



Hey Coach, I want to learn how to Head the Ball!



Panic mode has just set in.



You have a young player who wants to learn how to head the ball and you don't remember (or ever knew!) how. What to Do?!? First don't panic, tell the child we'll learn the technique next week and continue along with your scheduled practice.

Practice is over, now what? Call your Regional Coach Administrator (RCA) or other Regional board members. The correct heading technique is simple to learn and we'll make sure you get the proper instruction before teaching your eager player(s). Please do not attempt to instruct a child on how to head the ball until you are fully prepared (i.e. instructed and competent in the technique). What other options are available for you? We can make arrangements to have one of our trained staff come to your practice and teach the skill for you. We also have a few books and videos available for your use.



Okay now you're thinking training was good but it's been a few days, weeks, months, etc. and you're feeling a little forgetful (or nervous). What can you do? Review the following instructions on how to teach heading properly.

Golden Rule #1: *Never have an unwilling child (at any age) head the ball.* When the player (and coach!) is ready, feel free to teach the heading technique in our U10 and up divisions. Some players (and us adults!) may choose to never head the ball... that's okay! We have a lot of other skills and drills we can teach our young players.



Golden Rule #2: *Learn the proper technique.* There are hundreds of ways to head a ball but very few correct methods. Ask your RCA or board member for help. We'll make sure you get the instruction and skill set you need. If you're not comfortable teaching the technique we'll make arrangements to come to your practice and teach the technique for you.



General Rule of Thumb: *Start teaching heading at an age when a player shows interest, not when the coach thinks it should be taught.* We have U16 players who still show no interest in heading and that's perfectly acceptable... do not force a child to head the ball. We encourage coaches to wait until the player reaches the U12 division but heading is allowed to be taught in the U10 division.

The Technique: Proper techniques can first be learned through the use of a rag ball or a small beach ball, thus avoiding unnecessary, repetitive heading of a regulation soccer ball.

Teach your players to prepare to head the ball by:



- keeping their eyes open and on the ball
- placing their body so that the forehead will meet the ball – i.e. *head to ball*
- taking a comfortable stance with knees bent
- keeping their mouth closed
- keeping their chin tucked
- keeping a rigid neck
- keeping head above shoulder height – i.e. don't lower head to reach ball
- using their arms for balance (and self preservation if the ball is coming in too fast)



Teach your players how to contact the ball by:

- making contact with the ball at their forehead and hairline
- propelling their body from the waist, to the head, to the ball – i.e. *head to ball*, not ball to head
- keeping their neck rigid
- having the player follow through with their head and body towards the target
- having the player relax (provide verbal acknowledgement of a job well done!)
- teaching the player to prepare (ready position) for their next move



Remember: We'll help you hone your skill or come to your practice and teach the technique for you.

So how do we head in U6 & U8? ***DUCK!***



Our Region does not allow heading in the U6 & U8 divisions, however we do allow ducking and the use of hands/arms to protect the head. These techniques generally come naturally and require no assistance, but if you so desire, we'll be there.

Enjoy your newly developed skill and always remember Golden Rule #1

Never have an unwilling child head the ball.

Contact Ball Here

