



# POLICY ON HEADING THE BALL

## Background

- Heading is a key skill in soccer at higher levels, but concerns exist about potential brain injuries from repeated headers and collisions.
- Research into long-term effects is still in its early stages; cumulative impacts of headers are not fully known.
- Children's brains and bodies are still developing, making them more susceptible to concussions and neck/back injuries. Girls may be more vulnerable due to anatomical differences.
- Younger players may lack the coordination to perform headers safely.

## ANZA Soccer Policy on Headers

1. Parental Choice: Parents decide what is safe for their children. We encourage parents to review current research and communicate their preferences to their child.
2. No Penalty: Players who do not wish to head the ball will not be penalized or made to feel uncomfortable by coaches.
3. Coach Education: Coaches will be educated on heading risks and techniques, and encouraged to inform parents.
4. Younger Players: Headers are not encouraged or incorporated in practices or games for younger age groups.
5. Proper Technique: Coaches will teach correct heading technique to players who attempt headers to reduce injury risk.
6. Starting Age: Instruction on safe heading techniques begins around age 10.
7. Age-Appropriate Balls: Coaches will always use correctly sized soccer balls for each age group to minimize risk.

## More Information

For further reading on youth soccer and heading safety:

- *“Does Heading a Soccer Ball Cause Brain Damage?”* – Scientific American
- *“With Concussion Reform at Forefront, Should Youth Headers be Nixed?”* – Sports Illustrated
- *“Ban Heading in Youth Soccer”* – Boston Globe
- *“Don’t Use Your Heads, Kids”* – Slate

- ***“US ‘Soccer Moms’ Sue FIFA Over Concussion from Headers” – The Telegraph***