

YOUTH U10–U14

Heading for beginners

A sample practice session for ages U10–U14

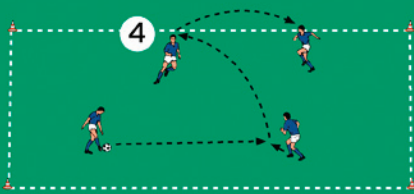
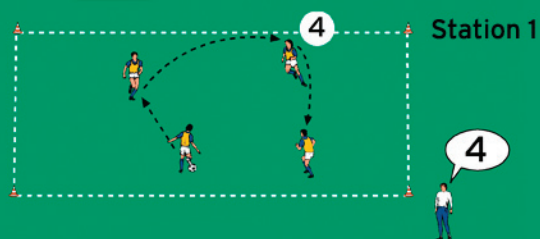
by Frank Engel, head coach, German U18 men's national team

The first touch is critical. You already know how true that is for receiving and controlling the ball, but it's true for heading too, just in a different way: A child's first experience of heading should never be painful!

A coach who expects his young players to bravely go after every cross with eyes wide open needs to lay the proper foundations first. If you're teaching heading to beginners, always use lightweight balls and make sure all techniques are correctly executed.

WARM-UP

Warm-up 1: Team heading



Setup

- Station 1: Mark out two grids.
- Station 2: Mark out one grid.
- Divide players into two groups, one for each station.

Sequence (Station 1)

- Number the players in each group.
- Players pass back and forth while moving around their grids.
- The coach calls the name of one player, who prepares for a high ball in the air. This player has to head the ball to the next player in the sequence.
- The first team to complete the task scores one point.

Sequence (Station 2)

- Two players stand outside the grid with one ball each, and two more stand inside.
- The players inside the grid call for serves to their heads. They either head the ball directly back to the server or control it with their heads and then pass it back.
- Players switch positions after one minute.

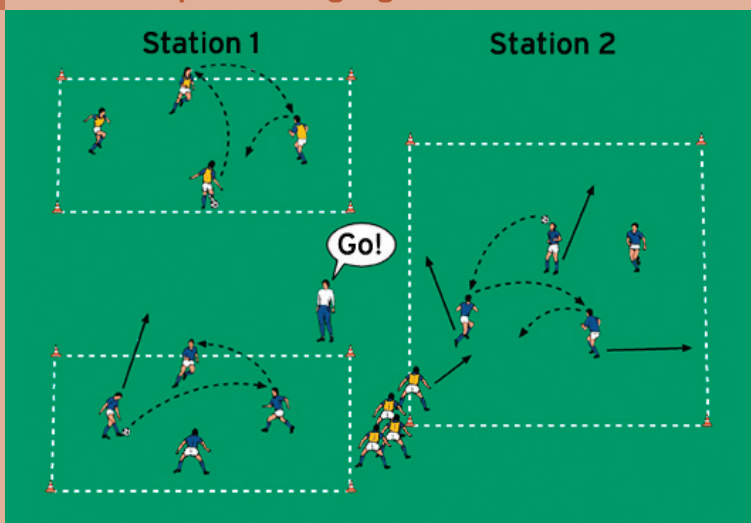
Tips and corrections

- Players at Station 1 need to find the best way of passing to whichever player is called to receive.
- Because the main focus at Station 2 is accuracy, players should rest between serves.

Heading for beginners

WARM-UP

Warm-up 2: Heading tag



Setup

- Stations and groups remain the same.

Sequence (Station 1)

- Players head the ball to each other inside their grids.
- As soon as one team drops the ball, the other gets 45 seconds to

tag the first team's players. Only one player from the tagging team is allowed onto the other grid at a time. As soon as he tags one opponent, he runs back to his own grid and tags a teammate, who runs across to tag an opponent, etc.

- The tagging team scores one point per tag.

Sequence (Station 2)

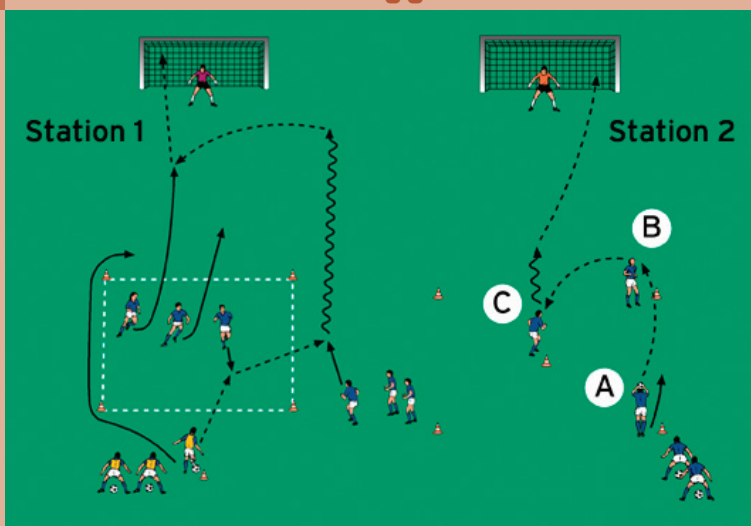
- One team (taggers) stands outside the grid. The remaining players stand inside the grid with a ball.
- The players inside the grid start heading the ball to each other.
- As soon as they drop the ball, a tagger runs onto the grid from outside and tries to tag one of them.
- The number of headers completed determines how long the taggers get to tag their opponents. If at least eight headers have been completed, the taggers get 30 seconds; otherwise they get 45.
- The tagging team scores one point per tag.
- Teams switch roles after each round.

Tips and corrections

- These small-sided competitions are a fun way to prepare players for the concepts of the main session.
- Don't do too many repetitions when working on heading with young children. Use extra rules to make the activities harder if necessary.

MAIN SESSION

Main session 1: Heading game 1



Setup

- Station 1: Set up a goal with goalkeeper and mark out a grid.
- Station 2: Set up a goal with goalkeeper and set out cones as shown.
- Divide players into two groups, one for each station.

Sequence (Station 1)

- Divide players into three teams of three, positioned as shown.
- The first player on the yellow team passes the ball into the grid and then runs around it. He scores one point for each cone he passes.
- Blue passes the ball to the outside and runs toward the goal.
- The outside player dribbles toward the baseline and crosses to his teammates, who finish on goal.
- Each goal scores two points. Headers count double.
- Have players switch roles and positions after a few rounds.

Sequence (Station 2)

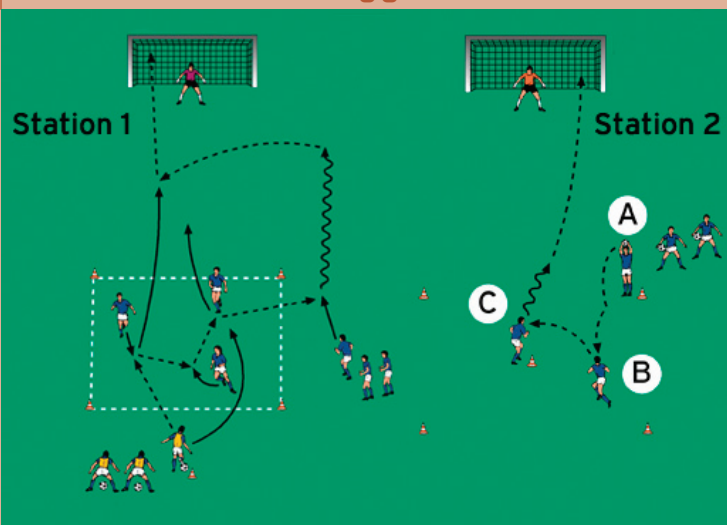
- Position players as shown in the diagram.
- Player A throws the ball to B, who heads directly to C.
- C controls the ball and finishes after dribbling a short distance toward the goal.
- Afterward, each player rotates to the next position.
- Switch sides after two or three rounds.

Tips and corrections

- The runners at Station 1 have to play their passes so that the ball stops inside the grid; otherwise the attacking team scores a point.
- Variation: Runners only score if the attack is unsuccessful.

MAIN SESSION

Main session 2: Heading game 2



Setup

- Stations and groups remain the same.

Sequence [Station 1]

- The basic sequence is the same as before, except now the runner follows his pass onto the field and tries to block the pass to the

outside player.

- Attackers have to complete two passes inside the grid before passing to the outside.
- The runner can also try to keep the attackers from finishing on goal.

Sequence [Station 2]

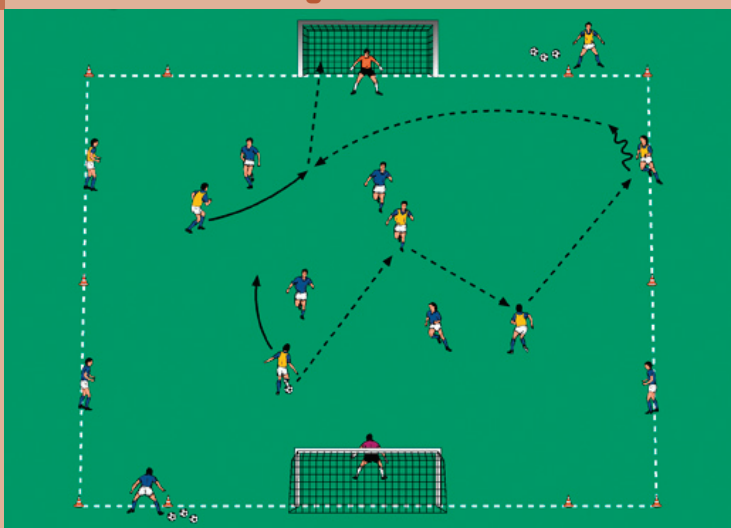
- Player A bounces the ball hard to B, who has to jump up to head it to C.
- C controls the ball, turns, dribbles a short distance toward the goal and finishes.
- Afterward, each player rotates to the next position.
- Switch sides after two or three rounds.

Tips and corrections

- At Station 1, players practice heading in a game-like situation.
- At Station 2, players work on heading technique in small groups. Here, the header is used not for finishing but for setting up shots.
- Depending on their ability level, players can do headers from a standing position, a two-legged jump or a one-legged jump with a running start.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion: Power game



Setup

- Mark out one field with two standard goals.
- Divide the field into halves and mark out throw-in zones.
- Each team has three servers outside the field (two passers and one thrower).

Sequence

- Teams play 4 v. 4 inside the field.
- Each team can incorporate its servers into its attack. Servers are limited to three touches.
- No corner kicks: If the ball goes over the endline, the throwers throw it back in.
- Playing time is three minutes.

Variations

- Servers must take two touches.
- Headers count double.
- The players on the field are limited to three touches.
- Servers are not allowed to pass the ball back to the passer.

Tips and corrections

- The purpose of the servers is to maximize the number of high crosses served in front of the goal.
- Even though servers cannot be attacked, they should play their crosses quickly for more realistic play.
- Throwers should immediately put the ball back into play whenever it goes over the endline.