

# Proper Helmet Fitting Instructions



**Head gear may be the most important piece of equipment a football player will wear. For this purpose the helmet, chinstrap, and facemask should be considered as a single unit.**



## The Helmet

### Selection

The number of football helmet manufacturers has diminished considerably since the creation of the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE) in 1976, but there are still a number of helmets to choose from, with different combinations of shells, liners facemasks and pads. You must be wise in making the selection of the system you will use and you can do this by getting as much information as possible from the manufacturer or retailers. Do not simply buy the cheapest. It is your responsibility to ensure that each player is properly fitted so purchase what you believe is the safest system for each player.

**No One Helmet System will Adequately Protect All Head Shapes.**

Regardless of the brand and styles you choose, all helmets must bear the NOCSAE approval seal and warning label.

The NOCSAE helmet standards are voluntary test standards that have been developed to reduce head injuries by establishing minimum requirements of impact attenuation for football helmets.

The NOCSAE seal and the warning label must be placed on the exterior of the helmet and be visible at all times.

**Warning:**  
**No helmet can prevent serious head or neck injuries a player might receive while participating in football.**

Keep your head up. Do not use this Helmet to butt, ram or spear an opposing player. This is a 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-brain 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.

The following general items should be considered when selecting a helmet:

- A helmet must fit snugly to protect the player. A loose-fitting helmet cannot provide adequate protection. Follow the manufacturer's instructions and procedures.
- The helmet is supposed to be snug. It should not move independently of the head.
- Research has indicated that the majority of blows to the head are received on the sides of the helmet, indicating the need for protection there. Ensure that the helmet fits snugly on both sides of the head.
- Purchase a sufficient number of helmets to allow for a wide selection of sizes when players are being fitted.

## General Helmet Fitting Tips

(See figure 1 for a demonstration of how to fit a helmet.)

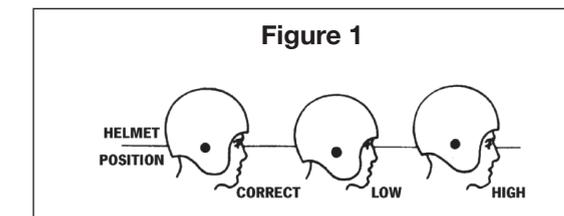
Obviously, the head is one of the most important parts of the anatomy. As much care as possible must be taken to prevent injuries to the head.

- Recommend to your players that when fitting day approaches, each player should have their hair cut to reasonable length. Extremely long hair is very unsafe and makes it hard to properly fit a helmet. In addition, helmets should be fitted when the player's hair is wet to simulate perspiration. It should be brought to the attention of all players that their helmets should be refitted after they get haircuts since many times the helmet size required will change drastically.
- Have a sufficient supply of different sized jaw pads handy.
- When fitting Schutt, Rawlings or Adams helmets have a good supply of both front and neck pads available as both are very easily interchangeable.
- Measure the player's head and record the size on your loan sheet. You can use this measurement as a starting point in select the helmet.
- Use both a head sizer and a cloth measuring tape, measure the circumference of the player's head. This measurement is taken by measuring approximately 1" above the eyebrows. After the measurement, refer to the helmet manufacturer's sizing charts to determine the proper helmet size.



It is imperative that there be some air in the bladder prior to fitting an air-sized helmet

- Have the player try on his helmet. Hold the helmet with thumbs in the earholes of the shell and fingers pointing toward the helmet top. Spread the fingers and bring the helmet down toward the forehead at a slight angle with jaw pads first touching at the temples. Roll the helmet back slightly and bring it down straight into position.
- Check for proper "positional" fit by placing your hands on the top of the helmet and pressing down. Pressure should be on the crown of the head and not on the brow. In dual airliner helmets, make sure the exterior liner is pumped up and fit snugly.
- Check for helmet rotation by having the player hold his head and neck as stiff as possible, then placing your hands on the backside of the helmet, try to turn the helmet from side to side. The skin on the player's forehead should move with the sweatband. If the helmet turns easily, try adding air (in air filled helmets) or try the next smaller size helmet or depending upon helmet type, try different sized front or back sizers. Check the helmet by pulling it forward to make sure it does not slide easily on to the nose, if possible change the front sizer to a larger size and then the back sizer (if needed) to a larger size. Readjust the air. If this fails try a smaller size helmet.
- There should be a distance no greater than 1" between the eyebrow and the front of the helmet.
- The jaw pads should fit firmly against the face but not feel uncomfortable. After checking the fit, adjust the jaw pads to either smaller or larger size.
- After the initial helmet fitting is done, it is extremely important to watch the players while



they are practicing to ensure that a proper fit is being maintained. There is no way to tell how much give there will be in helmet pads when you initially fit them. If you notice a helmet sitting too low on a player's forehead or twisting on his head it will be necessary to refit that player.

- Check the helmet fit periodically throughout the season.

*Note: Helmets tend to fit tighter during the warmer weather. Once the cooler weather comes, tight fitting helmets tend not to be problem. Remember you are trying to achieve a "firm but comfortable fit".*

After the players have been fitted, mark the players' names or numbers on the inside of the helmets; thus making for easier identification.

## Inspection Checklist for Players

Each player should inspect their helmet before each usage as follows:

- Check foam padding for proper placement and/or deterioration.
- Check for cracks in vinyl/rubber covering of air, foam or liquid helmet systems.
- Check that the protective system of foam padding has not been altered or removed.
- Check for proper amount of inflation in air-management helmets. Follow manufacturer's recommended practice for adjusting air pressure at the values.
- Check all rivets, screws, Velcro and snaps to ensure that they are properly fastened and holding the corresponding parts.

## Disclaimer Responsibility for Personal Injuries

Football Canada hereby disclaims all responsibility for personal injuries suffered by anyone as a result of following the recommendations set out in this publication entitled "Proper Helmet Fitting Instructions."

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