



ENGLAND  
FOOTBALL

# Heading Guidance

## HEADLINES

**NO HEADING IN TRAINING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE**

**GRADUATED APPROACH TO HEADING FOR CHILDREN IN  
THE DEVELOPMENT PHASE U12-U16**

### 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 header**

**U13**

Heading remains a low priority  
**1 session per week & max 5 headers**

**U14, U15, U16, U18**

Heading remains a low priority  
**1 session per week & max 10 headers**

**FREQUENCY OF HEADING IN ANY ONE TRAINING SESSION****U6****Ball size****3****Format****N/A**

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.

**FREQUENCY OF HEADING IN ANY ONE TRAINING SESSION****U7****Ball size****3****Format****5v5**

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.

**FREQUENCY OF HEADING IN ANY ONE TRAINING SESSION****U8****Ball size****3****Format****5v5**

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.

**FREQUENCY OF HEADING IN ANY ONE TRAINING SESSION****U9****Ball size****3****Format****7v7**

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.

**FREQUENCY OF HEADING IN ANY ONE TRAINING SESSION****U10****Ball size****3**(from 1/6/2020)**Format****7v7**

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.

**FREQUENCY OF HEADING IN ANY ONE TRAINING SESSION****U11****Ball size****4****Format****9v9**

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.

**FREQUENCY OF HEADING IN ANY ONE TRAINING SESSION****U12****Ball size****4****Format****9v9**

**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 moreregularly in the game at this age.

**FREQUENCY OF HEADING IN ANY ONE TRAINING SESSION****U13****Ball size****4****Format****11v11**

**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.

**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 moreregularly in the game at this age.

FREQUENCY OF HEADING IN ANY ONE TRAINING SESSION	U14	Ball size	4	Format	11v11
	U15	Ball size	5	Format	11v11
	U16	Ball size	5	Format	11v11

### 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.

## FREQUENCY OF HEADING IN ANY ONE TRAINING SESSION

U18

Ball size

5

Format

11v11

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

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.

## 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.



ENGLAND  
FOOTBALL