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The forward (no. 10, in red) is past the defender (no. 16, in white) and is about to take a shot at the goal. The goalkeeper will try to stop the forward from scoring a goal by preventing the ball from passing the goal line.

Forwards (also known as attackers) are outfield positions in an association football team who play the furthest up the pitch and are therefore most responsible for scoring goals as well as assisting them. As with any attacking player, the role of the forward relies heavily on being able to create space for attack.[1] Their advanced position and limited defensive responsibilities mean forwards normally score more goals on behalf of their team than other players.

Attacking positions generally favour irrational players who ask questions to the defensive side of the opponent in order to create scoring chances, where they benefit from a lack of predictability in attacking play. Modern team formations normally include one to three forwards. For example, the common 4 2 3 1 includes one forward.[2] Less conventional formations may include more than three forwards, or sometimes none.[3][4]

Brazilian striker Ronaldo (middle, in white) taking a shot at goal. A multi-functional forward, he has influenced a generation of strikers who followed.

The traditional role of a centre-forward is to score the majority of goals on behalf of the team. If they are tall and physical players, with good heading ability, the player may also be used to get onto the end of crosses, win long balls, or receive passes and retain possession of the ball with their back to goal as teammates advance, in order to provide depth for their team or help teammates score by providing a pass ('through ball' into the box), the latter variation usually requiring quicker pace and good movement, in addition to finishing ability. Most modern centre-forwards operate in front of the second strikers or central attacking midfielders, and do the majority of the ball handling outside the box. The present role of a centre-forward is sometimes interchangeable with that of an attacking midfielder or second striker, however, especially in the 4 3 1 2 or 4 1 2 1 2 formations. The term centre-forward is taken from the earlier football playing formations, such as the 2 3 5, in which there were five forward players: two outside forwards, two inside forwards, and one centre-forward. The term 'target forward' is often used interchangeably with that of a centre-forward, but usually describes a particular type of striker, who is usually a tall and physically strong player, who is adept at heading the ball;