

# SCOTTISH FA HEADING GUIDELINES



NOTHING  
MATTERS  
MORE

The following guidelines for heading in training and matches should be applied to the game across the various ages and stages as outlined below.

## KEY POINTS

- 1 The Scottish FA recommend no heading practice in children's football (primary school age children)
- 2 Graduated approach to heading in the youth ages (secondary school age children)

AGE GROUP	GAME FORMAT	BALL SIZE	HEADING FREQUENCY FOR PRACTICE/TRAINING SESSIONS	GAME CONTEXT	ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE NOTES
6s & 7s	Up to 4v4	3	<b>Heading should not be introduced</b> in training sessions at these ages. The focus should be on fun activities and game formats to engage players with an emphasis on learning to master the ball.	Coaches should encourage dribbling, passing and fundamental movement skills.	Coaches and volunteers should complete the relevant <b>Scottish FA Coach Education</b> courses for the ages and stages and attend the relevant Player Pathway Workshops.
8s	Up to 5v5	3		N.B. SWF Girls follow same guidance.	
9s, 10s & 11s	Up to 7v7	4	<b>Heading should not be introduced</b> in training sessions at these ages. 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.	Coaches should continue to emphasise dribbling, passing and combination play.  The retreating line used at 9s will be introduced at 10s and 11s to encourage playing through the thirds. Short corners and short free kicks should be encouraged.  N.B. SWF Girls – 9s Play 5v5 (Size 3 ball); 10s & 11s play 7v7 (Size 3 ball).	Scottish Sports Concussion Guidance – Coaches, teachers, leaders and parents involved in the game should have a clear awareness of the symptoms of possible concussion and understand how to deal with these situations. In the event of any doubt players should be removed from the field of play and the correct protocols followed. Further information is available via the Scottish Sports Concussion Guidance, however, <b>'IF IN DOUBT, SIT THEM OUT'.</b>
12s	Up to 9v9	4	<b>Heading is a low priority.</b> Our expectation is that heading should not be introduced at this stage.  However, if coaches feel it absolutely necessary to introduce the technique of heading, we would strongly advise a maximum of one session per month, with lightweight balls, maximum repetition of five headers per session, using self-serves or short distance serves. These limited sessions should introduce the technique of heading and should always be unopposed.	Heading is rarely observed in games at this age. Coaches should continue to emphasise dribbling, passing and combination play. To reduce further the instances of heading within games coaches should encourage short corners and short free-kicks.  N.B. SWF Girls – 12s play 7v7 (Size 4 ball).	There are various resources available via <a href="#">this Link</a> .  This guidance is intended to provide information on how to recognise sports concussion, how this should be managed from the time of injury through to safe return to sport.

AGE GROUP	GAME FORMAT	BALL SIZE	HEADING FREQUENCY FOR PRACTICE/TRAINING SESSIONS	GAME CONTEXT	ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE NOTES
13s	Up to 11v11	4	<p><b>Heading is a low priority.</b> At this age, however, 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 should limit the number of headers per player to five per session. Coaches should use a variety of distances relative to the game at this age.</p> <p>Don't over inflate the footballs: use the lowest pressure authorised by the Laws of the Game.</p>	<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.</p> <p>N.B. SWF Girls – 13s play 7v7 (Size 4 ball).</p>	<p>Coaches and volunteers should complete the relevant <b>Scottish FA Coach Education</b> courses for the ages and stages and attend the relevant Player Pathway Workshops.</p> <p>Scottish Sports Concussion Guidance – Coaches, teachers, leaders and parents involved in the game should have a clear awareness of the symptoms of possible concussion and understand how to deal with these situations. In the event of any doubt players should be removed from the field of play and the correct protocols followed. Further information is available via the Scottish Sports Concussion Guidance, however,</p>
14s & 15s	Up to 11v11	5	<p><b>Heading remains a low priority.</b> 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 can still be used to support the development of the technique.</p> <p>Don't over inflate the footballs: use the lowest pressure authorised by the Laws of the Game.</p>	<p>As player's knowledge of the game and physical strength develop, we will see more tactical use of restarts resulting in an increased number of headers. Coaches should still encourage a style of play which limits the number of longer, higher passes.</p> <p>N.B. SWF Girls – 14s &amp; 15s play 11v11 (Size 4 ball).</p>	<p><b>'IF IN DOUBT, SIT THEM OUT'.</b></p> <p><b>There are various resources available via <a href="#">this Link</a>.</b></p> <p>This guidance is intended to provide information on how to recognise sports concussion, how this should be managed from the time of injury through to safe return to sport.</p>
16s & 17s	Up to 11v11	5	<p><b>Heading sessions once a week only.</b> 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 any one training session. Lightweight balls can still be used to support the development of the technique.</p> <p>Don't over inflate the footballs: use the lowest pressure authorised by the Laws of the Game.</p>	<p>As player's knowledge of the game and physical strength develop, we will see more tactical use of restarts resulting in an increased number of headers. Coaches should still encourage a style of play which limits the number of longer, higher passes.</p>	

Please **visit here** for FAQs and additional information.

The above guidance should be introduced with immediate effect and will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.