

Summary of options for redhead emoji

To: UTC

From: Jeremy Burge <j@emojipedia.org>, Emoji Subcommittee

Date: 2017-01-17

Requests for representation of red hair in emoji have been ongoing, yet prove a challenge to address due to a number of competing implementation options.

This document aims to summarise options available for representing red hair within the emoji character set, for discussion at UTC.

The goal of this discussion is to determine the preferred implementation for red hair in emoji, should this be supported in future.

1. New Code Point “PERSON WITH RED HAIR”

- a. Would be used in same manner as PERSON WITH BLOND HAIR, and permit skin tones and gender ZWJ Sequences
- b. Pros:
 - i. Flexible with skin tones and gender
 - ii. Has no further repercussions for existing emoji set
 - iii. Straightforward process to implement
- c. Cons:
 - i. Restricts red hair to a single display (man or woman) instead of supporting all human gestures and activities
 - ii. Creating a new human emoji for a single trait may not be desirable precedent
 - iii. Including a redhead emoji in this limited context (man or woman only) may result in a redundant gender pair if other options are considered in future

2. New Skin Tone Modifier

- a. Introduce an additional skin tone modifier, which would be used for the display of *pale white skin with red hair*
- b. Current fitzpatrick modifiers for skin tone are commonly displayed as:
 - i. Type 1-2 (black hair, light skin)
 - ii. Type 3 (blond hair, medium-light skin)
 - iii. Type 4 (brown hair, medium skin)
 - iv. Type 5 (dark brown hair, medium-dark skin)
 - v. Type 6 (black hair, dark skin)

- c. By annotating Type 1-2 as “Type 2”, Unicode could introduce a “Type 1” modifier which would apply a very light skin tone with red hair¹
 - i. This is consistent with the Fitzpatrick scale which describes Type 1 as “pale peach; blond or *red hair*; blue eyes; freckles”
- d. Pros:
 - i. All human activities and gestures are supported
 - ii. Does not displace any existing skin tone / informal hair pairings
 - iii. Does not require new mechanism
- e. Cons:
 - i. Each human emoji will require 7 images instead of 6
 - ii. Embeds the notion of hair color linking to specific skin tones, which is not in-line with current recommendations of TR-51
 - iii. May result in a redundant skin tone if more flexible options for hair color are introduced in future
- f. Under this option, TR-51 would be updated to document recommended skin tone/hair color pairings.

3. Tag based mechanism for hair color

- a. Tags to allow hair colors to be specified independently of skin tone²
- b. Pros:
 - i. Flexibility for many hair colors
 - ii. Hair color remains independent of skin tones
 - iii. Optional for vendors to support
- c. Cons:
 - i. Very large number of new emoji images required if implemented widely
 - ii. Has been considered a low priority in the past

4. ZWJ Sequences for hair color

- a. In line with existing proposals for a color swatch³, propose vendors agree on sequences for hair colors to be applied to existing emojis
- b. Pros:
 - i. Flexibility for many hair colors
 - ii. Optional for vendors to support
 - iii. *if* color swatches are approved and used in other contexts, this may be consistent with that approach
- c. Cons:
 - i. Potentially large number of new emoji combinations required
 - ii. Unclear which ZWJ Sequences would adequately describe hair color compared to skin color, clothing color, etc.

¹ Additional skin tone images (Burge): <http://blog.emojipedia.org/the-trouble-with-redheads/>

² TR-51 (Davis, Edberg) http://www.unicode.org/reports/tr51/tr51-10.html#def_emoji_tag_sequence

³ Color Swatch proposal (Hunt) <http://www.unicode.org/L2/L2016/16318-ten-colors.pdf>

5. Propose Vendors display PERSON WITH BLOND HAIR with red hair

- a. Suggest (with vendor consensus) that U+1F471 PERSON WITH BLOND HAIR be displayed as Strawberry Blond (aka red/auburn hair) in future platform releases
- b. Current inclusion of U+1F471 is for compatibility with Japanese “Western Person” emoji. As such:
 - i. Red hair on this emoji does not break compatibility with this original intention
 - ii. Using this code point for red hair may make more efficient use of the allocated code point and UI space in emoji palettes
- c. Pros:
 - i. No new code points required.
 - ii. Fast and straightforward to implement
 - iii. Some users have expressions confusion about the difference between BLOND MAN and BLONDE WOMAN Emoji ZWJ Sequences, compared to MAN + Type 3 modifier or WOMAN + Type 3 modifier, which are commonly shown with blond/blonde hair
 1. This may resolve that specific issue / confusion
 2. Makes a relatively redundant character distinct/useful
- d. Cons:
 - i. Potential backward-compatibility concern when changing hair color of this character retroactively
 - ii. As with option #1, this option restricts red hair to a single display (man or woman) instead of supporting all human gestures and activities which may not satiate demand for a redhead emoji in all contexts
 - iii. Further to ii, including a redhead emoji in a limited context (man or woman only) may result in a redundant gender pair if options #2, #3, or #4 are considered in future