

# Heading Guidance Q&A

## **Q: Are The FA banning heading in youth football?**

- No. The FA is not banning heading in football
- We have implemented guidance to reduce and remove repetitive and unnecessary heading from youth football, without impacting how the game is played
- This is an evolution of existing heading guidance for coaches that helps to mitigate any potential risk without impacting the way the game is played. That is the responsible thing to do
- When the results of the FIELD study were published, we confirmed that we would set up a coaching group, with a focus on looking at best practice in relation to heading the ball
- We have liaised with the Irish FA, Scottish FA, UEFA and the coaching group, and we have created an updated set of Heading Guidance for training and coaching across age groups
- This is recommended Heading Guidance, which are an evolution of our previous heading guidance
- Importantly, we are not making fundamental changes to the way the game is played. This Heading Guidance is a precautionary and common-sense approach to take whilst further research continues into whether there are any potential risks associated with heading
- These guidelines will remain under regular review, and if new evidence comes to light, we will take the appropriate steps

## **Q: Is The FA banning heading in youth football training?**

- We are not banning heading training
- We are providing Heading Guidance to ensure that heading training in each age group is proportionate to the amount of heading each age group does in actual games
- So, for example, in U8's football there is almost no heading in matches, so our guidance will ensure the requirement for heading in training is appropriate for that age group

## **Q: How are youth players supposed to know how to head the ball in matches if they don't practice it in training session?**

- We are taking steps to reduce and remove repetitive and unnecessary heading from youth football
- This Heading Guidance is a precautionary and common-sense approach to take whilst further research continues into whether there are any potential risks associated with heading
- The Heading Guidance is proportionate to the amount of heading that actually takes place for each respective age group – our research shows heading is rare for younger age groups

**Q: Are you exposing youth players to dangerous scenarios, ie heading the ball in a match without sufficient coaching of heading technique?**

- No. When youth players reach an age where heading is more likely in matches, appropriate coaching technique will be approached
- We are taking steps to reduce and remove repetitive and unnecessary heading from youth football without impacting the way the game is played. That is the responsible thing to do
- We also don't want to ban heading from matches as players may take risks, such as trying over-head kicks, which could be more damaging to them

**Q: The FA previously said that it will only make evidence-based decisions on changes to the way the game is played. What evidence has led you to this decision?**

- We have taken coaching advice, which is supported by the medical experts on our independently-chaired Research Taskforce, and created this updated Heading Guidance
- They are not based on medical evidence. This Heading Guidance are a precautionary, proportionate and common-sense approach to take whilst further research continues into whether there are any potential risks associated with heading
- Importantly, the FIELD study did not determine whether the cause of its findings is due to concussions suffered by the group of professional footballers, or concussion management, or heading of the football, or style of play, or the design and composition of footballs over the years, or personal lifestyle, or some other factor
- However, once the FIELD study was published, we did confirm a number of proactive steps including: to analyse possible changes to heading coaching, to review concussion management protocols, and confirm which research studies we are currently supporting. This guidance is an evolution of those steps

**Q: Is The FA saying that heading is linked to dementia?**

- No. There is no evidence that there is a link between heading and dementia

**Q: Is The FA overreacting following the results of the FIELD study?**

- No, we are simply evolving our existing guidance for coaches to mitigate any potential risk without impacting the way the game is played. That is the responsible thing to do
- This Heading Guidance is a precautionary and common-sense approach to take whilst further research continues into whether there are any potential risks associated with heading

**Q: Is this Heading Guidance in line with the Home Nations?**

- Yes. We are proud that this is a collaboration and consultation with the Irish FA and the Scottish FA. They are also in line with UEFA's own guidelines which will be released in due course

**Q: Is this Heading Guidance in line with FIFA and UEFA?**

- They are in line with UEFA's own guidelines, which will be released in due course

**Q: Will neck strengthening exercises help?**

- Recent scientific evidence has demonstrated that neck strengthening exercises might be beneficial in heading drills
- Techniques on how to teach neck strengthening exercises will be under consideration as we continually review how best to support the game, for example it could form part of coach development programmes in the future
- However more work is required in this area before we can provide any further guidance

**Q: Are the Premier League and the EFL in agreement with this Heading Guidance? And will it be introduced in the academies of their Clubs?**

- The Premier League and the EFL have been consulted throughout this process
- The guidance applies to the whole game
- Both leagues will assess how the Heading Guidance fits with their clubs' training curriculum and practices

**Q: What action would The FA take against a grassroots coach or a club that does not abide by this Heading Guidance?**

- This guidance is not mandatory. This is Heading Guidance to provide advice and support to coaches at all levels of the game
- We know coaches are constantly focused on providing their players with the best possible advice. We hope they will embrace what is an evolution of existing guidance for coaches that helps to mitigate any potential risk without impacting the way the game is played. That is the responsible thing to do
- Where coaches disagree or fail to apply the guidelines, we would like to work with them to understand why they would go against guidance that has been produced and endorsed by coaches and medical experts

**Q: We know the brain continues to grow and develop until your early-20s, so why not ban heading until that age?**

- This is an evolution of existing guidance for coaches that helps to mitigate any potential risk without impacting the way the game is played
- The Heading Guidance is proportionate to the amount of heading that actually takes place for each respective age group – our research shows heading is extremely rare for younger age groups
- More information on the existing coaching guidance can be found [here](#)

**Q: Is this start of heading being banned across football at all levels.**

- No. This is an evolution of existing guidance for coaches that helps to mitigate any potential risk without impacting the way the game is played. That is the responsible thing to do
- This Heading Guidance is a precautionary and common-sense approach to take whilst further research continues into whether there are any potential risks associated with heading

**Q: How did you choose the appropriate number of headers in training for each age group?**

- They were agreed in consultation with our group of experienced coaches, UEFA, and with colleagues from The SFA and NIFA. We may be accused of being overly cautious, but we would rather be overly cautious to mitigate potential risks in line with best practice