



Heading








The International Coaches Association
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Heading Drills and Games

Select from a large variety of Heading drills and games to custom design your own practice sessions. There are fun and challenging practices for every age and skill level.





Advanced

-  Throw, Head, Catch
-  Crash the Goal
-  Defensive Heading
-  Heading in Midfield
-  Attacking Heading 2 v 2
-  World Cup Heading Game
-  The Heading Race

Intermediate

-  Head or Catch
-  Heading Reaction Game
-  Heading Repetition Training
-  Heading Rotary Game
-  Head and Serve
-  Heading for Distance

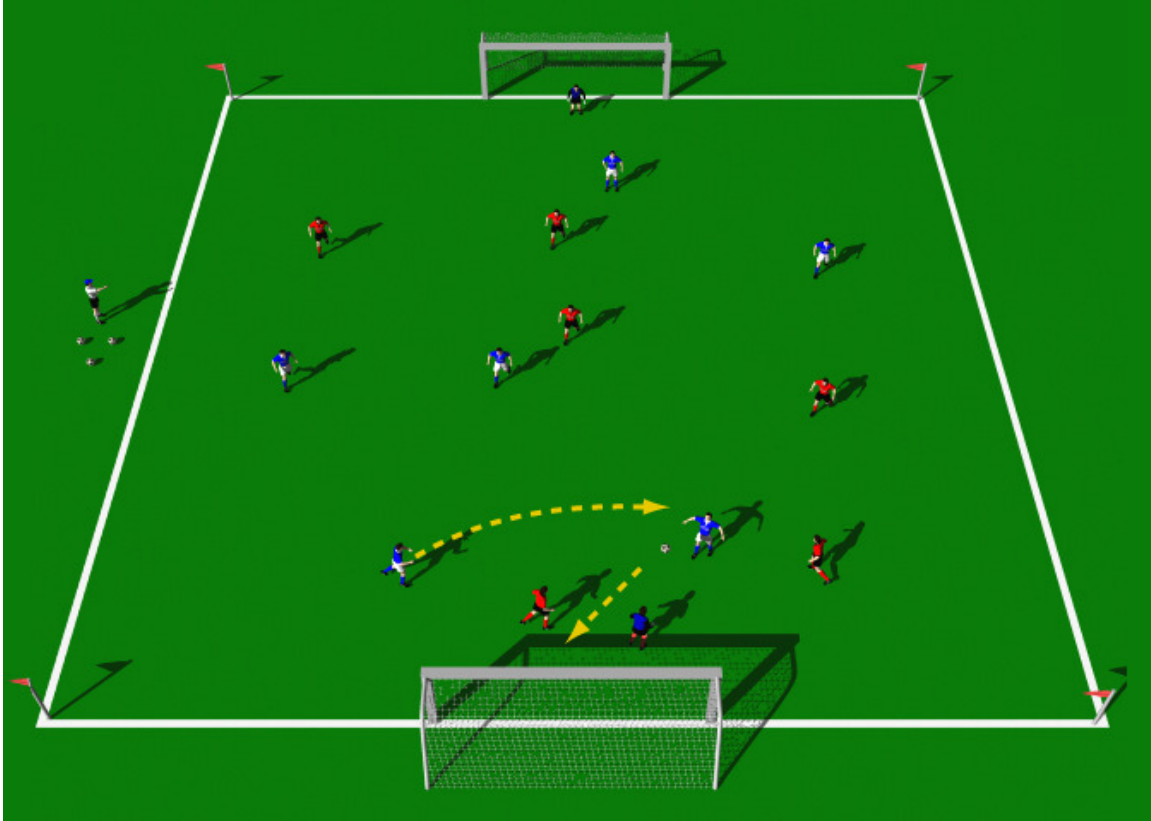
Fundamental

-  Heading Basics
-  Heading on the Run
-  Small Group Heading Relay
-  Heading for Accuracy



Advanced Heading

Throw, Head, Catch



Exercise Objectives:

This practice will improve attacking and defensive "heading" techniques. This can also be used as a fun warm up activity with your team.

Field Preparation

- Entire Group with Goalkeeper
- Area 20 x 30 yards
- Full Size Goals and Goalkeepers
- Cones or Flag poles
- Supply of Balls
- Colored Bibs

Coaching Pointers:

Divide the team into two groups. Identify groups by using colored bibs. The object of the game is for a team to score with a "header". The team in possession can only advance up the field in using this sequence "**Throw, Head and then Catch**". Players cannot run with the ball. Opposing team can only intercept a throw with a header and a header with a catch.

Focus On:

- Good support movement off the ball.
- Quality heading techniques. Heading to pass, heading to score.

Progression:

- Head ball from hands and catch.
- Volley ball from hands and catch.

- Must score with a volley.
- Diving headers worth 3 goals.
- Double headers worth 5 goals.

Crash the Goal



Exercise Objectives:

This practice will improve attacking and defensive "heading" techniques. This can also be used as a fun warm up activity with your team.

Field Preparation

Entire Group, Area 10 x 50 yards, Full Size Goals and Goalkeepers, Cones or Flag poles.
Supply of Balls

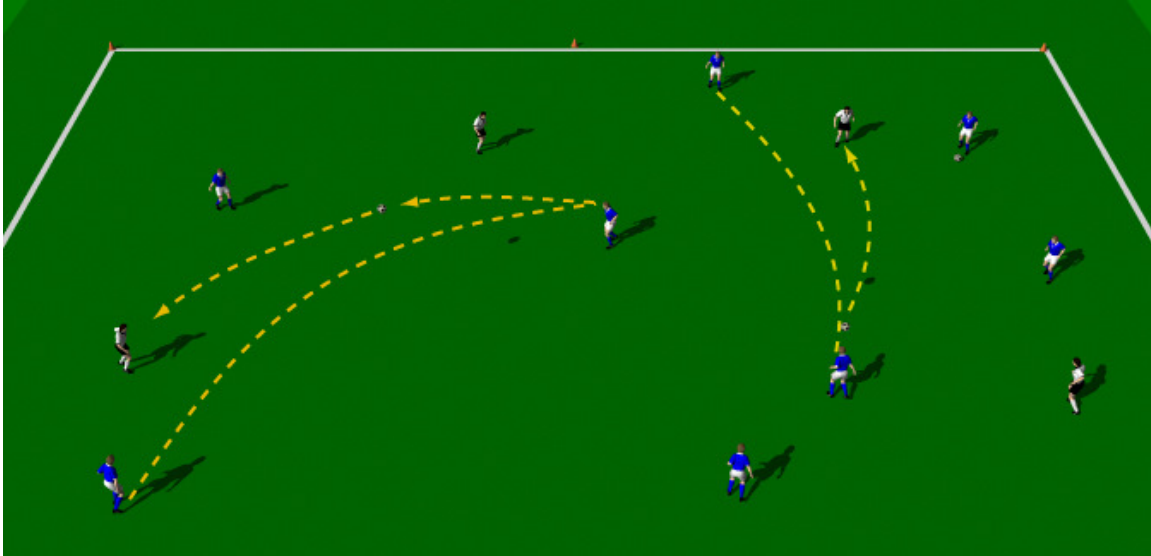
Coaching Pointers:

Place 2 goals approximately 15 yards apart. Two teams are inside the square. Identify each team using colored bibs. The object is to score a goal with a header or volley. The drill starts with one player serving the ball to his team from the side cone. The ball must be thrown in with pace. His team must crash the goal and try to score with a header or volley. After the attack the ball is turned over to the opposite team to serve. Team can serve from any side. This is a fun activity using a lot of players. If Goalkeeper catches the ball he can throw it at the opposite goal to try and score.

Focus On:

- Attack the ball aggressively.
- Quality heading and volleying technique.
- Challenging for the ball.

Defensive Heading



Exercise Objectives:

This practice is designed to improve the player's technical ability in a variety of shooting techniques. The practice will encourage goal scoring from aerial crosses, rebounds and deflections.

Field Preparation

- Large group of players
- Area 40 x 40 yards
- Cones or Flag poles
- Supply of Balls
- Colored Bibs

Coaching Pointers:

This is a great practice for developing your defenders ability to head the ball with power, distance and accuracy. It Involves plenty of repetition and constant movement. Make a grid approximately 40 yards by 40 yards. Position a large group of players (blue) in the grid. Place 4 defenders (green) inside the grid.

The blue players pass the ball around the grid, on every third pass they cross the ball in the air for a defender to attack and head. Both groups are constantly moving and calling for the ball. The object is for the defender to attack the high balls and head them with distance, power and accuracy. When heading the ball they must try to redirect it to a blue player. Make sure the balls are inflated correctly and are not too hard!

Step One: The defender should position their body behind the flight of the ball as early as possible. This will provide good composure and balance to attack the ball. The eyes should be fixed on the flight of the ball, the back should be arched and neck muscle's tightened. **Step Two:** Contact is made with the center of the forehead and contact should be made through the center and below the horizontal mid-line of the ball. Immediately on making contact with the ball, the player should quickly swing the upper body forward. By pulling the arms back when making contact, more power can be achieved.

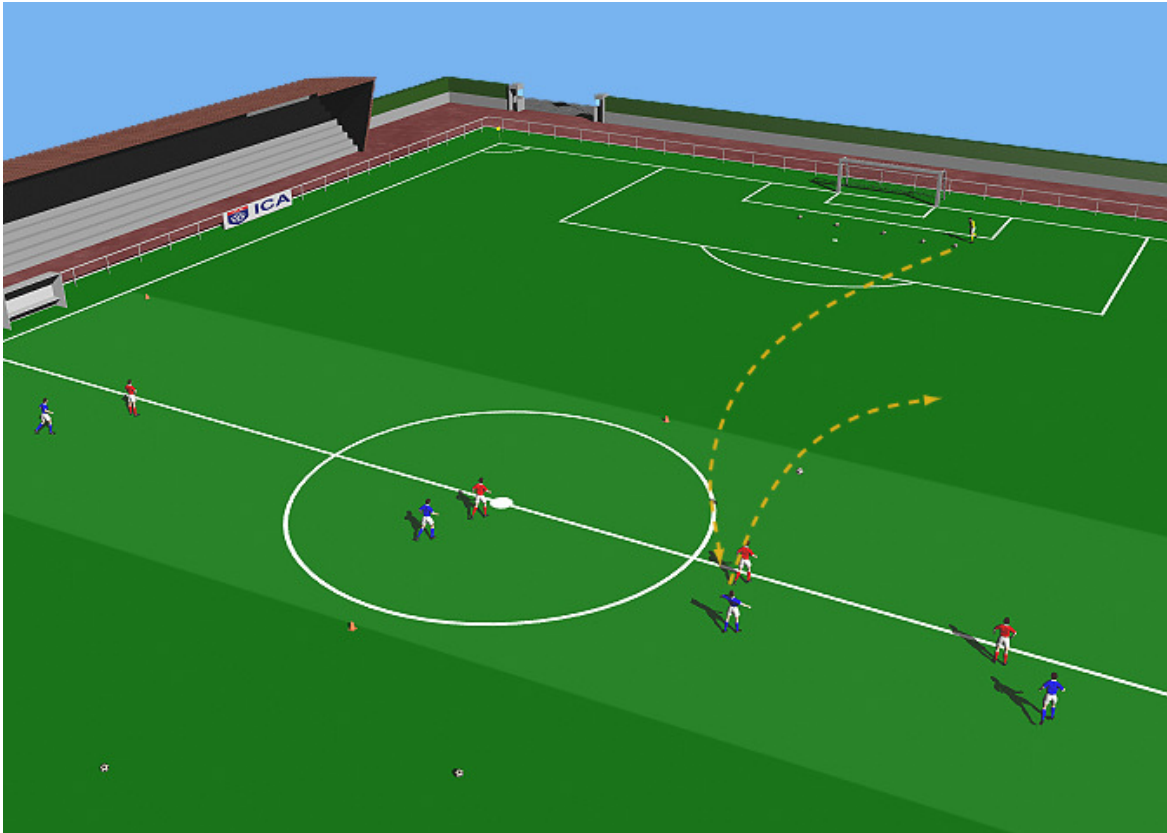
Step Three: The defender should aim for distance, height and accuracy. It is important for the player to develop an aggressive attitude towards defensive heading to win air balls consistently.

Variations:

- Condition (blue players) to 1 touch.
- Use 4 attackers instead of defenders and have them practice "flick on headers" or laying the ball off one touch to a second runner.
- Use your goalkeepers, have them catch the balls and distribute to the farthest supporting player.

This is a great activity to use as a pre-practice warm up after a good stretch.

Heading in Midfield



Exercise Objectives:

This practice is designed to improve defensive and offensive heading techniques in the midfield third.

Field Preparation

- Large group of players
- Half Field
- Cones or Flag poles
- Supply of Balls
- Colored Bibs

Coaching Pointers:

Two groups of four players are positioned in the middle third of the field. Mark the middle third with cones. One group acts as defenders, the second as attackers. Two servers are placed in the six-yard box. The servers alternate playing long lofted passes into the middle third of the field.

The object of the practice is for both groups to challenge and win the header. The defensive team must head the ball back towards the servers and past the cones to win a point. The offensive team must try to “flick” the ball over the defenders and past the end cones to win a point. Change roles of groups so each group practices defensive and offensive heading.

The coach should emphasize the following coaching points:

- Ensure that the server delivers quality high lofted passes into the middle third.
- Attack the ball; don't wait for the ball to come to you.
- Get under the flight of the ball as early as possible for good balance.
- Remember to keep the head steady and eyes fixed firmly on the ball.

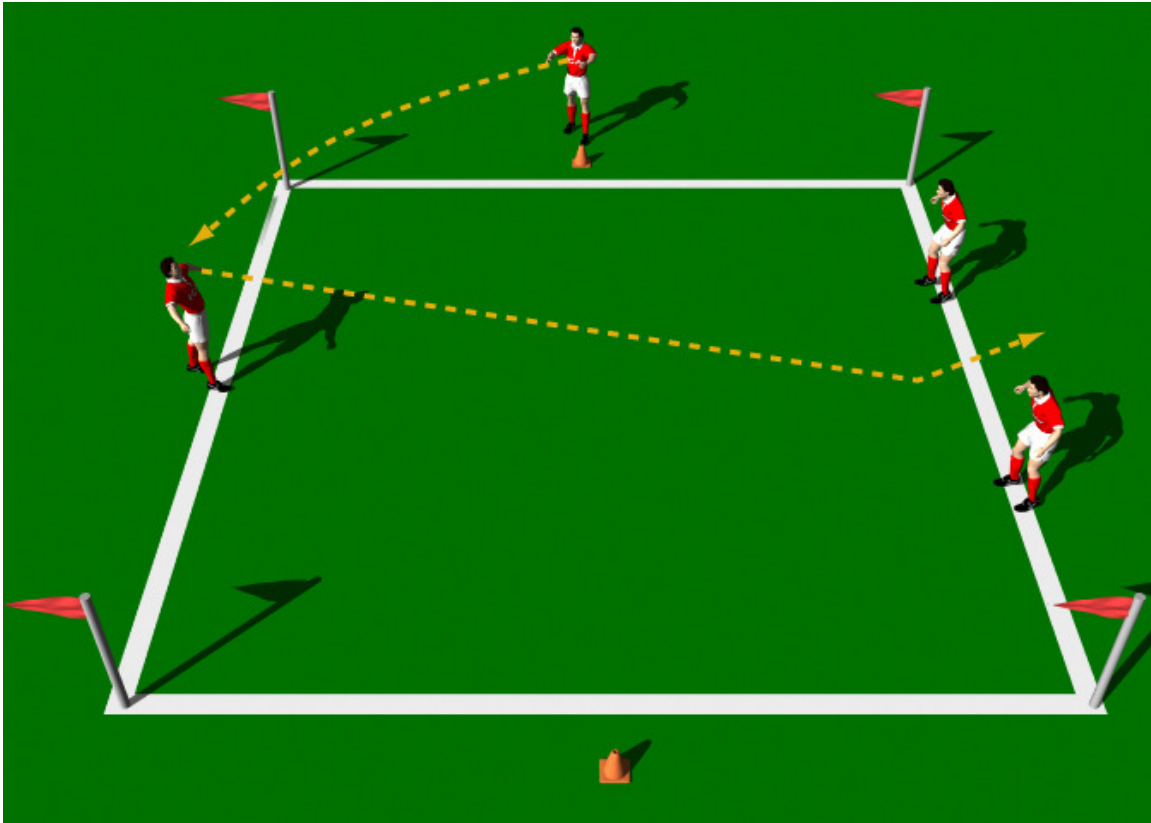
Defensively:

- Immediately on impact, the player should swing the upper body forward quickly and make contact on the ball with the center of the forehead.
- The player should redirect the ball with height and distance.
- Do not tilt the head too far back or the ball will skim from the head.

Offensively:

- Time your jumps carefully.
- On the approach to the ball, the player must slightly arch the back and tighten the neck muscles.
- Contact is made with the top part of the forehead and below the horizontal mid-line of the ball. The ball should be redirected with just a small part of the ball glancing off the forehead. Immediately on making contact with the ball, the player should quickly swing the upper body and make contact on the ball with the center of the forehead.

Attacking Heading 2 v 2



Exercise Objectives:

This practice is structured to improve the technical ability of "Heading" with an emphasis on "accuracy and power".

Field Preparation

4 players, Area 10 x 10 yards, Cones or Flag poles, Supply of Balls

Coaching Pointers:

Four players are positioned in a grid 8 yards x 7 yards, using one ball. The players are divided into teams of two. Both sets of players defend a goal marked by the cones. The players act as goalkeepers and may use their hands to stop a header. Goals are scored with a header between the cones and under head-height of the players.

The practice starts with one server throwing a straight throw from the nearest sideline for their partner to head at goal. The player heading the ball must head from the goal-line. The two goalkeepers must try to stop the header. When they catch the ball they also must serve from the nearest sideline and head at goal. The players must always keep the correct sequence; no player may have two headers in succession.

If a team defending can head the ball back at goal without first catching the ball they can score 2 goals for a double header, 3 goals for a triple header and so on. After the server throws the ball to his partner he must quickly return to his goal line to defend the goal. A supply of balls should be placed alongside the grid to maintain a high tempo. Encourage the players to attempt "Diving Headers" at goal when the opportunity presents itself.

World Cup Heading Game



Exercise Objectives:

This practice is designed to improve the player's technical ability in "Heading".

Field Preparation

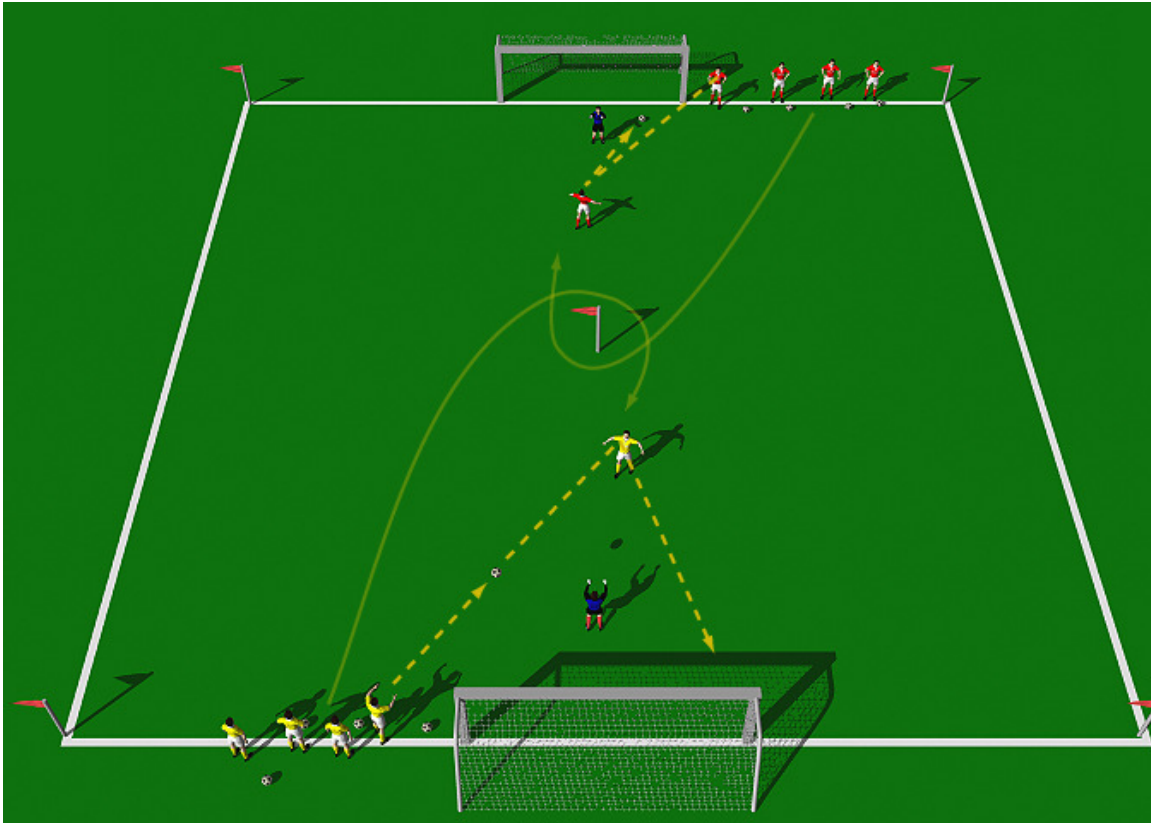
- Large group of players
- Penalty Area
- Full Size Goal and Goalkeeper
- Cones or Flag poles
- Supply of Balls

Coaching Pointers:

Players are divided equally into two groups. One group is positioned behind the goal to recover missed headers. The second group are split equally and positioned at two cones placed at the edge of the penalty area. Two servers, positioned each side of the goal, serve the ball in the air and between the two cones placed approximately 12 yards from the goal line. Each server alternates serving. Players recovering the balls must always ensure there is a ready supply of ball for the servers.

Players heading must receive a throw from the server diagonally opposite. The ball must be struck after it passes through the cones. Any ball struck before passing through the cones does not count. The group works as a team to see how many goals they can score in a three-minute period. After the three-minute period, all goals are totaled and groups alternate. The emphasis should be placed on accuracy and power. Players should time their runs so that they do not have to break stride when heading the ball.

The Heading Race



Exercise Objectives:

This practice is designed to improve the player's technical ability in attacking heading under speed.

Field Preparation

- Large group of players
- Area 30 x 30 yards
- Full Size Goals and Goalkeepers
- Cones or Flag poles
- Supply of Balls

Coaching Pointers:

A group of players with a ball each are placed at opposite goals. Two goalkeepers are positioned in goal. Identify groups using colored bibs. A cone is placed in the middle of the goals. On the coaches command, the first player from each group runs around the cone and has to score as quickly as possible with a header. The second player in their group serves the ball. Headers should be outside the 6 yard box. The first player to score wins a point for their team.

After heading the ball, players join the end of their group. The practice is then repeated by the next players in line. Coach should keep track of goals scored and make a competition amongst the teams.

The coach should emphasize the following coaching points:

- Be alert to the coach's command.
- Attack the ball quickly.
- Head the ball down towards the goal-line.
- The emphasis should be placed on accuracy and power.
- Remember to keep the head steady and eyes fixed firmly on the ball.

Players can score an extra point if they can score with a "diving header".

Intermediate Heading

Throw, Head, Catch



Exercise Objectives:

This practice will improve attacking and defensive "heading" techniques. This can also be used as a fun warm up activity with your team.

Field Preparation

- Entire Group with Goalkeeper
- Area 20 x 30 yards
- Full Size Goals and Goalkeepers
- Cones or Flag poles
- Supply of Balls
- Colored Bibs

Coaching Pointers:

Divide the team into two groups. Identify groups by using colored bibs. The object of the game is for a team to score with a "header". The team in possession can only advance up the field in using this sequence "**Throw, Head and then Catch**". Players cannot run with the ball. Opposing team can only intercept a throw with a header and a header with a catch.

Focus On:

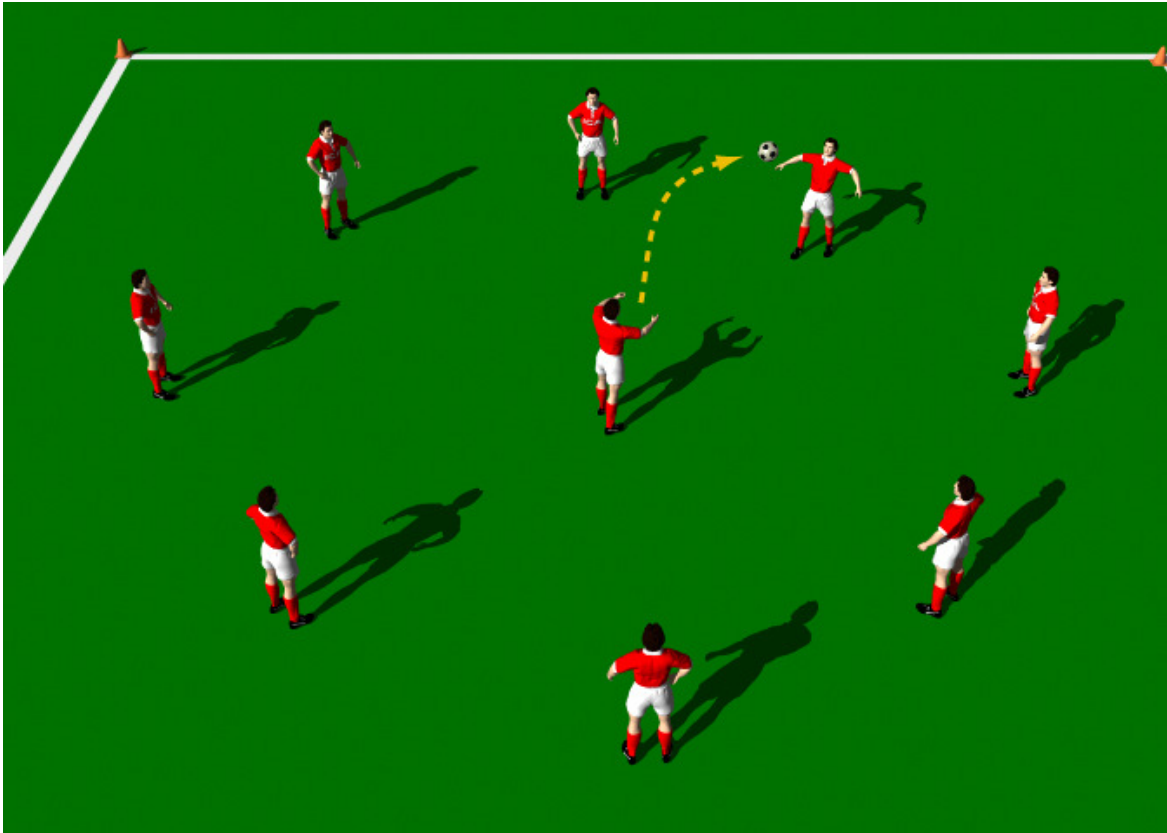
- Good support movement off the ball.
- Quality heading techniques. Heading to pass, heading to score.

Progression:

- Head ball from hands and catch.
- Volley ball from hands and catch.

- Must score with a volley.
- Diving headers worth 3 goals.
- Double headers worth 5 goals.

Heading Reaction



Exercise Objectives:

This practice is structured to improve the technical ability of "Heading" with an emphasis on "quick reaction".

Field Preparation

- Entire group of players
- Area 20 x 20 yards
- Supply of Balls

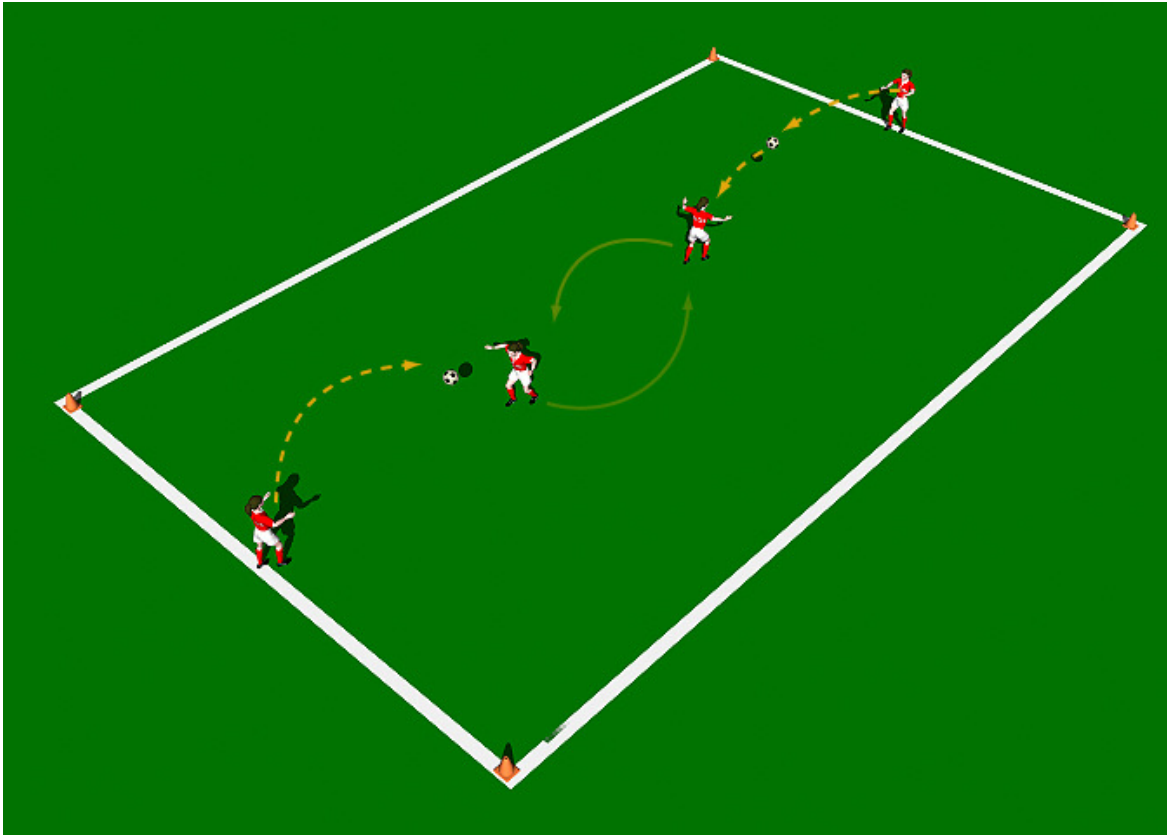
Coaching Pointers:

A group of players are positioned in a circle around the coach, using one ball. The coach serves a straight throw to the players in random order. As the coach serves the ball he shouts one of two commands "HEAD" or "CATCH".

- If the coach shouts, "HEAD" - the player must do the opposite and catch the ball.
- If the coach shouts, "CATCH" - the player must do the opposite and head the ball.

The player receives a goal for every successfully performed header or catch. If the player heads the ball it must be headed back to the coaches hands, if they catch the ball he must then throw it back to the coach. A competition can also be played. When the player makes a mistake they are eliminated and sit on the ground. The last player standing wins.

Heading Repetition Training



Exercise Objectives:

This practice is structured to improve the technical ability of "heading the ball on the run" with an emphasis on "accuracy".

Field Preparation

Small group of players, Area 10 x 20 yards, Cones or Flag poles, Supply of Balls.

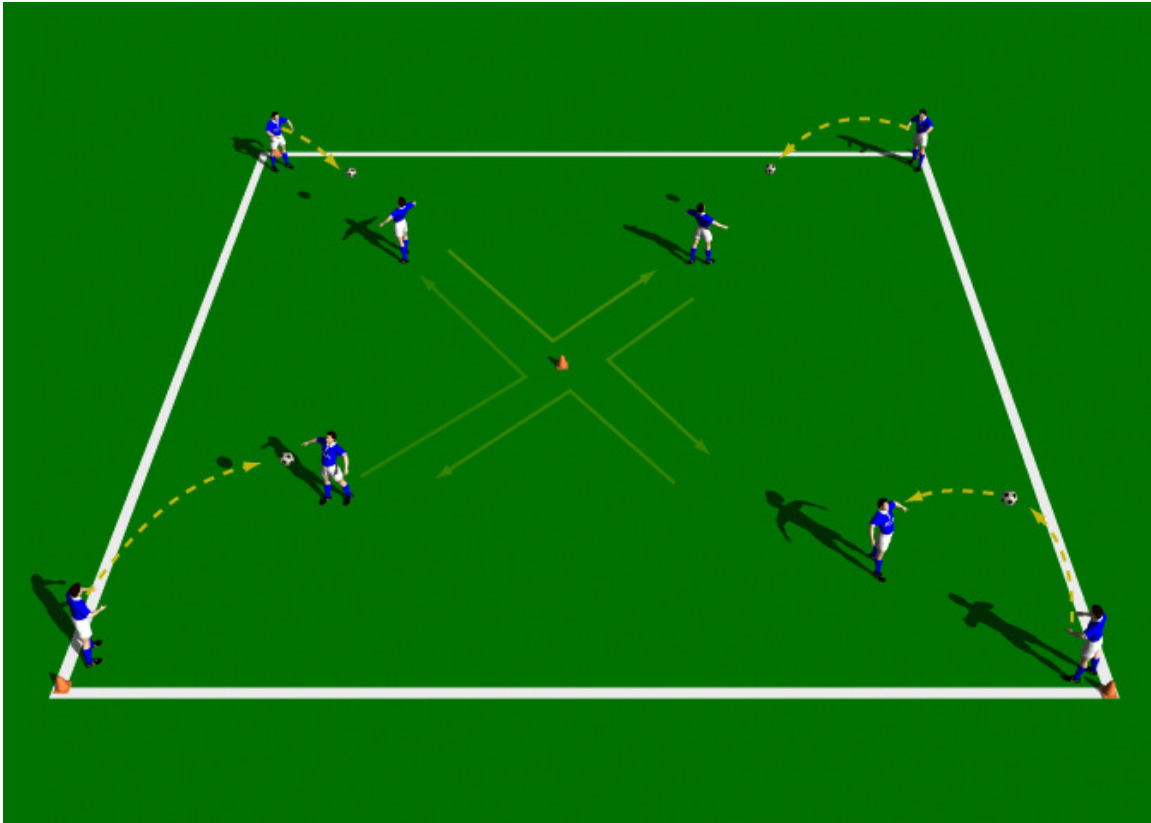
Coaching Pointers:

Two players are positioned in a grid 10 yards x 20 yards. Two servers with a ball stand at each side of the grid. Each server alternates serving a high looped throw for the receiver to head back to the server. Ensure that the servers do not serve the ball too far, so that the player in the center does not need to come to meet the ball.

The player working in the center has to receive a throw from server and head it back to server. The player then turns quickly and repeats with the server on the opposite side. The players in the center should work at full speed and concentrate on quality.

If the player working turns to a server for a header, and the server is retrieving the ball, the player must continue to run and turn to receive the ball from the opposite server. The player should not wait for a server to retrieve the ball. Competitions should be played: how many headers in 60 seconds, the first player to reach 20 good headers. Only headers made back to the server's hands are countable.

Heading Rotary Drill



Exercise Objectives:

This practice is structured to improve the technical ability of "heading" with an emphasis on "accuracy".

Field Preparation

8 players, Area 20 x 20 yards, Cones or Flag poles, Supply of Balls.

Coaching Pointers:

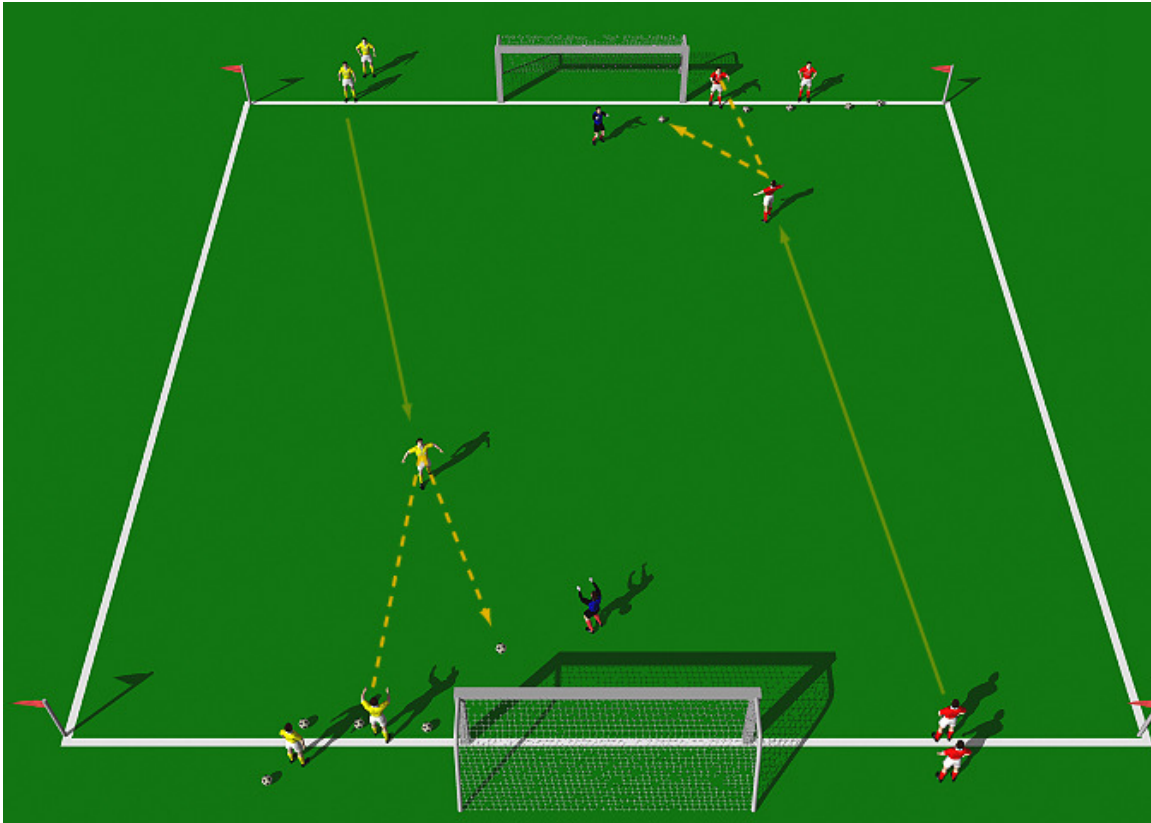
Eight players are positioned in a grid 20 yards x 20 yards. One cone is placed in the center of the grid as a marker. Four players are positioned in the corners of the grid, each with a ball. Four players start from the center cone, each facing one of the servers.

The players in the center of the grid receive a throw from the server and head the ball back to the server. They then must check back to the center cone and rotate to the next server on their right and repeat exercise.

The players repeat this practice for approximately 3 minutes as they rotate around the grid. Emphasis should be placed on the accuracy, heading the ball back to the servers hands. The header should be played back at the correct pace so the receiver can catch the ball with ease.

It is advised to have an extra ball at each cone to keep the tempo of the practice constant. A goal is scored for each successful header made. Each player should keep their own score. A team total can be recorded to challenge the next set of four players.

Head and Serve



Exercise Objectives:

This practice is structured to improve the technical ability when "heading" the ball on the run. An emphasis is placed on "accuracy and power".

Field Preparation

- Large group of players
- Area 30 x 30 yards
- Full Size Goals and Goalkeepers
- Cones or Flag poles
- Supply of Balls

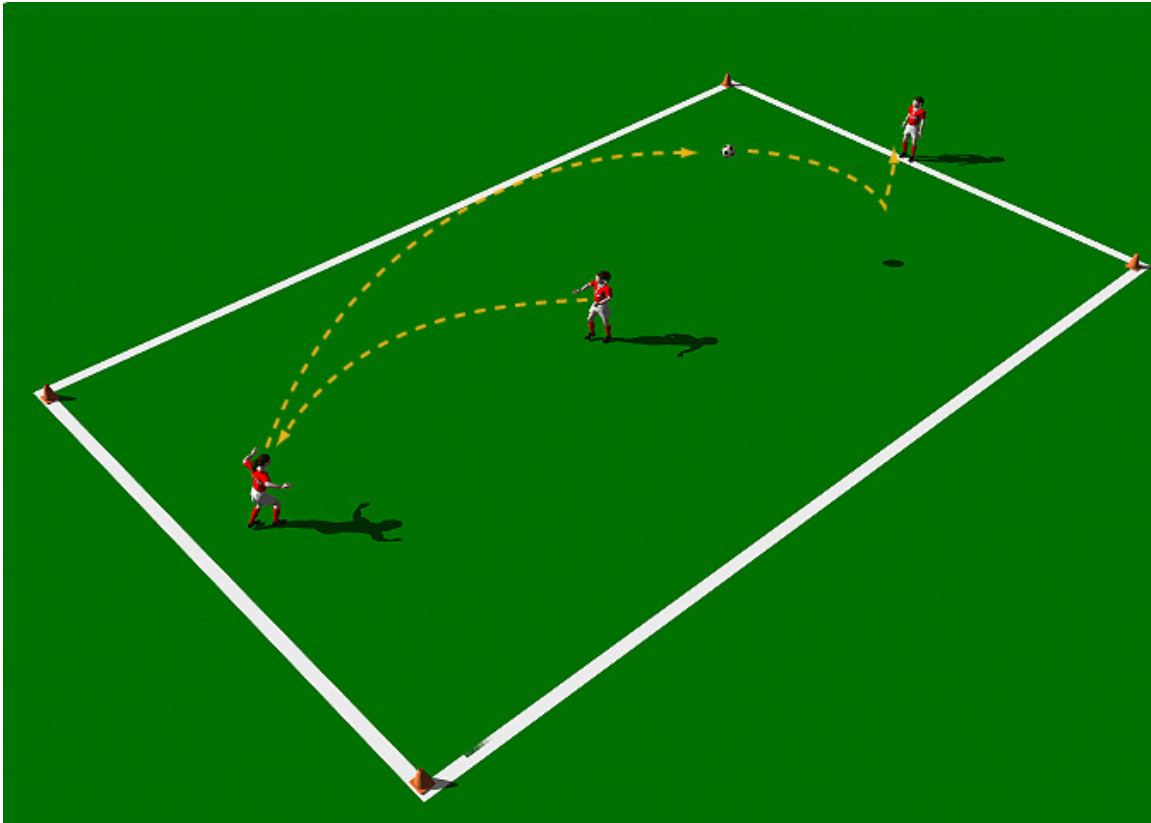
Coaching Pointers:

Goals are placed at each side of a grid 30 yards x 30 yards. A small group of players are positioned at each goal post. Attacking players receive the ball from the group opposite. The practice starts with the attacking player running towards the goal. The server is the opposite group throws and under-handed serve for the attacker to head at goal. If the attacker scores he is rewarded by returning to his starting position. If the attacker misses, he then becomes a server and the server runs to the opposite side to get in line to head the ball.

The coach should emphasize the following points:

- Make sure the attackers receive good throws from the servers. Under-handed throws are preferred.
- Don't serve the ball too close to the goal.
- Players should aggressively attack the goal.
- Attackers should get behind the flight of the ball. The player's eyes should be fixed on the flight of the ball. On the approach to the ball, the player must slightly arch the back and tighten the neck muscles.
- Immediately on making contact with the ball, the player should quickly swing the upper body and make contact on the ball with the center of the forehead. Further power can be achieved by pulling the arms back when making contact with the ball. Contact should be made above the horizontal mid-line of the ball. This will direct the ball downwards.
- When heading for goal, the ball should be headed down towards the goal line. The timing of the run must be late, fast and aggressive.

Heading for Distance



Exercise Objectives:

This practice is designed to improve the mechanics involved when heading for distance.

Field Preparation

- 3 players
- Area 10 x 20 yards
- Cones or Flag poles
- Supply of Balls

Coaching Pointers:

Three players are positioned in a grid 10 yards x 20 yards. One player is placed on each side of the grid with the server positioned in the center. The server starts the practice by throwing the ball for one of the receivers to head. The receiver heads the ball above and beyond the server to the player at the opposite side of the grid. The second receiver heads the ball back to the servers hands to repeat the practice from their side.

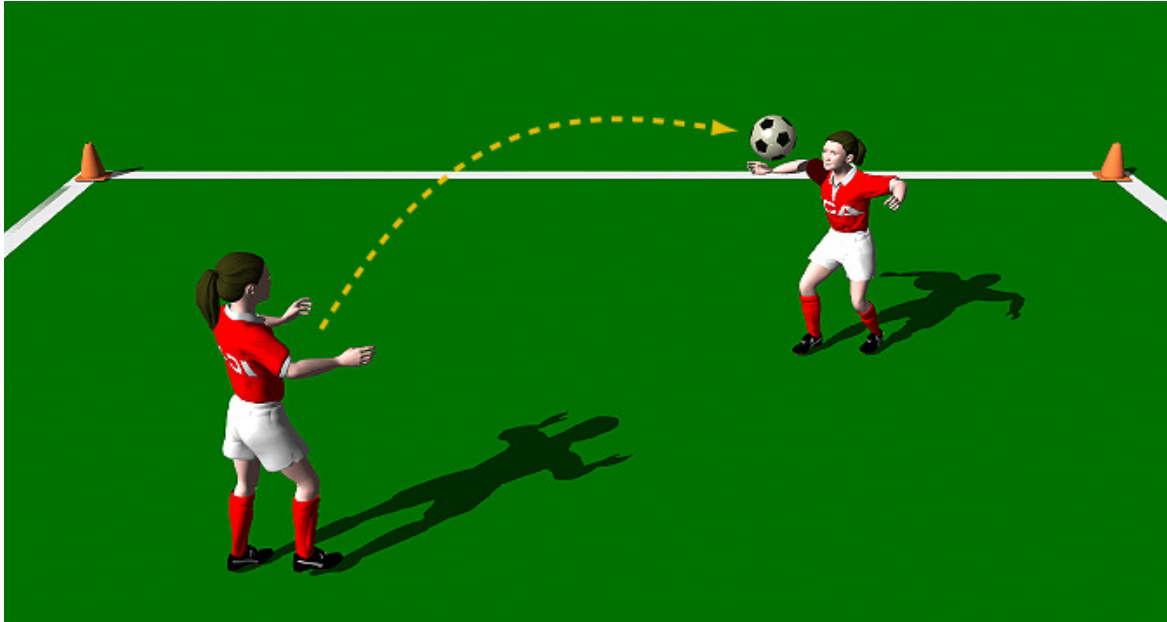
The coach should emphasize the following coaching points:

- Ensure that the server delivers quality throws for heading.
- Attack the ball; don't wait for the ball to come to you.
- Get under the flight of the ball as early as possible for good balance.
- Remember to keep the head steady and eyes fixed firmly on the ball.

- Immediately on impact, the player should swing the upper body forward quickly and make contact on the ball with the center of the forehead.
- The player should redirect the ball to the player with height and distance.
Do not tilt the head too far back or the ball will skim from the head.

Fundamental Heading

Heading Basics



Exercise Objectives:

This practice is designed to introduce the novice player to the correct technique when heading the ball.

Field Preparation

- 2 players
- Area 10 x 10 yards
- Cones or Flag poles
- Supply of Balls

Coaching Pointers:

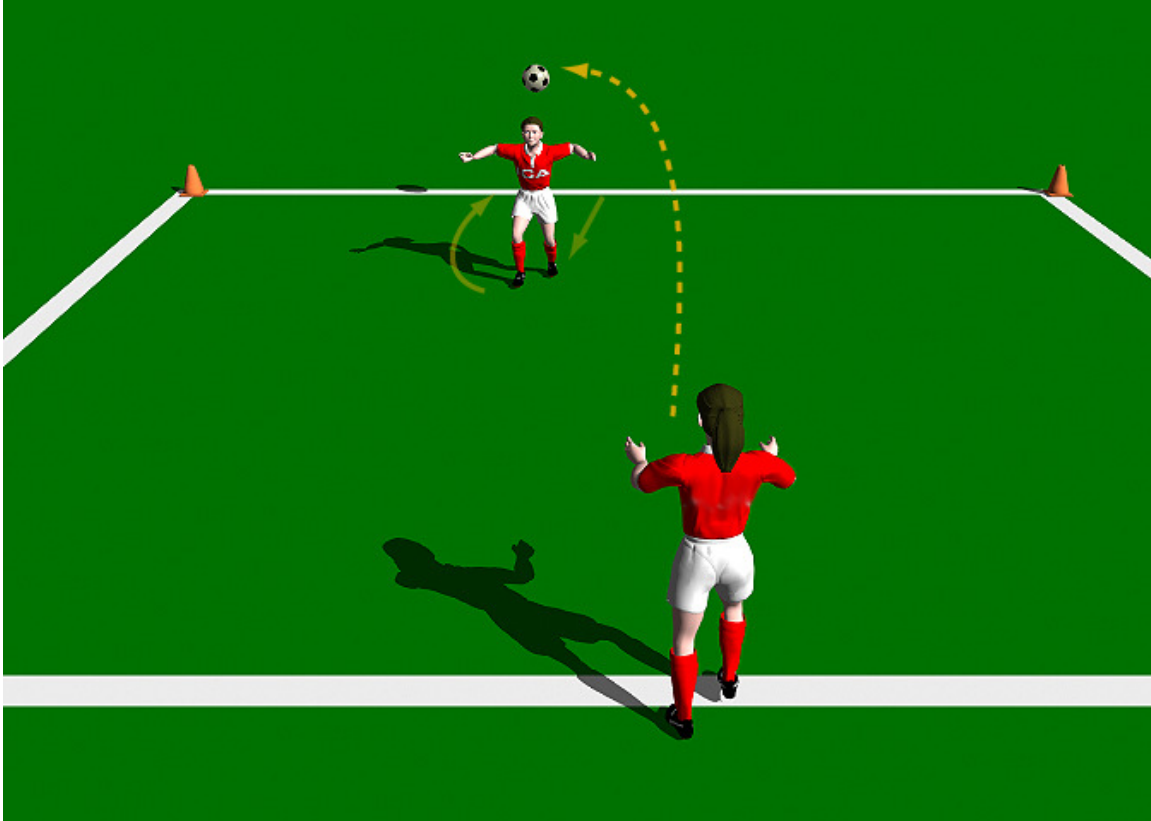
Two players are positioned in a grid 10 yards x 10 yards. One player serves the ball for their partner to head back. The players should alternate serving the ball.

The coach should emphasize the following coaching points:

Position the body behind the flight of the ball. This will lead to good composure and balance for receiving the ball instead of reaching out and being caught off balance. Remember to keep the head steady and eyes fixed firmly on the ball. Immediately on impact, the player should swing the upper body forward quickly and make contact on the ball with the center of the forehead. The player should redirect the ball to the player. Do not withdraw on impact, or this will cushion the ball. Do not tilt the head too far back or the ball will skim from the head and possession may be lost.

As the player is redirecting the ball, the upper body and head should be moving forward.

Heading on the Run



Exercise Objectives:

This practice is structured to improve the technical ability when "heading" the ball on the run. An emphasis is placed on "accuracy".

Field Preparation

- 2 players
- Area 10 x 10 yards
- Cones or Flag poles
- Supply of Balls

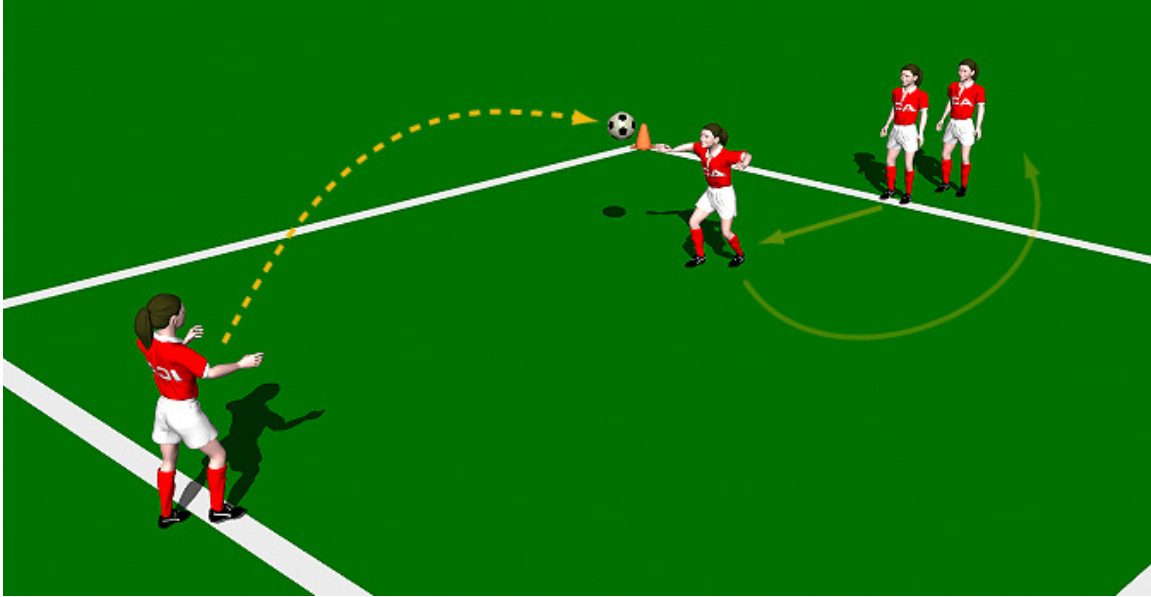
Coaching Pointers:

In an area 10 yards x 10 yards a player receives the ball from the server. The receiving player must head the ball back to the server and only scores a point for each header played back to the servers hands. After each header the receiver must return to the starting position and repeat drill.

The server must throw a high looped serve to the receiving player. The ball should be served approximately 5 yards. If the server throws the ball too far the receiving player will not come to meet the ball. With a correct serve the receiving player is always encouraged to attack the ball.

The coach should emphasize correct technique and slowly build up the tempo to game speed. Care must be taken to emphasize quality over speed. Create a competition between players. Keep score and award points for the first player to reach 20 good headers or the player who can perform the most headers in one minute.

Heading Relay



Exercise Objectives:

This practice is structured to improve the technical ability of "Heading" the ball on the run. An emphasis is placed on "accuracy".

Field Preparation

- Small group of players
- Area 10 x 10 yards
- Cones or Flag poles
- Supply of Balls

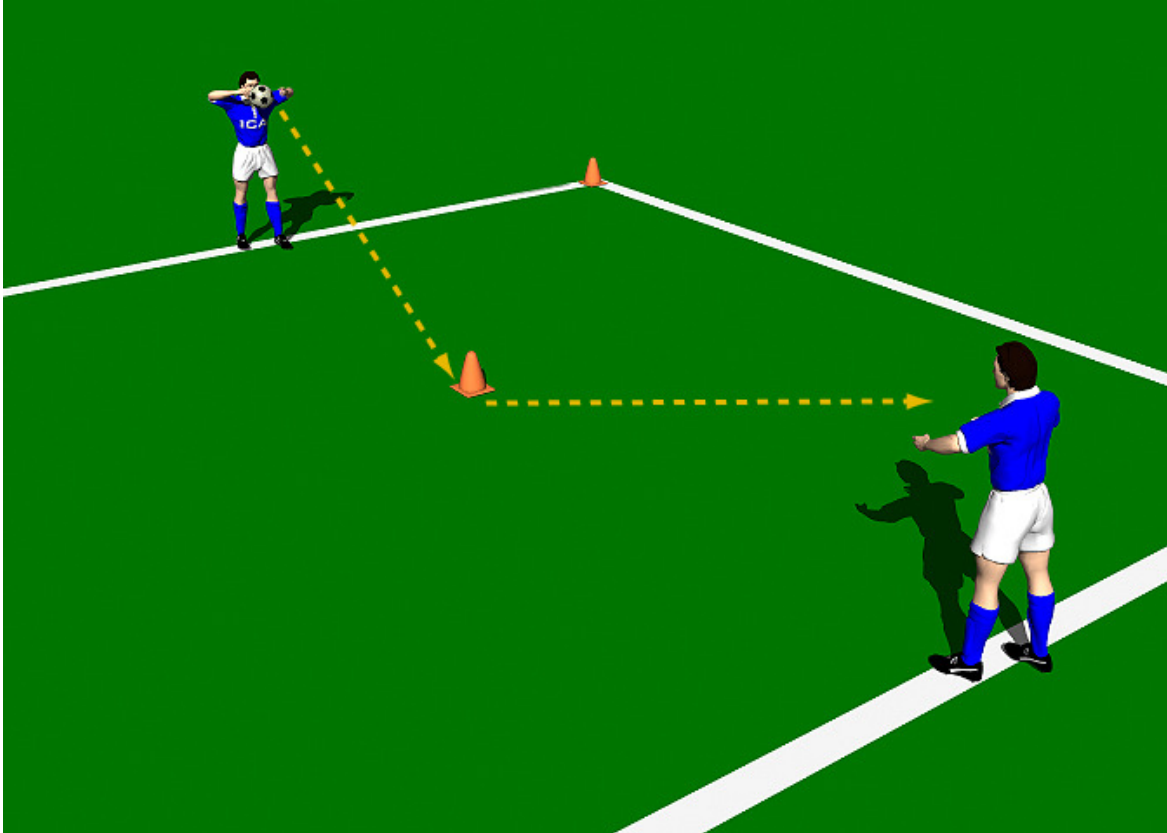
Coaching Pointers:

In an area 10 yards x 10 yards, players alternate receiving the ball from the server. The receiving player must head the ball back to the server and only scores a point for each header played back to the servers hands. After each header the receiver must turn and join the end of the group.

The server must throw a high looped serve to the receiving player. The ball should be served approximately 5 yards. If the server throws the ball too far the receiving player will not come to meet the ball. With a correct serve the receiving player is always encouraged to attack the ball.

The coach should emphasize correct technique and slowly build up the tempo to game speed. Care must be taken to emphasize quality over speed. Create a competition between teams. Keep score and award points for the first team to reach 20 good headers or the team who can perform the most headers in one minute.

Heading for Accuracy



Exercise Objectives:

This practice is designed to improve accuracy and power when heading the ball.

Field Preparation

Small group of players, Area 10 x 10 yards, Cones or Flag poles, Supply of Balls.

Coaching Pointers:

Two players are positioned in a grid 10 yards x 10 yards. One player holds the ball firmly between their hands. The players alternate heading the ball from their hands, while attempting to hit the cone. A goal is awarded each time a player hits the cone.

The coach should emphasize the following coaching points:

- Position feet one behind the other. This will lead to good balance. Remember to keep the head steady and eyes fixed firmly on the ball.
- Bring the ball quickly up towards the forehead. Swing the upper body backwards, then forward quickly and make contact on the ball with the center of the forehead.
- Do not let go of the ball; use the power of the head to hit the ball out of the hands.
- The player should direct the ball downward to hit the cone. Do not tilt the head too far back or the ball will skim from the head.