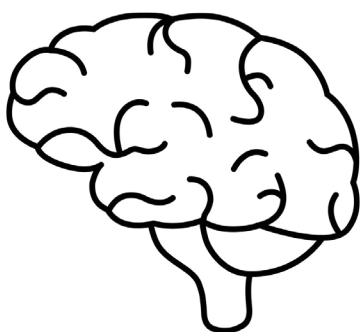




L2/16-299

# The world needs a brain

To: Unicode Consortium  
From: Cath Brassington  
Date: 25<sup>th</sup> October 2016

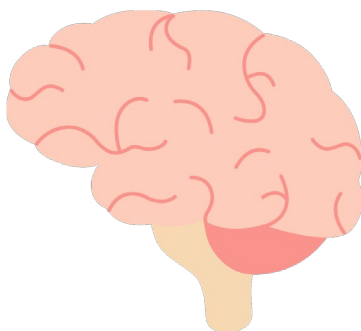


## Abstract

I am requesting the addition of a brain emoji. Not only would a brain glyph fill a notable gap in the current emoji set, it would serve to represent a broad range of brain related illnesses and issues, and aid conversations around thought, mind and intelligence.

## Introduction

The current emoji set has eyes, ears, a nose, a mouth, a tongue, a heart, even fingernails, but sadly, as yet, no brain. And no one can live without a brain.



Emoji's missing brain first came to my attention when I began working on a global project called The World vs. MS, an initiative dedicated to making a real difference to the day-to-day lives of those living with multiple sclerosis (MS), a disease that attacks the brain and spinal cord. As The World vs. MS largely lives on social media, it became apparent that there is no single emoji that represents conditions affecting the brain. MS is just one of over [400 neurological disorders affecting people around the world](#), with [one in four being affected by a mental or neurological disorder](#) at some point in their lives.<sup>1,2</sup>

What's more, this submission is supported by the fact that the online MS community often want visual representations of their invisible symptoms to help raise awareness of their condition.



As well as being an outreach symbol for those affected by neurological disorders, the brain emoji would also hold relevant symbolism for other mental health problems such as depression. The inclusion of an emoji for these issues is particularly pertinent, as research has found that [72% of 18 to 25-year-olds found it easier to put their feelings across using emojis than with words](#).<sup>3</sup> As a result, it is vital that the brain emoji is included, so that it can join the increasingly open and honest conversations surrounding brain atrophy, brain disorders and mental health.

**Therefore, it is my mission to give the world a brain.**



## Factors for inclusion

### A. Compatibility

The emoji will be compatible across all platforms.

### B. Expected usage level

#### 1. Frequency

The word 'brain' has been used **47,171,584 times on Twitter**, **searched for 6,405,000 times on Google**, and used as a hashtag **918,948 times on Instagram** in the past 12 months, so the expected usage of the brain emoji is high.<sup>4-6</sup> These current high levels of 'brain' usage would make it **equivalent to the 17<sup>th</sup> most used emoji on Twitter in 2014, scoring higher than the 'THUMBS UP' emoji.**<sup>7</sup> And this is only representative of online uses of 'brain' in the English language. Below is a breakdown of the use of 'brain' and two related terms in English, German, Italian, French and Spanish across four popular channels.



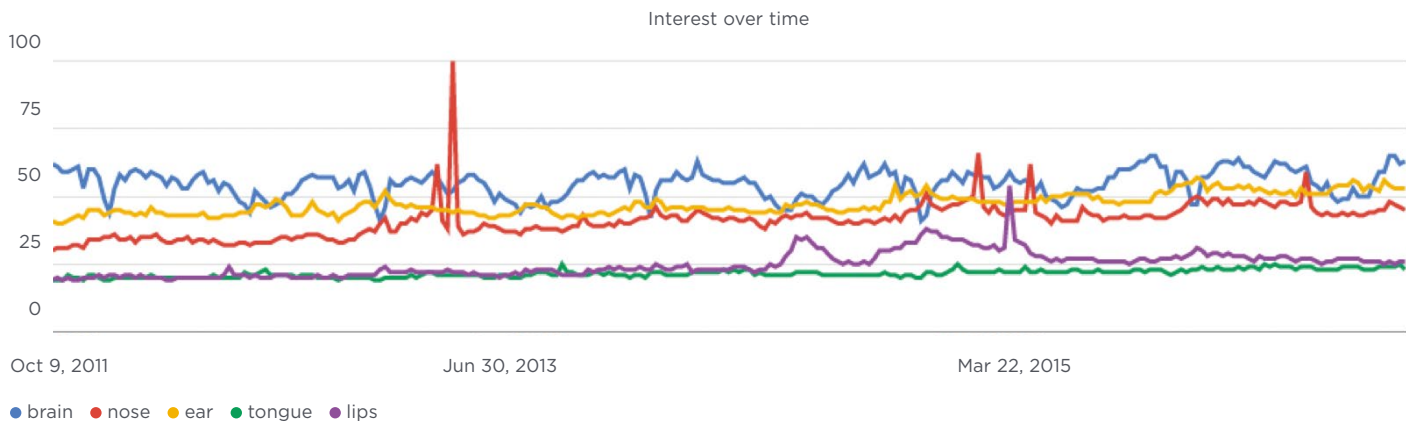
Brain emoji in situ on Apple's emoji keyboard.

	TOTAL	TWITTER	BLOGS	FORUMS	NEWS
<b>ENGLISH</b>					
Brain	51.1m	46m	847k	2.4m	1.9m
Intelligent	11.3m	8.7m	345k	914k	1.4m
Clever	8.7m	7.3m	282k	652k	1.9m
<b>GERMAN</b>					
Gehirn	253k	155k	11k	21k	67k
Intelligent	131k	66k	6k	17k	42k
Schlau	214k	148k	5k	36k	24k
<b>ITALIAN</b>					
Cervello	765k	669k	32k	27k	37k
Intelligente	436k	340k	32k	19k	44k
Sveglio	392k	371k	6k	10k	5k
<b>FRENCH</b>					
Cerveau	21m	2m	29k	52k	73k
Intelligent	978k	882k	18k	29k	49k
Astucieux	22k	15k	2k	1k	4k
<b>SPANISH</b>					
Cerebro	9.4m	9m	110k	60k	222k
Inteligente	7.9m	7.5m	110k	70k	312k
Listo	15.8m	15.2m	132k	132k	327k

Source: Sysomos <https://sysomos.com/> Accessed: Friday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2016



As well as its high volume and consistent usage across multiple platforms during the past five years, the word 'brain' shows consistently higher demand on Google Trends when compared with other body parts that are already part of the emoji keyboard, including the tongue, nose, ear and lips.



According to SwiftKey's emoji report, body parts are the 15<sup>th</sup> most used emoji category for 2015; a good estimation of the potential usage of the brain if it were to be added to the emoji keyboard.

1. Happy faces	16. Female	31. Plants	46. Ocean creatures
2. Sad faces	17. Booze	32. Money	47. Insects
3. Hearts	18. Religious	33. Clothing	48. Geography
4. Hand gestures	19. Music	34. Pets	49. Drugs
5. Romantic	20. Cold weather	35. Food	50. Household
6. Other	21. Symbols	36. Female-oriented	51. Tech
7. Monkeys	22. Junk food	37. Moons	52. LGBT
8. Party	23. Male	38. Wedding	53. Outer space
9. Holiday	24. Funny	39. Fruit	54. Baby
10. Violent	25. People	40. Royalty	55. Asian food
11. Flowers	26. Stars	41. Reptiles	56. Meat
12. Clocks	27. Transport	42. Buildings	57. Tools
13. Cats	28. Bird	43. Hot weather	58. Travel
14. Mammals	29. Farm animals	44. Sports	59. Film
15. Body parts	30. Words/letters	45. Raunchy	60. Reading materials

Source: [http://www.aargauerzeitung.ch/asset\\_document/i/129067827/download](http://www.aargauerzeitung.ch/asset_document/i/129067827/download)



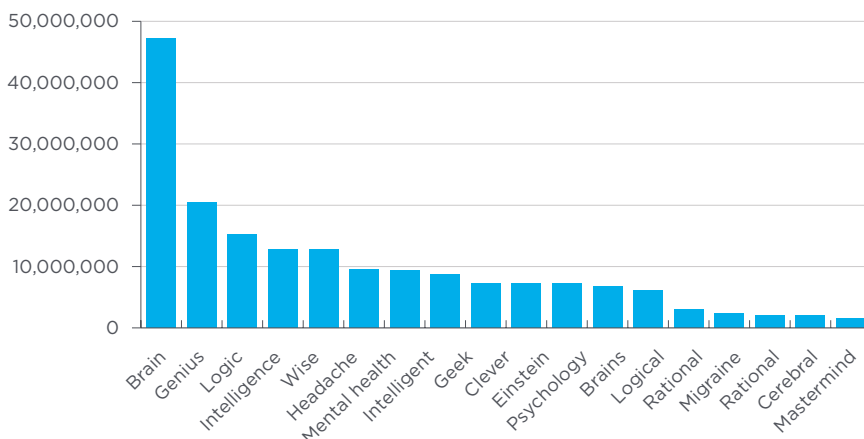
## 2. Multiple uses

Whilst the brain is synonymous with neurology, psychology, psychiatry and mental health, its associations far transcend these broad topics. And while the brain emoji will have multiple uses within these areas, it could also be used to reflect a wide variety of other commonplace themes and subject matters that aren't currently accurately represented by any available emoji.

A brain can represent intelligence, education and learning – you're a mastermind, a genius, an Einstein. It can signify a breakthrough in science, innovation and technology. It can symbolise your mind, your thoughts, your thinking. You might have something on the brain; have a brainwave or an idea. Or perhaps you have a migraine, a headache, from thinking too hard. From brain training to brainstorming, from demonstrating your wit to simply showing your logic, the world needs a brain.

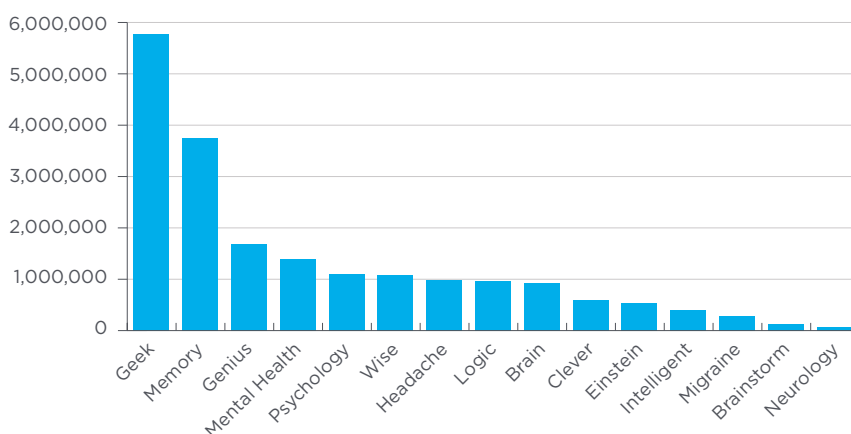
The following charts show the high levels of usage of some of these terms across Twitter, Instagram and Google over the past 12 months.

**Use of brain and associated words on Twitter over previous 12 months**



Source: Google Analytics Keyword Search Volumes Globally. Accessed: Friday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2016

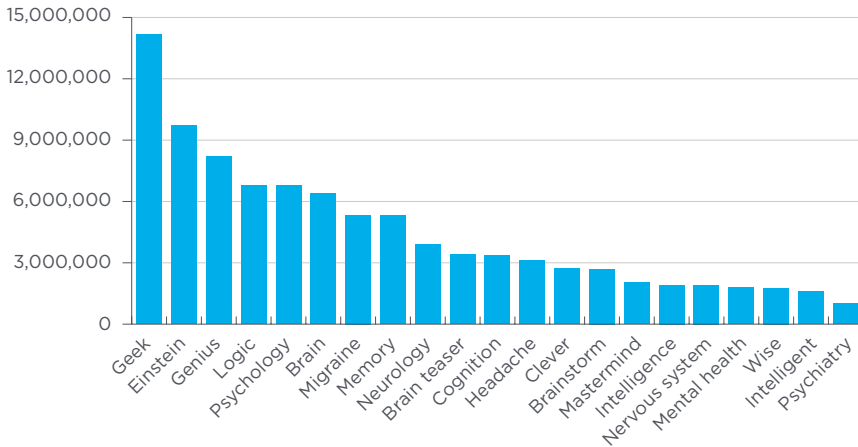
**Hashtag mentions of brain and associated words on Instagram over previous 12 months**



Source: Instagram search <https://www.instagram.com> Accessed: Friday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2016



Google search volumes for brain and associated words over previous 12 months



Source: Sysomos <https://sysomos.com/> Accessed: Friday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2016

If the brain emoji was substituted for, or used alongside, all of these key words and associated words on Twitter alone, it would have been used 229,758,109 times in the last year. This would mean overall usage would be equivalent to the third most used emoji on Twitter in 2014, scoring higher than the ‘unamused face’ emoji.<sup>7</sup>

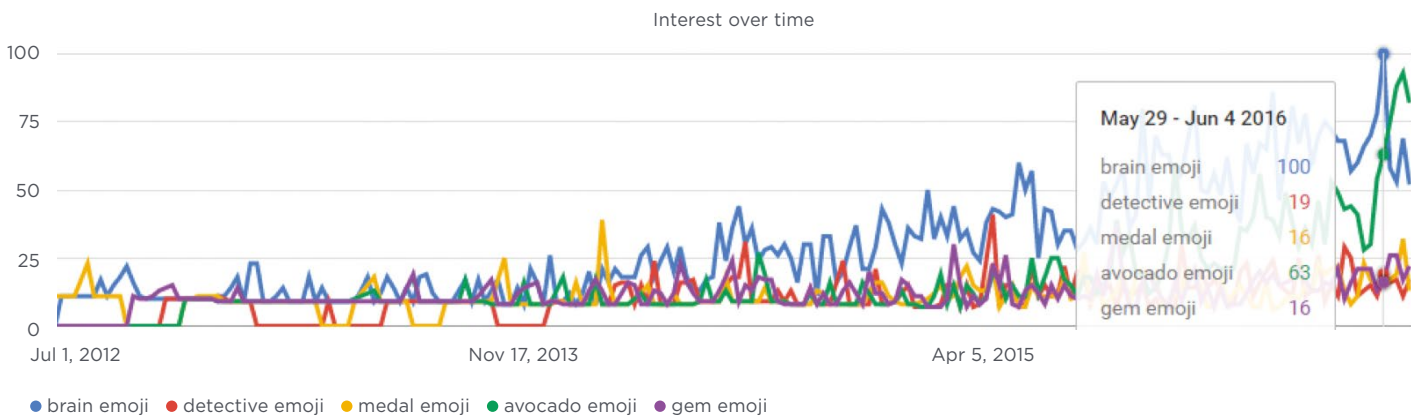
As well as the high volume of use of associated words, there is also a wide range of options for using the brain alongside existing emojis to create commonly used phrases – see examples to the right.



- ✘ + 🧠 = can't think
- 🧠 + 🕒 = thinking time
- ✘ + 💡 + 🧠 = can't hear myself think
- 🧠 + 📦 = brain box
- 🧠 + 💣 = mind blown
- 🧠 + 🩺 = brain surgeon
- 🧠 + 💀 = brain dead
- 🧠 + 🚑 = mental health
- 🧠 + ❄️ = brain freeze
- 🧠 + 🧠 = brainstorm
- 🧠 + 💪 = brain training
- 🧒 + 🧠 = childish thinking
- ⬅️ + 🧠 = backward thinking
- ↔️ + 🧠 = lateral thinking
- 🔊 + 🧠 = sound thinking

3. Demand: requests and mentions of ‘brain emoji’  
How can we 🧠 without a brain?

To me it's clear; the world needs a brain emoji. But don't just take my word for it. The chart below from Google Trends shows the search volume for 'brain emoji' vs. four other approved emojis from 2012 to 2016 – and it comes out on top.<sup>8</sup>





But people aren't just searching for it – they're actively discussing its current absence from the emoji keyboard. Here are just a few examples:

Apple Support Communities

HT202332: Use emoji on your iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch

Jgosalvez  
Level 1 (0 points)

Q: I think there should be a "smart" emoji.  
An emoji smiled face with a big brain and glasses or something to symbolize smart. I would love to see it on next update. Thanks  
iOS 71  
Posted on Mar 31, 2014 11:32 PM

Instagram

azamp\_

1,363 likes

azamp\_ "brain emoji"  
hanniemay0000 Elbow:) that funny bone though  
roachweed Wish my elbows took ink like this  
azamp\_ @ivanantonyshevtattoo thank you!  
azamp\_ @larsontattoos111 thanks man!  
lydiabestfootforward  
atilarezler\_tattoo\_arte Wonderfull take buddy  
mentapoleo Escroto, doy fe...  
timothyx  
y\_ubstalkin Elbow @heatheralley\_  
stonecolddown @germanshible  
wolfanters @death.magic @evoket1000  
@logan\_nardmagnetic  
@nickhillinstattnos @noietlavetattnos

Tim Casasola  
Striving towards making work better as an Org Designer at @theready.  
May 20

The collective brain  
Susan Basterfield

Exactly. I wish a brain emoji existed right about now.



Eleni @Uhleeknee

Why is there no brain emoji? RT @DearDevon\_: Yep I know it's cause I gave her all those CDs that one time. And now we share a music brain 🧠🎵

5:21 PM - 11 Oct 2012

DEAN trouble @deantheofficial

// why is there no brain emoji //



RETWEETS 30 LIKES 29

9:01 PM - 5 Jul 2015

iZombieSupportGroup @iZombieSG

My brain emoji nominations for #iZombie get on this @twitter #twitter #iZombieObsessed @iZombieObsessed @CWizZombie



15 Oct 2015, 2:56 am

11 RETWEETS 22 LIKES





## C. Image distinctiveness

It is clear that a brain can be represented by a unique image that is distinct from existing characters in the emoji set and communicates the intended associations.

## D. Completeness

Introducing the brain emoji could be seen as a logical step towards completing the set of 'body parts'. This set currently includes organs and body parts such as the heart, eyes, ears, mouth, nose, tongue, hands and feet.

As well as this, it could be considered to complete the 'senses' emoji group. The current emoji selection has images that represent all of the five senses: taste, sight, sound, touch and smell. However, there is no emoji that represents 'common sense' which the brain could be considered to do.

## E. Frequently requested

Whilst it is unclear how many requests to Unicode there have been for a brain emoji, current search volumes of the term 'brain emoji' in the past year from [Google AdWords: 21,200](#), and uses of the term 'brain emoji' in the past year on [Twitter: 7,988](#), indicate that there is clearly an unmet brain emoji need.<sup>9</sup>

## Factors for exclusion

### F. Overly specific

As highlighted above, there are multiple uses for a brain emoji beyond representing the brain as an organ. For example, it can be linked to any descriptions of intelligence, the areas of neurology and psychology, mental illness and problems such as headaches and migraines. It therefore has a wide scope of use.

### G. Open-ended

With no current brain emoji, or relevant substitute brain emoji, this would be a truly unique and first of its kind inclusion.

### H. Already representable

There is no current emoji or group of emojis that truly represent the brain nor some of the above contexts in which a brain emoji might be used. Therefore, I believe there is good reason to include this in the emoji keyboard.

### I. Are the images unsuitable for encoding as characters?

The brain emoji would not be associated with a brand or logo.

### J. Is the expected level of usage likely to continue into the future?

I would hope that there is no possible future in which the brain has no part. As such, I expect use of the brain emoji to reflect this. I also believe that use of the brain emoji is futureproofed further due to the increasing technological obsession with artificial intelligence, an area in which the brain emoji has clear relevant application, and is likely to be used widely as a part of discussions. [Searches for artificial intelligence have increased by 25% since 2011.](#)<sup>8</sup>



**Helen Godley** @godley22 2h  
Congratulations on your #Graduation @ali\_C - absolute mega 🧠



**Michael Stott** @MichaelS\_Stott 6h  
Loving your work @Dyson – inspiring to see such a great 🧠 in action



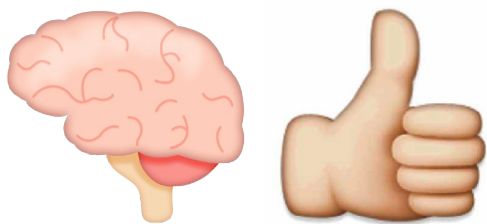
**Jen Woodward** @@jenwoodward16 1h  
#MS might be attacking my 🧠 but it will never take my ❤️



Brain emoji in use on Twitter.

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9. Sysomos review: September 2015-2016.



**Thank you for considering my submission.**  
**If you have any further questions,**  
**please don't hesitate to contact me.**

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## Contact

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