

# HEADING IN FOOTBALL TRIAL



A trial to remove deliberate heading in football matches across U12 level and below in England from the start of the 2023/24 season.

## GUIDANCE FOR COACHES

### WHY?

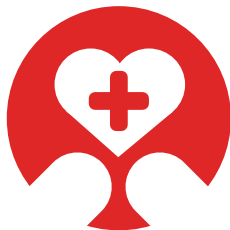
**Align matches with training.**  
Currently heading in training at U12 and below is eliminated or restricted.



**Support the development of more skilful players.**  
Stay on the ball when in possession.



**Player welfare.**  
Mitigate against any potential risks that may be linked to heading the ball while research is ongoing in this area.



### HOW?

Leagues and competitions will be invited to take part in the trial for the duration of the **2023/24 season**.

### WHAT IS A DELIBERATE HEADER?

A deliberate header / heading will usually involve a player moving their head and / or body:

- Towards the ball and / or
- Into the path of the ball

When judging if a header is 'deliberate', account should be taken of whether the player had the time / opportunity to avoid the ball. This will be influenced by:

- The speed of the ball
- The distance between the ball and the player when it is played by another player or rebounds from the goalpost or crossbar etc.

### WHAT ARE THE LAW CHANGES?

Deliberately heading the ball is an offence punishable by an indirect free-kick. The indirect free-kick is taken at the point where the ball was deliberately headed.

- Where a player deliberately heads the ball within their own penalty area, the referee will stop the game and restart with an indirect free-kick to the opposition from the nearest side line of the penalty area where the offence took place.

Deliberately heading the ball is not a cautionable (yellow card) or sending off (red card) offence, unless it:

- Stops or interferes with a promising attack (yellow card)
- Denies the opposing team a goal or obvious goal-scoring opportunity (red card)
- Occurs often enough to be considered 'persistent misconduct' (yellow card)

During this trial, indirect free-kicks will be introduced into Mini-Soccer for the purpose of restarting play in the event of a deliberate header only. They will not be used in any other circumstance during Mini-Soccer.

### WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

Inform your parents and players:

- You are part of the trial
- What the trial laws are
- What is / isn't a deliberate header
- What an indirect free-kick is

Encourage your players to 'stay on the ball', helping to develop their confidence and ability when moving with the ball at their feet.



**ENGLAND  
FOOTBALL**