



*Please note: Some of the recommendations listed below will be mandatory for Implementing Members, as they have previously agreed to affirmatively implement certain recommendations. All other Organization Members of U.S. Soccer are strongly encouraged to adopt these recommendations, as well.*

As part of the U.S. Soccer Concussion Initiative, it is recommended that players 10 years old and younger be prohibited from heading the ball in practice and games. The intent of the recommendation is to protect the safety of children, so it applies to the player and level of competition. Age 10 and younger are specifically cited for the player and U11 is the referred age group to in order to assist with its practical implementation. Since U11 competitions may have players who are 10 years old, it is recommended that heading be prohibited in U11 competitions and younger. If adopted, this also means that 11 years olds playing U11 are prohibited from heading the ball.

For those members adopting the recommendation, if a player deliberately heads the ball in a game, an indirect free kick (IFK) should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense. If the deliberate header occurs within the goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred. U.S. Soccer will provide this information in its referee training and will direct officials to check with their local rules of competition to see if the recommendation has been adopted by the applicable member. U.S. Soccer will also provide this information in its coaching education courses and will direct coaches to check with their local rules of competition to see if the recommendation has been adopted by the applicable member.

If a player is playing up in an older age group (ex: 10 year old playing with a U12 team), please note that players who are 10 and younger should not be heading the ball regardless of the age group in which they play. This requires education and support from the coach and parent to instruct the player accordingly.

For players that are 11, 12 and 13 years old, the recommendation is that heading be allowed in games, but that its use in practice should be limited. Since U12, U13 and U14 competitions have players that are 11, 12 and 13 years old, heading is allowed in games but it is recommended that it be limited in practice to a maximum of 30 minutes per week with no more than 15-20 headers per player, per week. U.S. Soccer will provide this information in its coaching education courses and will direct coaches to check with their local rules of competition to see if the recommendation has been adopted by the applicable member.



In support of U.S. Soccer's Concussion Initiative, the need to teach players the proper technique for heading a ball is an important component of player safety. In a controlled and individual environment (where heading is an isolated skill being taught away from any form of opposition or other aspects of the game), the use of lightweight balls (foam, balloon, etc.) would be acceptable for teaching heading technique. In particular, these lightweight alternatives to soccer balls could be used for teaching players 10 years old and younger the proper technique needed in preparation for being able to head the ball at the U12 and beyond.

These recommendations apply to all current seasons, as well as all future seasons.