

Coin Emoji Proposal

Submitted by David McCarthy and Jennifer 8. Lee of Emojination
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Abstract

This proposal requests the addition of the COIN to the Unicode emoji character library. A coin can be described as, “a flat, typically round piece of metal with an official stamp, used as money,” however, this narrow definition ignores the coin’s role as the world’s first form of money, the coin’s popularity as a medium of exchange (the US alone produces over 28 billion coins every year), its connotation in the public imagination with treasure and gold, and its current influence on the burgeoning field of crypto-currency.

While there are currently eleven emojis associated with money, as noted in a previous rejection of a coin emoji proposal, they actually have a few gaps. They cannot convey a generic non-denominated currency. The current emojis associated with money also rely upon either \$, ¥, £, € symbols, which, while being recognizable, are not universal in use, covering only about 40% of the world’s population.

In addition to this, these emojis cannot be used to represent gold, silver, or other metals, and have no obvious connection to the popular concept of treasure. We are

proposing a separate coin emoji, as it will directly address all of these popular concepts.

Introduction

The coin is a medium of exchange that developed at between 700 and 650 BC in Ionia, on the western coast of what is now Turkey. The first coins were pieces of electrum - a mixture of silver and gold – stamped with designs on both sides to indicate that they were of a standard weight. These first pieces were known as “staters”, the Greek word for “standard”.

By the early sixth century BC, the Lydian king, Alyattes, had mints producing tremendous quantities of electrum staters; however, over time, Alyattes increased the ratio of silver to gold in his coins. Debasement, as this practice is known, apparently led to a lack of confidence in Lydian coinage for a time. This situation that was rectified by Alyattes’ son, Croesus, the first monarch to strike coins out of refined gold and silver. The adoption of refined gold and silver coinage allowed for the easy and accurate valuation of coins based upon their weight, and soon became the most common form of money in the world.

Coins as money were an incredibly disruptive technology. Other stores of value at the time were bulky, prone to spoilage, difficult to transport, and hard to assign value to. As such, the use of coins spread quickly throughout the ancient world, changing human society completely, and contributing substantially to the flowering of classical civilization.

The metal-based economy that developed because of the use of coinage in the ancient world conferred huge advantages to city-states with rich mines. Perhaps the most influential of these city-states was Athens, whose control of the mines at Laurion produced a substantial amount of silver which was used to increase crucial Athenian military strength, allowing the Athenian-led Delian League to defeat the Persian Empire. Following the peace with Persia, the Athenians put almost half of the population of the city on the public payroll. This stipend, in the form of silver coins known as “Athenian Owls” contributed to the Golden Age of Athens, a century-long period that saw the development of many concepts – democracy among them – that have shaped the world we live in today.

The spread of coinage also allowed monarchs to pay and provision larger, more mobile armies, resulting in farther-reaching, more stable governments. Alexander the Great minted vast quantities of silver tetradrachms bearing his likeness, which were used to pay his army as it spread his empire from Macedon to Egypt, Persia and India. Along with other Greek ideas, Alexander’s army carried the use of coinage with them, and imitations of Alexander’s tetradrachms spread throughout the world, developing eventually into local forms of coinage throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa.

In addition to consolidating power, the use of coins successfully redistributed wealth from the top down, increasing the ancient equivalent of a middle class, and allowing – to some extent – a measure of social mobility in the classical world. Coins, unlike other forms of wealth, were easily stored and durable, allowing people to save the value of their labor over long periods of time. In ancient Rome, this feature of money would allow slaves to purchase their freedom.

Following the collapse of the Roman Empire, coins continued to be used throughout Europe in a style that generally imitated the coins of the classical age. The concept of coins spread throughout the Islamic world at about this time, although Islamic coinage was characterized by a lack of figural representations, and the use of calligraphy and geometric ornamentation.

The discovery of the vast supplies of gold and silver in the New World, which in turn stimulated immense commercial activity throughout Europe. Consequently, the size of coins increased, and the technology to produce them advanced steadily throughout the 16th and 17th centuries.

While the size and general appearance of coins underwent changes during the renaissance, it was not until the 18th century that the next major revolution in coinage took place. The math the Greeks and Romans used was generally base-4 or base-12, and worldwide, various monetary systems maintained denominations based upon these systems. In 1704, Russia decimalized the Ruble, an advance that passed almost unnoticed. The United States experimented with decimal currency in 1783, and officially adopted a decimal Dollar in 1792. Since that time, every nation on earth has followed suit, and today all coinage systems worldwide utilize decimal math.

The 20th century saw the widespread abandonment of commodity money – that is, money made of gold or silver. In its place, most people use fiat money, or currency without intrinsic value that is declared “legal tender” by governments. Interestingly, this did not spell the end of coinage. In fact, more coins are struck today in base metals than at any time during the use of commodity money.

Names

CLDR short name

Recommended name: coin

CLDR keywords

Recommended keywords: gold, silver, metal, money, treasure, wealth

Selection Factors Inclusion

Compatibility

There are currently eleven emojis associated with money, five of which are depictions of paper money, one is a money bag, one is a credit card, one is a credit card receipt, and three are depictions of monetary symbols; however, none of these emojis represents the most common physical form of money as it has been used for over two millennia.

Nine of these emojis rely on the \$ or ¥ to convey the concept of value, symbols which are culturally specific to the United States and Japan, forcing users from other countries to rely upon symbols which, while recognizable, are essentially foreign to them.

In addition to this, the current emojis cannot be used to represent gold or silver, and have no obvious connection to the popular concept of treasure. We are proposing a separate coin emoji, as it will directly address all of these popular concepts.

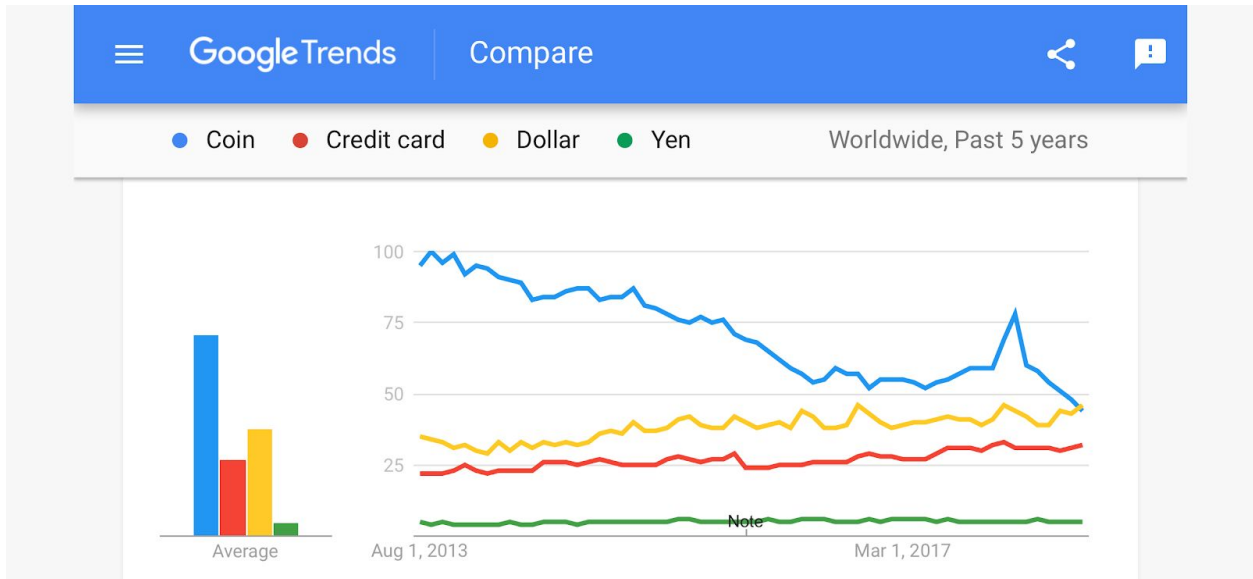
Expected Usage Level

Frequency

We expect COIN usage to be extremely high, especially as compared to other money emojis, largely because it addresses a wider range of value-related concepts, such as gold, silver, metal, and treasure. It also provides users with a more universal means of communicating monetary or value-related concepts that do not rely upon the culturally specific \$ and ¥ symbols.

Source: Google Trends, 2018:

Worldwide, “coin” is now, and has almost always been more popular than either “dollar”, “credit card”, or “yen”:



More dramatically, “gold” - an obvious association with the coin emoji – is always a more popular term than “money”, “dollar”, “credit card” or “yen”:

Google REGISTER TO VOTE | coin

All Images News Shopping

About 957,000,000 results (0.67 seconds)

Google REGISTER TO VOTE | dollar

All Maps News Images Shopping

About 1,700,000,000 results (0.70 seconds)

Google REGISTER TO VOTE! credit card

All News Images Shopping

About 1,520,000,000 results (0.59 seconds)

Here are the Bing choices

b coin

All Images Videos Maps News

17 100 000 Results Date Language

b dollar

All Images Videos Maps News |

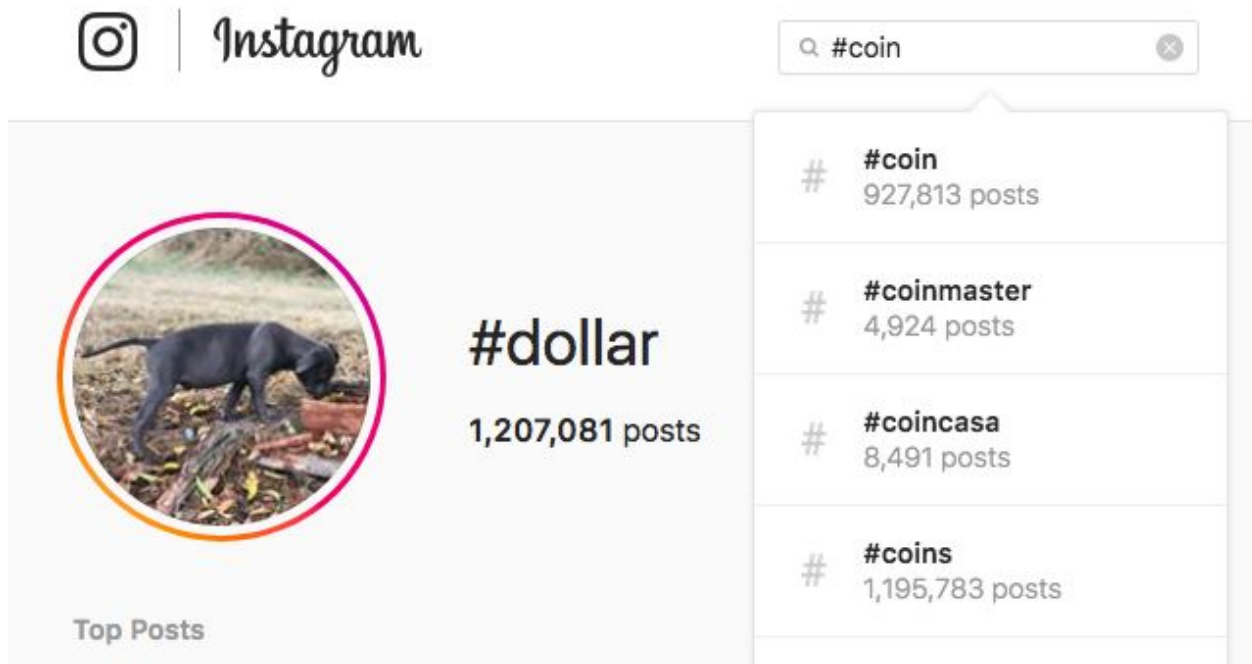
18 600 000 Results Date Language

b credit card

All Images Videos Maps News |

127 000 000 Results Date Language

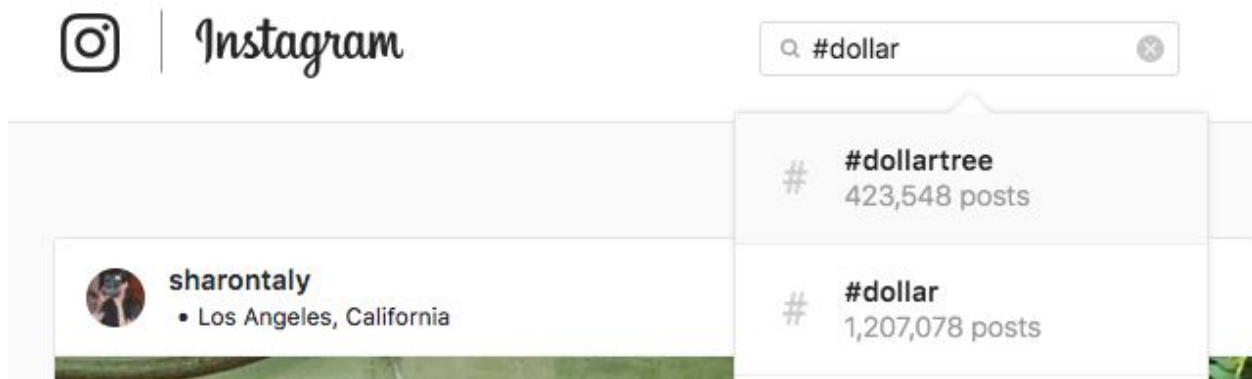
Additionally, analysis of Instagram hashtags suggests a tremendous number of situations where a coin emoji would find uses: the #gold hashtag appears on Instagram 38.8M times, the #money hashtag appears on Instagram 30.3M times, the #silver hashtag appears on Instagram 18.3M times, #metal hashtag appears on Instagram 17.5M times, the #coin and #coins hashtags appear on Instagram 1.9M times. These numbers dwarf many hashtags associated with emojis currently in use.



This screenshot shows the Instagram search interface for the hashtag #coin. The top left features the Instagram logo and the word "Instagram". A search bar at the top right contains the text "#coin". Below the search bar, a dropdown menu lists several related hashtags with their respective post counts:

- #coin: 927,813 posts
- #coinmaster: 4,924 posts
- #coincasa: 8,491 posts
- #coins: 1,195,783 posts

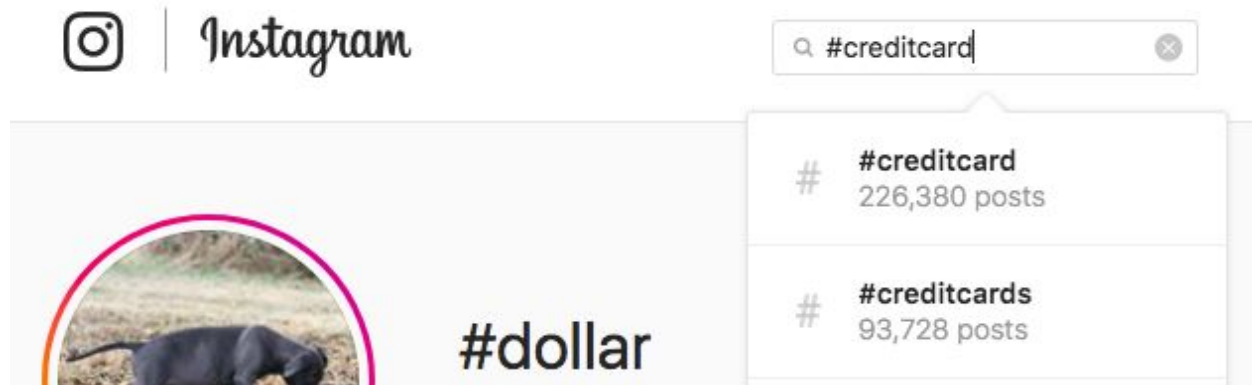
On the left side of the screen, a circular image of a black dog is displayed, with the hashtag #dollar and a post count of 1,207,081 posts next to it. Below the image, the text "Top Posts" is visible.



This screenshot shows the Instagram search interface for the hashtag #dollar. The top left features the Instagram logo and the word "Instagram". A search bar at the top right contains the text "#dollar". Below the search bar, a dropdown menu lists several related hashtags with their respective post counts:

- #dollartree: 423,548 posts
- #dollar: 1,207,078 posts

On the left side of the screen, a profile card for the user "sharontaly" is visible, with the location "Los Angeles, California" listed below the name. Below the profile card, a portion of a green landscape image is visible.



Multiple Usages

We foresee the COIN used in at least the following contexts, if not more:

- As a representation of coins currently in use (Dimes, Quarters, etc.)
- As a representation of gold or silver, based upon the color assigned to the emoji
- As a symbol of the concept of metal (currently unrepresented as an emoji)
- As a worldwide representation of money that does not rely upon a culturally specific symbol
- As a symbol for the concept of treasure
- As a symbol of the concept of wealth

Image Distinctiveness

There is nothing that resembles a COIN, otherwise we would not feel compelled to submit this proposal. The closest would be the medals, but those are different enough because of the ribbons.

Completeness

The COIN represents the longest-standing form of money used throughout the world. It can also be used to visually communicate such important money- and value-related concepts as Gold, Silver, Treasure, Money, and Wealth.

Frequently Requested

We are aware that the Unicode Emoji Subcommittee has previously rejected a COIN emoji proposal in L2/17-229 www.unicode.org/L2/L2017/17229-coin-emoji.pdf, but was rejected as “redundant given other money symbols” (<https://www.unicode.org/L2/L2017/17287-esc-rec-part2.pdf>)

However, we believe that our proposers’ deep expertise explain in depth why this is not redundant, and we posit it will be a very popular emoji, completing existing money emoji symbols.

Selection Factors Exclusion

Overly Specific

The COIN is not overly specific, as it has been the most widely used form of money in human history. The universality of the symbol is understood. As vendors choose their specific depictions of coins, with colors and designs, it may become more specific, but we feel that is in line with other emoji designs such as DRESS and SHIRT.

Open Ended

The COIN emoji offers an opportunity to reduce the creation of additional money-related emojis by offering a symbol that is not dependent upon a culturally specific sign, such as the \$, ¥, £, or €. The universe of monetary items which are so universal is extremely limited in scope, perhaps only accompanied by a BILL or GOLD BAR.

Already Representable

The closest comparable existing emoji is the MONEY BAG. The MONEY BAG emoji is not a sufficient replacement for the COIN because it cannot represent an individual coin, gold, silver, or metal, concepts which are currently popular, but are not currently represented in the emoji keyboard. Only some vendor representations of MONEYBAG include individual coins, but the general representations are of a bag of mixed currency, and not an individual coin. The other problem is that the MONEY BAG also uses the \$ symbol, which may be too specific.

Transient

The COIN has existed longer than money bags (which were invented to hold coins, after all), paper money, credit cards, computers, microwaves, airplanes, automobiles, telescopes, and champagne. The COIN has contributed immensely to human history in its 2 ½ millennia of use, and continues to be used and collected worldwide.

Logos, brands, UI icons, signage, specific people, deities

The COIN falls under none of these categories, and is not trademarked by any single brand.

David J. McCarthy (david@kagins.com) is the Senior Numismatist at Kagin's Inc. In 2014, he handled the Saddle Ridge Hoard, the largest buried treasure ever found in the United States, at \$10,000,000 and in 2017 identified the very first coin struck by the U.S. Government. When he's not busy obsessing about coins, he obsesses about vintage guitars.

Jennifer 8. Lee (jenny@emojicon.co) is a co-founder of Emojination, whose motto is "Emoji by the People, for the People" and Emojicon, a celebration of all things Emoji. She has a coin collection from around the world, mostly by accident, in that she doesn't get rid of the coins before she travels. As such, she was particularly proud of the coins she got in 2000 as she took the train from Beijing to London, before the introduction of the Euro.

Katie McLaughlin (katie@glasnt.com) has worn many different hats over the years. She has been a software developer for many languages, systems administrator for multiple operating systems, and speaker on many different topics. She has recently spoken in multiple different countries about the technical and social aspects of emoji use and misuse. When she's not changing the world, she enjoys making tapestries, cooking, and seeing just how well various application stacks handle emoji.