



Football's National  
Governing Body

[usafootball.com](http://usafootball.com)

# Player Health and Safety Advisor



# HELMET FITTING GUIDE

Responsible coaching includes properly fitting equipment



## 1. CHECKING HEAD SIZE

To get the most accurate circumference measurement, use a cloth measuring tape, fixing the tape approximately one inch above the eyebrows. Guide the tape around the player's head, ensuring the tape remains flat and taut against the player's skin and hair. When the tape has traveled completely around the player's head, determine the helmet's size by the number that appears when the orbit is complete.



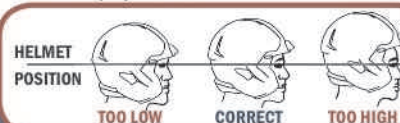
## 2. PUTTING ON HELMET

Before putting on the helmet, make sure that the correct size appears on the helmet's label. After confirming the appropriate size, the player should hold the helmet with the thumbs over the bottom of the jaw pads and the fingers against the exterior shell. Bring the helmet down at a slight angle, with the jaw pads first touching the temples. For additional leverage, place the index fingers into the ear holds, this should help bring the helmet straight down into position.



## 3. ADJUSTING HELMET HEIGHT

When properly fitted and adjusted, the front of the helmet should be approximately 1" above the player's eyebrows. For helmets with inflatable Crown Liners, it is important to use an inflation bulb and a well-lubricated inflation needle. When lubricating the inflation needle, do not use petroleum-based lubricants or saliva, as they can weaken the valve material. Glycerin is recommended for lubrication prior to each inflation. Inflate the Crown Liner to adjust the height of the helmet on the player's head.



## 4. ADJUSTING FRONT-TO-BACK & SIDE-TO-SIDE OF HELMET

Helmets that contain inflatable liners for a proper front-to-back and side-to-side fit, can be adjusted using appropriate inflation points. Depending on the helmet model, inflation points may differ in location. Add air to achieve a snug, comfortable fit front-to-back and side-to-side.

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# HELMET FITTING GUIDE



## 5. ADJUSTING FACE PADS

Jaw pads should feel firm against the player's face. If non-inflatable jaw pads look and feel loose - if there is space between the pad and cheek - change to a thicker size. If inflatable jaw pads are installed, the fit can be adjusted with the helmet on the player's head. When the helmet is on the head, inflate the pad at the valve located on the outside of the helmet's jaw flap. Inflatable pads are also available in different thicknesses. Use the different thicknesses to avoid over inflation.



## 6. CHECKING FOR PROPER FIT

It's important to remember that in a properly fitted helmet, there should be no room for twisting. The skin of the player's forehead should move with the helmet's front pad. If the helmet slides easily over the player's forehead, adjust the fit using the inflatable air liners or try a smaller-sized helmet. A properly fitted helmet should rest approximately 1" above the player's eyebrows. To avoid injury and discomfort, a player should never wear a helmet that is positioned too low or too high. Check for a proper fit by interlocking the hands on top of the helmet and pressing down on the exterior shell. The player should feel pressure on the crown of the head, not the brow.



## 7. ADJUSTING CHIN STRAP

Using either a soft or hard cup chin strap, buckle the chin strap into the snaps making sure the cup is centered and snug over the player's chin. Chin straps are available in multiple sizes to best fit the player's chin. If the cup offers a loose fit - if it is not firmly pressed against the chin - tighten it until it fits properly. The chin strap is adjustable and can easily be modified to fit the player. With the chin strap buckled, the helmet should feel comfortable and snug.



## 8. TAKING OFF HELMET

To take off the helmet, unbuckle chin straps and pull the chin cup from the chin. The player should place an index finger into the left and right ear holes of the helmet. Finally the player should press his thumbs into the bottom of the jaw pads, located below the ear holes on the inside of the helmet. This grip will give the player the necessary leverage to lift the helmet straight up and off his head.

WARNING: NO HELMET CAN PREVENT SERIOUS HEAD OR NECK INJURIES A PLAYER MIGHT RECEIVE WHILE PARTICIPATING IN FOOTBALL. Do not use this helmet to butt, ram or spear an opposing player. This is in violation of the football rules and such use can result in severe head or neck injuries, paralysis or death to you and possible injury to your opponent. Contact in football may result in CONCUSSION/RAIN INJURY which no helmet can prevent. Symptoms include: loss of consciousness or memory, dizziness, headache, nausea or confusion. If you have symptoms, immediately stop playing and report them to your coach, trainer and parents. Do not return to a game or practice until all symptoms are gone and you have received medical clearance. Ignoring this warning may lead to another and more serious or fatal brain injury. Maintenance of correct fitting is essential to the use of all protective equipment. Football helmets must be fitted and properly maintained if they are to serve the player.

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# SHOULDER PAD FITTING GUIDE



## 1. MEASURE CHEST

- Wrap measuring tape around upper torso
- Record measurements



## 2. MEASURE SHOULDERS

- Stretch tape over contour of shoulders
- Measure from tip of left humerus to tip of right humerus
- Record measurements



## 4. PUT ON PADS

- Bring pads down over head
- Be careful of eyes and nose

Flat Pads: Youth

Pad Size/ Weight Range	Chest Circumference	Shoulder Width
2XS / 40 lbs	26" - 28"	10" - 11"
XS / 50 lbs	28" - 30"	11" - 12"
S / 60 lbs	30" - 32"	12" - 13"
M / 70 lbs	32" - 34"	13" - 14"
L / 80 lbs	34" - 36"	14" - 15"
XL / 90 lbs	36" - 38"	15" - 16"
2XL / 100 lbs	38" - 40"	16" - 17"

\*This is only a guide. Athletes' measurements, shoulder pad sizes and actual fit may vary.

## 3. SELECT PADS

- Identify player position and select corresponding Riddell® pad style
- Refer to chart above for correct Riddell® pad size
- Select appropriate shoulder pads

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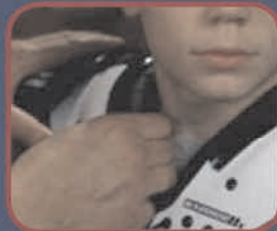


## SHOULDER PAD FITTING GUIDE



### 5. SECURE STRAPS & LACES

- Connect front and back of pads
- Buckle belts and connect straps (if applicable)
- Establish tight fit in chest and back area



### 6. CHECK FOR PROPER FIT

- Ensure there is no pinching in collar
- Foam padding should be above tip of humerus (at least one quarter inch)



### 8. ENSURE COVERAGE IN BACK

- Pads should cover scapula
- Pads should cover rhomboid

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### 7. ENSURE COVERAGE IN FRONT

- Pads should cover sternum
- Pads should cover front-upper shoulders



### 9. CONFIRM PROPER FIT

- Confirm complete coverage
- Confirm optimal range of motion

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## VERBIAGE

- Be impeccable with your words –  
“Four Agreements,” Miguel Ángel Ruiz
- Our words convey powerful messages and tell young players what we feel as coaches is important. Chose your words carefully.
- The “Tackle” vs. Hit, Stick, Pop
- Media clichés
  - Lay a hat on him
  - Light him up
- Bite the Ball must be removed from our vocabulary
- Poor representation of what we actually want them to do
  - Poor body position
  - Moves head INTO contact
- Wrap
  - Diving into the pool
  - Poor shoulder position
- Correct terminology
  - Breakdown Position
  - Hit position
  - Buzz
  - Rip
  - Shoot
- Consistent terminology leads to better teaching
  - Tell the player what he did wrong, give him a plan to get better
  - Don’t coach the obvious





## BUILDING CONFIDENCE

- Some youths instinctively are aggressive and eager for contact; many more may have some initial reservations.
- This initial fear of contact is natural and real.
- Overcome this fear by:
  - Gaining players' trust – you are there for their safety
  - Be positive, enthusiastic and encouraging
  - Fundamentals execution properly = safety
  - Build Confidence through repeated success
    - Levels of Contact
    - Intensities they are ready for
    - Proper matchups
      - Size, temperament, skills
- Missed tackles are only a big deal if you make them one
- Coaching philosophy should be about good “tackles,” not highlight hits
  - Bringing the ball carrier on the ground is a successful football play
- Look for behavioral signs for kids lacking confidence
  - Head down
  - Lack of eye contact
  - Skipping to the back of line
  - Lack of enthusiasm whenever contact drills or situations come up





# HEADS UP FOOTBALL

## Tackle Progression

## Definition

### 1. BREAKDOWN



The foundational starting point for all movements and drills.

### 2. HIT



Correct body posture at moments of impact for safe and proper tackles.

### 3. BUZZ



Proper technique to get in the hit position from the buzz movement.

### 4. SHOOT



How the hips and arms work together keeping the head from initiating contact during a tackle.

### 5. RIP



Proper rip technique to use in a tackle.





## BREAKDOWN POSITION



### KEY POINTS:

- Proper athletic position
- Feet shoulder-width apart
- Inward curve of the spine
- Head and eyes up
- Shoulders over knees
- Knees over toes
- Must maintain position throughout play and adjust to always have leverage

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## HIT POSITION



### KEY POINTS:

- Correct body position for moment of impact
- Downhill power step
- Flat back, maintaining 45-degree lean
- Head and eyes up
- Hand pulled back to hips – 6 shooters

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## BUZZ



### KEY POINTS:

- Come to balance
- Shorten stride
- Always moving forward
- Quick choppy steps

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## SHOOT



### KEY POINTS:

- Explosive opening of hips
- Generates power in the tackle
- Aim hips up and through ball carriers
- Works to move head up and away from contact

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_

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RIP



## KEY POINTS:

- Proper arm swing in tackle
- Double uppercuts with knuckles up and elbows down
- Elbows tight to ball carrier
- Grab cloth at back of ball carrier's jersey
- Works with shoot to move head up and way

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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# STEPOVER TACKLE



## KEY POINTS:

- Full integration of all tackle fundamentals
- Horizontal bag continues emphasis on Rip
- Full speed drills with no resistance
  - Bags
  - Contact
  - Confidence
- Simple to take to angle-tackle situation

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## POP UP TACKLE



### KEY POINTS:

- All fundamentals used within full, speed conditions
- Still limiting “resistance”
- Cylinder bag introduces body-like contact target
- Technical check – Will they still rip?
- Simple to take to the angle-tackle situation

### Notes:

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# LEVELS OF CONTACT

## Levels of Contact

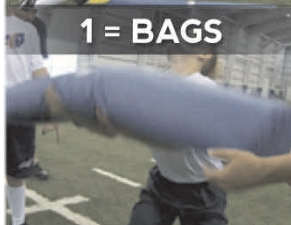
## Definition

### 0 = AIR



Players run a drill unopposed without contact.

### 1 = BAGS



Drill is run against a bag or another soft-contact surface.

### 2 = WRAP



Drill is run between two players until the moment of contact; one player is pre-determined the "winner" by the coach. Contact remains above the waist and players stay on their feet.

### 3 = THUD



Drill is run between two players until the moment of contact; no pre-determined "winner." Contact remains above the waist, players stay on their feet and a quick whistle ends the drill.

### 4 = LIVE



Drill is run in game-like conditions and is the only time that players are taken to the ground.





# STRAIGHT ON TACKLE



## KEY POINTS:

- Introduction to player-on-player contact
- 4 cones = a tiny football field
- Allows coach to control variables
- Smaller task allows for more technique refinement

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## ANGLE TACKLE



### KEY POINTS:

- Gate concept: tiny football field
- Control contact vs. forcing contact:
  - Speed
  - Ability
- Greater mental task:
  - Geometry
  - Anticipation
  - Timing

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## OPEN FIELD LANES



### KEY POINTS:

- Introduce decision-making
- Only ask questions if you know they know the physical answer
- Simple answers
- Control variables, gradual introduction

### Notes:

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## OPEN FIELD BOX



### KEY POINTS:

- Removes restrictions, adds variables
- Play football – still a small field
- Control contact and speed
- Application of techniques

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_

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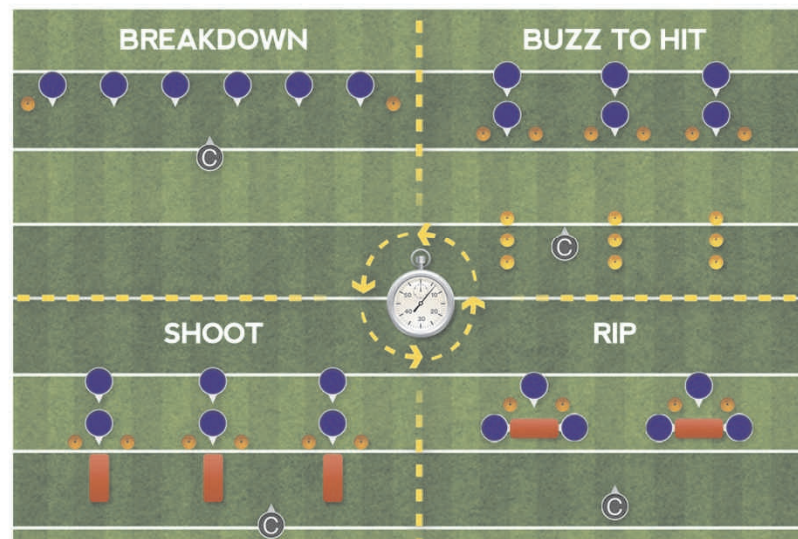
# TACKLE CIRCUIT

## Integrate this Period into your Practice Plan

- Tackling is the most important all-player skill
- Separate period conveys its importance
- Teams who tackle well are competitive

## Basics

- 20-minutes every practice
- Four stations, 5-minutes each
  - Maximize # of reps
  - Small groups
  - Individual attention
- One coach per station
- Change levels of contact
  - Air, Bags, Thud, Wrap
  - Keep youngsters on their feet





# TACKLE CIRCUIT

## Programming

### Early Season

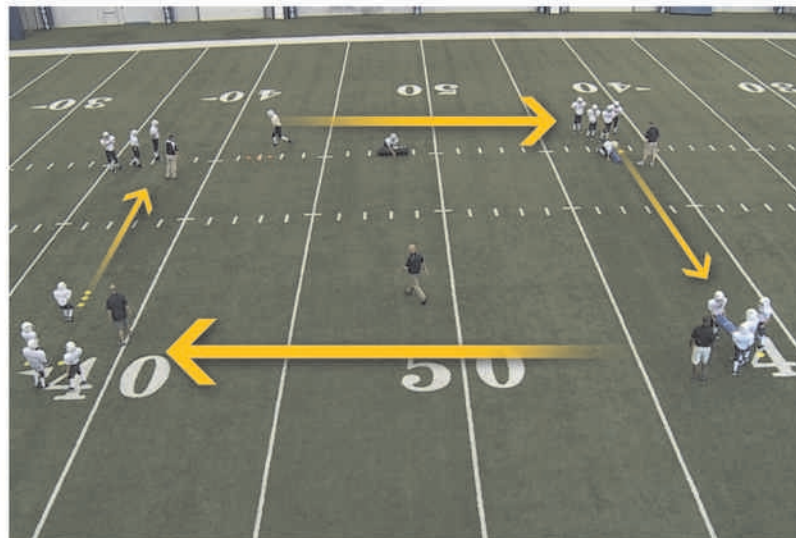
- Follow skill progression
- Same skill all stations
- Instill circuit to create habit
- Acclimate using Levels of Contact

### In-Season

- Different drills at each station
- Focus on more skills per session
- Limit unnecessary collisions
- In-week progression
- Seasonal volume

### Troubleshooting

- Circuit drills as the "fix"
- Why players/team miss tackles?
- Correlate drill responsible for THAT fundamental
- Put it back together







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## U14 Practice Planner

Week: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Equipment: \_\_\_\_\_

Offense / Defense Opponent: \_\_\_\_\_ Opposing Coach: \_\_\_\_\_

Period	Time	DL / Coach A	LB / Coach B	DB / Coach C	Floating / Coach D	Level of Contact
1	5:00	Warm Up Dynamic Stretching Routine - County Fair				Air (0)
2	5:15	Team Talk				Air (0)
3	5:20	Indy  Stance/Start-Defeat Combo Block- Arm Over rush-Screen and Draw Reaction	Indy  Defeat Combo Block-Zone Drops- Screen and Draw Reaction	Indy  Backpedal/ Angle Pedal-Turn and Run-2on1 coverage-React to Screen	Indy **Help DBs**  Backpedal/Angle Pedal- Turn and Run-2on1 coverage-React to Screen	Coach Controlled (1-4)
4	5:40	Special Teams 1 = Kickoff				Thud (3)
4	5:45	Special Teams 2 = Kick Return				Thud (3)
5	5:50	Tackling Circuit				Wrap (2)
6	6:10	Station 1 Straight On	Station 2 Angle	Station 3 Lanes	Station 4 Open	
6	6:10	Water Break				Air (0)
7	6:15	Group:  Inside Run: 4-3 Cover 3 vs-QB Sweep, Draw and Zone Read		Group:  Pass Skeleton: 4-3 Cover 3 vs All Go, All Hook,Quick Screen		Thud (3)
8	6:30	Team Period 4-3 Cover 3 vs QB Sweep, Zone Read, WR Quick Screen, All Go, All Hooks				Thud (3)
9	6:50	Conditioning Pursuit Drill				Air (0)
10	7:00	Announcements The weather is really hot this week, make sure your getting enough fluids				Air (0)