

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 LEAGUES

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.
- In the event a player deliberately heads the ball off the line, and therefore is denying a goal, a Penalty kick will be awarded.

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.

Deliberately heading the ball is not a cautionable offence and EDMSL has agreed with Hampshire FA that no Red cards will be issued for denying a goal or obvious goal-scoring opportunity.

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

If you are part of the trial, inform your clubs and referees:

- 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 clubs to inform their coaches, parents and players about the rule change.

This England Football guide has been amended to reflect EDMSL rules for the Heading In Football Trail.

