

Heading the Ball

For the modern footballer, heading is an extremely valuable skill that can be used to pass, score or clear the ball out of defence.

HOW TO HEAD THE BALL:

- Get into position early. Position your body in line with the flight of the ball.
- Meet the ball and strike the ball with your forehead, just above eye level.
- Lock the neck and keep the upper body rigid.
- Thrust the upper part of your body forward and use the muscles in your trunk. (The action is similar to a catapult being bent back and then released.)

There are two types of headers used in football:

Attacking header: to pass, shoot or receive the ball.

- Get over the ball; head the ball downward and toward the bottom corner of the goal.

Defending header: to clear the ball out of dangerous areas of the field. Defensive headers are used for clearing the ball as high and as far away from your goal as possible. It's better to head the ball out to either side of the goal rather than into areas directly in front of the goal.

- Get underneath the ball and use your legs to propel your body upward to get power, distance and height.

GLANCING HEADER

- When executing a glancing header, you must turn your head in the direction of your aim. This motion redirects the oncoming ball.

DIVING HEADER

This is one of the most spectacular ways of heading the ball. From an attacking perspective, when done correctly, defenders are powerless in preventing a player diving into space and heading at the goal. When defending, it's often a last resort and takes a lot of courage.

- Move forward to the ball by using a number of quick steps.
- Take off from one foot.
- Contact with the ball on the forehead.
- During the follow-through, your body can end up in a horizontal position off the ground.

WHERE TO HEAD THE BALL IF IT HAS BEEN CROSSED TO THE BACK POST

Whether it be a cross from a corner, free-kick or during normal play, heading the ball from the back post to re-direct it to the far post has the following advantages:

- The goalkeeper will instinctively follow the path of the ball and cover the near post (exposing the far post).
- Defenders will tend to move across toward the near post (exposing the far post).

A ball that is re-directed to the far post will give you the opportunity to score or allow your teammates to attack the ball in this area of the goal.