Name: _____ Date: _____

Ronaldo's Road from Madeira

Reading level 8 (4th grade) · 918 words

Lisbon, September 5, 2024. It is the 34th minute of a game. Portugal is playing Croatia. A cross comes in from Nuno Mendes. Cristiano Ronaldo turns it into the net. Then he puts his hands to his face and drops to his knees. Reporters say it is his 900th goal. No man had reached that number in official games for club and country.

Who is Cristiano Ronaldo? He is a soccer forward from Portugal. A forward is a player whose main job is to score. He was born on February 5, 1985, on Madeira. That is an island in the Atlantic Ocean, and it belongs to Portugal. Through November 2026, he is 41. He plays for a club in Saudi Arabia, Al Nassr. He has played for Portugal since 2003.

What counts as a goal? The rule is about the ball. A goal is scored when the whole ball crosses the goal line. It must go between the posts and under the bar. The team scoring must not have broken a rule. Ronaldo has added goals to one running total for over twenty years. This book follows that total.

It starts in Portugal. As a boy, Ronaldo played for two other clubs first. In 1997, he joined the youth teams of Sporting, in Lisbon. On October 7, 2002, Sporting played Moreirense at home. Ronaldo was 17. He scored in the 34th minute, and Sporting won 3 to 0. He scored twice that day.

In August 2003, he joined United, in England. He was 18. On the first day of the season, he wore number 7. David Beckham had worn that shirt before him. United won 4 to 0. He stayed six seasons. In that time, United won the league three times.

In May 2008, United played Chelsea in the Champions League final, in Moscow. Ronaldo scored with a header. A header is a shot or a pass made with the head. The game ended 1 to 1 after extra time. Then each team took penalty kicks. United won the cup. Those kicks are not part of the game, so they are not goals.

Headers kept coming. Through July 2026, UEFA counts 25 goals that Ronaldo scored with his head in the Champions League. For Portugal, its list through September 2026 shows how he scored. Most came off his right foot. Some came off his left foot, and some came off his head. A goal off the head counts the same as a goal off the foot.

In 2009, he moved to Real Madrid, in Spain. The club's own page says no one has scored more goals for Madrid. With Madrid, he won the Champions League four times. Some of his goals came from free kicks. A free kick has its own rules.

A free kick is a restart after a player breaks a rule. The ball sits on one spot. The other team must stand at least ten yards away. On a direct free kick, the kicker may shoot straight at the

goal. UEFA counts twelve direct free-kick goals for Ronaldo in the Champions League. He hit every one with his right foot.

In 2018, he moved to Juventus, in Italy. The club says he played 133 games and scored 101 goals in three years. In 2021, he went back to United, where he had begun in England. In 2023, he joined Al Nassr, in Riyadh. The total kept growing at every stop.

In May 2026, Al Nassr won the Saudi Pro League on the last day of the season. The team beat Damac. Ronaldo scored twice. It was the club's first league title since 2018-19. The race went to the last day, because Al Nassr had dropped points a week earlier. Ronaldo was 41.

Ronaldo first played for Portugal in August 2003. In 2004, Portugal hosted the European Championship. The team reached the final. Portugal lost to Greece, 1 to 0. Twelve years later, in July 2016, Portugal beat France, 1 to 0, in the final. That time, Portugal won the title.

In June 2025, in Munich, Portugal played Spain in the Nations League final. That is a contest between European national teams. It ended 2 to 2. Then came a shoot-out. That is a set of penalty kicks that settles a tied game. Portugal won it, 5 to 3. UEFA wrote that Ronaldo was the first player over 40 to play and score in that final.

Ronaldo has played in six World Cups, from 2006 to 2026. On June 23, 2026, in Houston, he scored twice, and Portugal beat Uzbekistan, 5 to 0. The news agency AP said he was the first player to score in six World Cups. Portugal lost to Spain, 1 to 0, on July 6. That ended Portugal's World Cup.

So how many goals has he scored? That depends on who is counting. ESPN keeps a running count. On October 29, 2026, Al Nassr beat Al Kholood, 5 to 3. Ronaldo scored three times in the second half. Three goals in one game is a hat trick. ESPN's count then read 985 goals.

ESPN's page said he was 15 goals from 1,000. It also said no player has officially reached 1,000 in games that count. Pelé and Romário claimed it, but only when friendly games are added. A friendly is a game played for practice. On September 5, 2024, Ronaldo dropped to his knees at number 900. On October 29, 2026, the count read 985. The next goal would be number 986.

Questions

1. What happened in the 2008 Champions League final?

A. Chelsea won in extra time

B. The game ended 1 to 1, and United won on penalty kicks

C. United won 4 to 0 after 90 minutes

2. In this book, what is a header?

A. A shot or a pass made with the head

B. A kick taken from one spot

C. A goal scored late in a game

3. Why do the penalty kicks after a tied final not count as goals in the game?

A. They are always missed
B. They are taken by the goalkeepers
C. They are not part of the game itself

4. What is a hat trick?

A. Two goals in one season
B. Three goals by one player in one game
C. A goal scored from a free kick

5. What does ESPN's page say about 1,000 career goals?

A. No player has officially reached it in games that count
B. Every player in the Saudi league has reached it
C. ESPN stopped keeping the count in 2024

6. Why does the book say the number of goals he has scored depends on who is counting?

A. Only the referee is allowed to count goals
B. The number changes at every kickoff
C. Different counters follow different rules, such as whether friendly games are included

Words to know

forward: scoring player
header: head shot
cross: pass from side
penalty: spot kick
friendly: practice game

Answer key: Ronaldo's Road from Madeira

1. B. The game ended 1 to 1, and United won on penalty kicks
2. A. A shot or a pass made with the head
3. C. They are not part of the game itself
4. B. Three goals by one player in one game
5. A. No player has officially reached it in games that count
6. C. Different counters follow different rules, such as whether friendly games are included