



Sizing Up Helmets

How to properly fit football helmets on your young players.

As a coach or parent, ensuring the safety of your players while they are on the football field is your most important concern. That said, knowing how to properly fit your player with the right equipment makes your team that much safer.

And in today's environment, a coach must be proficient at more than organizing practices and teaching skills. You must be able to properly fit helmets and shoulder pads on your young players. Their safety and well-being depends on it. Let's take a look at how to go about preparing youngsters for a day of football fun.

Helmets

Proper fitting is the key to head protection and player comfort. The goal is a customized fit for every player. A helmet that doesn't fit can contribute to head injuries. The helmet should always move as the head moves, and should not move independently of the head.

1. Instruct players on the dangers of using the helmet incorrectly, and the importance of using proper blocking/tackling techniques.
2. Before fitting, note any irregularities of the head, which may require a fitting adjustment. Two players with the same sized heads may have two completely different-shaped heads.
3. Measure a player's head with helmet tape to determine proper shell size. Do this about 1 inch above the eyebrow. Wetting the player's head makes the initial fit easier.
4. Tighten the chinstrap so that the cup is snug and centered on the chin. Do not allow your players to play with unsnapped chinstraps. This can cause the helmet to pop off on contact.
5. Be sure the player's ear openings are centered with the helmet's ear openings.
6. Check to see that the eyebrows are 1 to 1 1/2 inches below the helmet's edge.
7. Make sure the jaw pads follow the contours of the cheek. It's very common for young players to have very narrow faces. You may have to adjust the thickness of the jaw pads to get a better fit.
8. Try to rotate the helmet side to side. Forehead skin or hair should move with the helmet, but it should not slip.
9. Check to see that the faceguard is 2 to 2 1/2 finger widths from the tip of the nose.
10. Check vision, both peripherally as well as up and down. He should be able to see peripherally to about 180 degrees and up and down to about 75 degrees.