



# FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT MODEL

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

# FAQs

ON FOOTBALL SAFETY

FOR PARENTS

# GENERAL QUESTIONS

## **Q** Is football safe?

**A** Every sport our kids love to play offers an abundance of physical, emotional and social advantages. Enjoying any sport comes with a chance for injury. However, sports today – including football – are taught and played smarter and safer than ever before. It begins with trained coaches and forward-thinking developmental frameworks.

## **Q** Are your child's coaches certified through a nationally accredited coaching curriculum?

**A** If they're certified by USA Football, then yes, they are. USA Football's Youth Coach Certification provides your child's coaches with a fundamental education in heat and hydration, sudden cardiac arrest, concussion recognition and response, age-appropriate Football Development Model modules, tackling, blocking and equipment fitting (for tackle football coaches) and abuse prevention and reporting.

## **Q** Is your child participating in a league that is utilizing USA Football's Football Development Model?

**A** If so, your league is utilizing a new approach to coaching, learning and playing the sport that meets young athletes where they are developmentally and guides them on a life-long path to health and fitness through the fun of America's favorite sport. USA Football believes parents know their children best and should own the decision of the right football experience for them and their family. The Football Development Model encourages leagues to offer multiple entry points into the sport, providing smart options for parents.

## **Q** How common are concussions?

**A** There is insufficient data on the frequency of concussion in youth football (pre-high school) to accurately answer this question due to a number of factors like restrictions under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, availability of funding, use of human subjects and others. USA Football encourages more robust research in the area of concussion occurrence so the medical community can better assess the prevalence of the issue.

## **Q** What are the signs and symptoms of a concussion?

**A** According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), concussion symptoms reported by an athlete in any sport include:

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Just not "feeling right" or is "feeling down"

Across all sports, the CDC cites the following concussion signs observed by parents/guardians:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets an instruction
- Is unsure of game, score or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows mood, behavior or personality changes

For more information, check out the CDC's **"Concussion Fact Sheet for Parents."**

**Q** How does USA Football make coaching and playing football safer?

**A** USA Football provides resources to coaches on proper technique as well as athlete health and safety. More than 700,000 coach certifications have been completed through USA Football. This means millions of athletes across all ages have been coached using better and safer techniques.

**Q** What's the best helmet available?

**A** A properly fitted helmet – regardless of manufacturer – is a key step in reducing the risk of concussions, facial lacerations and fractures.

USA Football has partnered with Riddell to educate coaches on properly fitting helmets as part of USA Football's Youth Coach Certification and to help parents by providing helmet fitting guidelines, [available here](#). Coaches and parents should continue checking helmet fittings frequently throughout the season to ensure the helmet is still properly fitting the player.

Also, helmets should have a National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (**NOCSAE**) seal. We encourage you to insist that your youth football program follows the reconditioning guidelines of the helmet manufacturers.

**Q** What does reduced contact mean? / How are you reducing contact?

**A** The Football Development Model (FDM) spans three categories of football with a range of game-types across each:

- Non-Contact (flag)
- Limited Contact (Rookie Limited Contact™ and Senior Limited Contact™ through padded flag and TackleBar®)
- Contact (Rookie Tackle® and Senior Tackle™).

Within each category, the amount of contact differs. For example, Rookie Limited Contact™ is a bridge game where athletes wear traditional equipment, plus flags or a TackleBar™ harness. Athletes learn how to block, track and engage an opponent with proper form and technique, all while staying on their feet. For the full breakdown and description of these game types, [click here](#).

USA Football's Levels of Contact and Youth Practice Guidelines, endorsed by football and sports medicine leaders across the country, also define contact and seek to limit full contact in practices while teaching football smarter. This approach assists the development of young athletes and allows them to learn the game and related contact and non-contact skills in a progression that best suits them. This path offers more opportunities to enjoy the sport and choose the game-type kids and parents wish to play.

**Q** Where can I learn more about the Football Development Model (FDM)?

**A** Head to [fdm.usafootball.com](http://fdm.usafootball.com) for more information. There are sections for leagues, parents and coaches to learn more with details on how it all works. You can also sign up for more content and updates on the future of football.





## PARENT QUESTIONS

**Q** How do I know if my coach is properly trained?

**A** Coaches have a lot on their plate, but you can always start by asking your coaches if they earned USA Football certification before stepping on the practice field. Some coaches choose to wear or have their certification badge visible on the sidelines.

**Q** My coaches said they're certified. What does that mean?

**A** That means they completed their certification requirements for this year, which includes health and safety topics, proper technique and coaching modules customized for players' age range based on our Football Development Model.

All youth coaches must earn their certificate annually to be certified. Coaches who earned their certification in 2019 would not be certified for 2020 until they complete their 2020 certification requirements.

