

Heading 101

Soccer players often use their heads to control or redirect the ball on the field. This skill is fundamental to the game, but can lead to concussions if a player does not do it properly. These tips and techniques from the Children's Sports Medicine Program will help players, coaches and parents learn how to safely keep athletes' heads in the game in practice and competition.

Who should do it

Ages
10 and younger
NO heading

Ages
11 to 13
limited
heading

Ages
14 and older
heading using proper
technique

How to do it

1

Prepare

- **Watch the ball** at all times to achieve proper timing and avoid being hit by the ball.
- **Communicate** with teammates to call the ball and avoid a collision.
- **Keep your mouth closed** so you don't bite your tongue.

2

Gain momentum

- **Stay relaxed** as you approach the ball.
- **Tuck your chin**, bend your knees and bend backward at the waist.
- **Jump to meet the ball**, keeping your arms out and bent at a 90-degree angle to protect yourself.

3

Make contact

- **Strike the center of the ball** at the "sweet spot"—the center of the forehead where the hairline begins.
- **Use your entire upper body.** Attack the soccer ball, bend at the waist and push your head forward when making contact.
- **Do not bend your neck** when making contact.



Not sure if you're heading the ball the right way? Our pediatric physical therapists can evaluate your mechanics with Dartfish motion analysis and recommend corrections to your technique.

Visit choa.org/motionanalysis to learn more.