U10-U11	7v7	4	<p><b>Heading should not be introduced in training sessions at these ages.</b></p> <p>The focus should continue to be on fun to engage players, teaching them to master the ball and understand the basic principles of the game.</p>	<p>Heading remains rare in games at this age. Coaches should continue to encourage dribbling and passing and combination play.</p> <p>Small-sided game formats and adapted match rules remain in place. Coaches should encourage short corners and free kicks to further reduce the instances of heading within games.</p>
U12-U13	9v9	U12: 4 U13: 5	<p><b>Heading is a low priority.</b></p> <p>At this age, players can be introduced to the basic techniques of heading in training with limited repetition. Heading should be introduced using self-serves or short distance serves and should always be unopposed.</p> <p>If available, coaches may choose to introduce heading with lightweight balls. Balls used for heading training should be inflated to the lowest recommended regulation pressure or lower.</p> <p>Coaches should not focus on heading practice more than one session per week and should limit the number of headers per player to five per session.</p>	Heading may become more likely within the game at this age and stage; however, coaches should continue to encourage a style of play which limits the number of longer, higher passes and balls played in the air.

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AGE GROUP	GAME FORMAT	BALL SIZE	HEADING FREQUENCY FOR PRACTICE/TRAINING SESSIONS	GAME CONTEXT
U14-U15	11v11	5	<p><b>Heading remains a low priority.</b></p> <p>Coaches should not focus on heading practice more than one session per week and should limit the number of headers per player to 10 per session. Lightweight balls or balls inflated to a lower pressure should still be used to support the development of heading technique.</p>	<p>As player's knowledge of the game and physical strength develop, the ability to pass over distance and tactical use of restarts may result in an increased number of headers.</p> <p>The FIFA Laws of the Game are generally applied to 11-aside games beginning at this stage. Coaches should still encourage a style of play which limits the number of longer, higher passes.</p>
U16-U17	11v11	5	<p><b>Heading sessions once a week only.</b></p> <p>Coaches should use a variety of heading situations which players may experience during the game. Coaches should still be mindful of the number of repetitions during training sessions as well as situations resulting in high impact heading. Lightweight balls or balls inflated to a lower pressure can still be used to support the development of heading technique.</p>	

## ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE ON CONCUSSIONS:

As outlined in the [Canada Soccer Coach Education Minimum Standards](#) and [Safe Sport Roster](#), all coaches in the Grassroots/Competitive Streams must complete the NCCP Making Headway module and all coaches, regardless of age and stage, are encouraged to complete this important training. The NCCP Making Head Way module is a free, online training designed to help coaches gain the knowledge and skills required to prevent concussions, recognize the signs and symptoms of a concussion and what to do when you suspect an athlete has a concussion, and how to ensure athletes return to play safely.

In addition, the current Canada Soccer Concussion Policy designed by the Canada Soccer Sports Medicine Committee to prevent head injuries and manage them effectively when they do occur is [available here](#).



Thank you to the Scottish FA for sharing the content of their heading guidelines for Children [Heading Guidelines for Children | Football Development | Scottish FA](#)