

Proposal for new RGI Emoji Sequence

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To: Unicode Technical Committee

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Pirate Flag Emoji

OVERVIEW

This proposal seeks to add the pirate flag emoji to the list of Emoji ZWJ Sequences recommended by Unicode. The pirate flag (otherwise known as a Jolly Roger) features a skull and crossbones on a black flag and is commonly used to depict pirate-related activities.

This is the only flag emoji supported by a major vendor yet not listed as *Recommended for General Interchange* (RGI) by Unicode.

IMAGES



Black and white image



Color (shaded) image

IDENTIFICATION

- **Suggested Name:** Pirate Flag
- **ZWJ Sequence:**
 - 🏴‍☠️ U+1F3F4 WAVING BLACK FLAG
 - U+200D ZERO WIDTH JOINER
 - ☠️ U+2620 SKULL AND CROSSBONES
 - U+FE0F VARIATION SELECTOR-16
- **Suggested Keywords:** Jolly Roger
- **Suggested Category:** Flags
- **Suggested Sort Location:** After *RAINBOW FLAG*

SELECTION FACTORS: Inclusion

A strong reason to add the pirate flag emoji to a future Unicode emoji release is for compatibility with an existing major platform (Twitter). However, there is also ample reason to add it based on the expected usage level.

Compatibility

Twitter and the Twemoji open source project include support for the full set of RGI emoji. The only character supported by Twitter but not other platforms is the pirate flag.

The ZWJ Sequence for WAVING BLACK FLAG and SKULL AND CROSSBONES displays as a pirate flag emoji on Twitter but two individual emoji (🏴‍☠️) when shown in any native app. Despite only a subset of Twitter users having access to this emoji (users of Twitter website), it is used between 2,000 and 6,000 times each week.¹

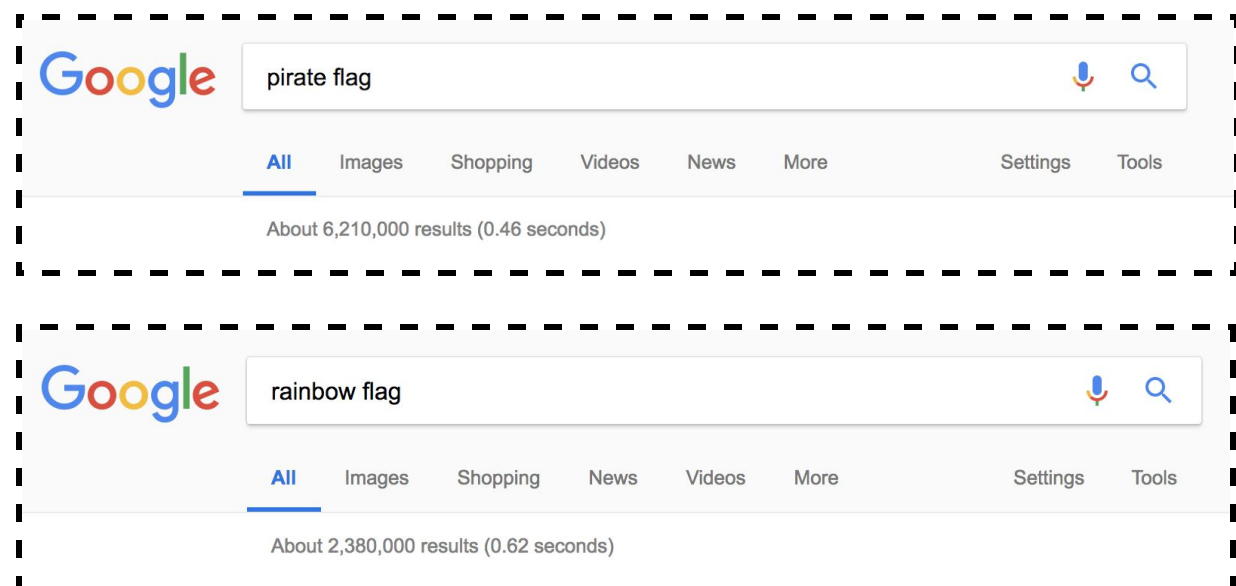
Expected Usage Level

Frequency

Pirate flag is very commonly referred to on the web, with millions of results showing on major platforms including Google, Bing, YouTube, and Google Trends.

Google Search

Pirate flag displays 2.5x the number of results on Google compared to “rainbow flag”



¹ Source: Twitter. See [Appendix A](#) for full usage data.

Bing Search



All

Images

Videos

Maps

News

My saves

5,570,000 Results

Date ▾

Language ▾

Region ▾



All

Images

Videos

Maps

News

My saves

364,000 Results

Date ▾

Language ▾

Region ▾

Youtube Search

YouTube^{GB}

About 323,000 results

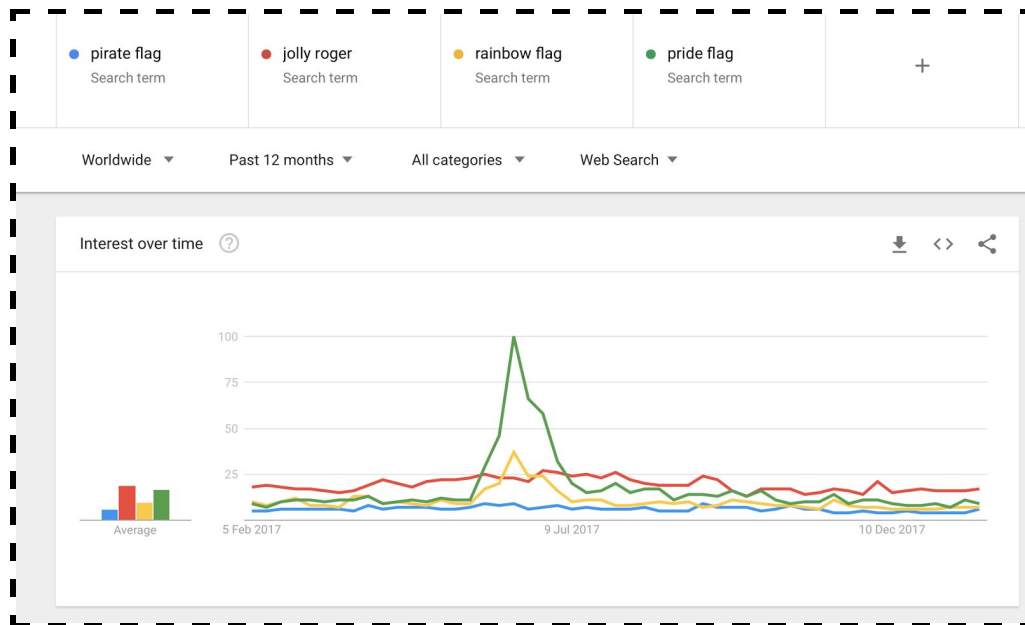
YouTube^{GB}

About 847,000 results

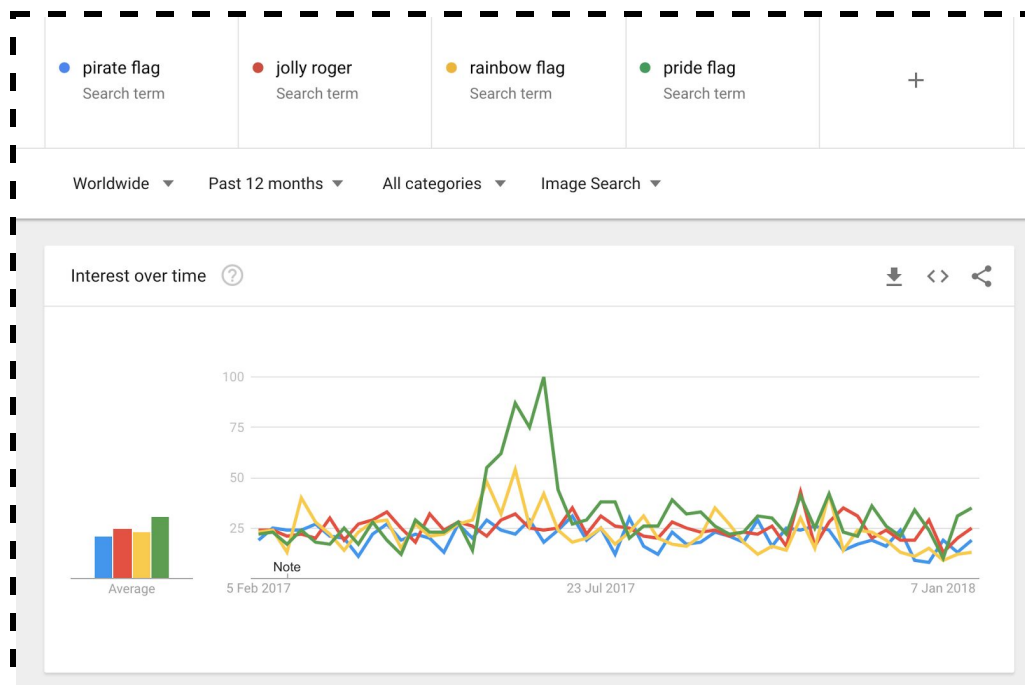
Google Trends (Web Search)

“Jolly Roger” sees higher consistent trends than rainbow flag or pride flag other than in June (LGBT Pride month).

While Jolly Roger is a more popular search phrase, the more generic phrase that may be used for an emoji name would be “pirate flag”.



Google Trends (Image Search)



Multiple Uses

The term “pirate” has multiple meanings and uses from seafaring pirates to the modern concept of software piracy.

Use in Sequences

Not applicable as this is a ZWJ Sequence.

Breaking new ground

Pirates are a common theme in popular culture, but there is no other obvious way to indicate “pirate” with emoji.

Completeness

On the grounds of compatibility, this will bring major vendors inline with support for a consistent set of ZWJ Sequences. As this is a single sequence, the cost of adding would be lower than a human-form or other collection of sequences.

SELECTION FACTORS: Exclusion

Overly specific

The pirate flag is a commonly displayed flag and is not a specific variation of another flag.

Open-ended

While there are many flags in the world for regions, people, and historical purposes, this flag does not specifically require the addition of other similar flags. As the reason for addition is *compatibility* this is not open-ended as there are currently no other flags supported by major platforms which aren’t listed as RGI.

Already representable

The sequence of WAVING BLACK FLAG and SKULL AND CROSSBONES is the fallback display for this flag. While a reasonable fallback, it doesn’t convey the same concept as the actual pirate flag to be displayed.

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

The pirate flag is not a logo, brand, or representing a specific person or deity.

Transient

Use of the Jolly Roger (pirate flag) dates back to at least 1723.²

Exact Images

The pirate flag does not require a specific representation of a skull and crossbones on a black flag to be understood.

Other information

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² https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=5ou7Bm1lgEC&pg=PR7&redir_esc=y

Appendix A: Times the Pirate Flag emoji is used on Twitter

Source: Twitter data.

Date range: January 2017 — January 2018

Total # of times Pirate Flag emoji is used: 192,675

End of Week	Code Point (s)	Render	Description	Usage
2017-01-07	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	1724
2017-01-14	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	2036
2017-01-21	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	1973
2017-01-28	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	3218
2017-02-04	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	2568
2017-02-11	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	1840
2017-02-18	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	1884
2017-02-25	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	2413
2017-03-04	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	2166
2017-03-11	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	2358
2017-03-18	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	3383
2017-03-25	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	3758
2017-04-01	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	5122
2017-04-08	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	6215
2017-04-15	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	4046
2017-04-22	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	2884
2017-04-29	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	4839
2017-05-06	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	3918
2017-05-13	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	5495

2017-05-20	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	3741
2017-05-27	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	7268
2017-06-03	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	3401
2017-06-10	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	3659
2017-06-17	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	3454
2017-06-24	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	2282
2017-07-01	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	3491
2017-07-08	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	4192
2017-07-15	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	3591
2017-07-22	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	3095
2017-07-29	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	3047
2017-08-05	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	2975
2017-08-12	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	3890
2017-08-19	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	4996
2017-08-26	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	4734
2017-09-02	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	4533
2017-09-09	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	2211
2017-09-16	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	2025
2017-09-23	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	6891
2017-09-30	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	3272
2017-10-07	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	4046
2017-10-14	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	4452
2017-10-21	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	3941
2017-10-28	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	3003

2017-11-04	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	2548
2017-11-11	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	3596
2017-11-18	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	4763
2017-11-25	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	3787
2017-12-02	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	4588
2017-12-09	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	4337
2017-12-16	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	3524
2017-12-23	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	3293
2017-12-30	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	2491
2018-01-06	1f3f4-200d-2620-fe0f		Pirate flag	5700