

## Proper Fitting of Youth Football Helmet

An improperly fitting or improperly worn football helmet increases the chance of serious injury. The following guidelines are suggested in an effort to enable the football helmet to do its intended job of protection. If you have a football player in your household, clip this article out so that you can utilize these guidelines in verifying the appropriateness of the football helmet's fit.

- Always fit the football helmet with a normal length of hair. If the athlete was fitted while having long hair and then gets a hair cut that removes a significant length of hair, the helmet fit should be readjusted.
- Watch for variations in head shape, such as a long, oval head or an extra large projecting bone.
- Check to be sure that those helmets having air bladders are inflated properly and maintain their inflation. Always check the inflation of the helmet at a air temperature in which the athlete intends to participate. Air temperature can vary the fit of a football helmet and should therefore be checked in the playing environment's air temperature.
- Have the player put his thumbs in the ears of the helmet and hold the helmet up along side the head with the fingers.
- Pull the helmet directly overhead, tilted back, and rotated down in front by pulling it into position.
- Check visually to see that the fit is correct.
- Have the player hold his head straight forward, try to turn the helmet on his head. If the fit is correct, the helmet should turn only slightly.
- Observe visually for proper crown adjustment. It should be about 1 finger breath above the eyebrow.
- Ask the player to overlap his hands directly on top of the helmet. While he exerts a pressure straight down ask if he feels pressure on the top of his head against the rubber crown, or if all pressure is against the forehead. If it is against the forehead, the helmet is too low and should be adjusted to the proper position.
- The neck band should be snug and properly positioned. A loose neckband permits the helmet to rock forward.
- The jaw pad should fit the jaw snugly and prevent lateral rocking of the helmet.
- Adjust the chin strap to a tight position with equal tension on both sides. This will keep the mouth shut and maintain proper position.
- Make sure that the chin strap release is under pressure. It should never be locked in.
- Remove the helmet and recheck to be sure that all air bladders are full with air.
- Enter the player's name or number in the helmet and record this information in the files to insure that each player wears his own custom fit helmet.
- Be sure the face guard attachments allow 2 inches of clearance between the nose and face mask.
- Procedures for different types of helmets can be obtained from local helmet dealers.
- Be certain the face guard attachments are constructed of material that is easily cut with a knife should rapid removal of the face mask be necessary.

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