

Heading the ball (restrictions)

US Soccer is recommending, and Eastern New York is immediately requiring, new rules as it relates to heading:

- Players in Under-11 programs and younger must not engage in heading, either in practices or in games. Additionally:
 - When a player deliberately heads the ball in a game, an indirect kick shall 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 at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred. However, if a player does not deliberately head the ball, then play should continue.
 - There is limited heading in practice for players Under-12 and Under 13 programs. More specifically, these players shall be limited to a maximum of 30 minutes of heading training per week, with no more than 15-20 headers per player per week.
 - Clubs should be aware of circumstances in which individual consideration is needed. For example:
 - A 10 year-old playing at Under-12 should not head the ball at all.
 - An 11 or 12 year-old playing at Under 14 should abide by the heading restrictions in practice.

Referees should enforce these restrictions by age group according to the specified rules. Referees will not be assessing the age of individual players on the field and must enforce the rules for the age group they are officiating. Leagues and organizations are free to set their own standards, as long as the minimum requirements outlined above are met.