Feedback on ESC recommendations for draft candidates for Emoji 12.0 (L2/18143R2)

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COLOURED CIRCLES, SQUARES and HEARTS

The proposal to add 14 additional coloured squares, circles and hearts to create consistent sets of nine coloured square, circle and heart emoji should be very carefully evaluated before acceptance. The proposal states that these colour emoji blobs would be used by users as spacing graphic "adjectives" to semantically modify an existing emoji. For example the sequences white emoji blob plus 🐻 could be used to represent a polar bear; white emoji blob plus 🍷 could be used to represent a glass of white wine; and yellow emoji blob plus 🎗 could be used to represent a yellow ribbon (or equivalent sequences with emoji followed by a coloured blob if the user's language puts adjectives after the noun). Whilst this may seem like a good solution to the problem of users requesting an open-ended number of coloured versions of existing emoji (white wine, polar bear, yellow ribbon, etc.), it seems to have been proposed because "it sounds like a good idea" without carrying out any research as to whether emoji users would actually be willing to use emoji adjectives in this way.

I have seen large numbers of requests for a polar bear emoji on social media, but I have never yet seen anyone using a sequence of bear with white square or white circle (🐻□ or □🐻 or 🐻○ or ○🐻) to represent a polar bear, so I have doubts whether emoji users will be willing to use coloured emoji blobs as emoji adjectives as suggested by the ESC.

In fact the recent proposal for a White Wine Glass emoji sequence (L2/18-208) expressly discusses whether white wine glass could be represented by a sequence of two spacing graphic characters, white square and red wine glass (□🍷), and concludes that this would not be acceptable to either emoji users or vendors:

- Using "White Wine Emoji" in the testing of colors after v12 will **confuse the user**
  - The image of a "red wine glass" + "white box" does not clearly translate the meaning of "white wine" in human language. White wine is golden in color, but described as "white" in English, "blanco" in Spanish, "Blanc" in French, "Weiß" in German, "白" (shiro) in Japanese, etc., a golden or yellow box perhaps may be a more appropriate fallback color
  - Even more **problematic and risky** is the **behavior change** Unicode is expecting of the user, which will add unneeded complexity to a clear and efficient communication tool
  - "Red wine glass" + "white box" Emoji is challenging to **describe / communicate succinctly in human language**. I have struggled to do it in this proposal and believe the average Emoji user, and vendors for that matter, will agree

I recommend that the UTC do not accept these additional coloured emoji squares, circles and hearts without research being carried out as to whether they will be accepted by emoji users.

YAWNING FACE

This emoji is not needed as there is already U+1F62B TIRED FACE 😫 which is an emoticon showing a face with a yawning mouth. The only difference between TIRED FACE and YAWNING FACE is that YAWNING FACE has a tiny hand in front of the yawning mouth, which is almost invisible in the example image. There is no need for an additional emoticon indicating sleepiness as this is already represented by TIRED FACE, and having two emoticons for tiredness would be confusing for users.

STANDING PERSON

There is no real evidence that the concept of standing needs to be represented by an emoji, and in any case the proposed emoji showing a standing man or women is unlikely to be recognised by users as representing the concept of standing. Rather, it will likely be seen as just another emoji representing a man or a woman, but as a full body in contrast to just a head or bust.

Users will expect this emoji to have the full range of features expected for a person emoji, including gender, skin colour, facial hair, and hair colour/style. Moreover, as it is a full body person users may well want to specify what clothing the person is wearing – dress, trousers, sari, cheongsam, kimono, bikini, etc. – as well as a range of headwear such as hat, baseball cap, headscarf, etc. And of course, not only will a man, woman and gender-neutral version of this emoji be required, but also girl, boy and gender-neutral child will also be required to meet user expectations.

People emoji have been proven time and time again to create more problems than they solve, and this particular emoji will surely cause more problems than most as users demand that it reflects more and more facets of their existence. I therefore recommend rejecting this "standing person" emoji.

KNEELING PERSON

Unlike the standing person emoji, the kneeling person is immediately understandable as a person kneeling, and kneeling is probably also a more useful concept to express using emoji than standing, as users may wish to use a kneeling person to represent someone praying. However, prayer is already representable using 🙏 or 🧎 or 🛐 so there is not a strong case for encoding a kneeling person emoji for prayer. The only other uses for a kneeling person emoji that I can think of are to represent meditation (but there is already Person in Lotus Position 🧘), or in conjunction with a gun or axe or knife emoji to indicate someone being executed or murdered.

As there is a high cost to encoding a person emoji (gender and skin colour), a new person emoji should only be encoded if it is very highly required and would be very frequently used. However, there is no evidence that either kneeling person or standing person meet this criteria, and I believe they should not be encoded purely to complete the set of human postures. Indeed standing and kneeling persons do not complete the set of human postures, and if kneeling person and standing person are encoded then emoji for person lying face down, person lying face up, and person crawling should also be added.
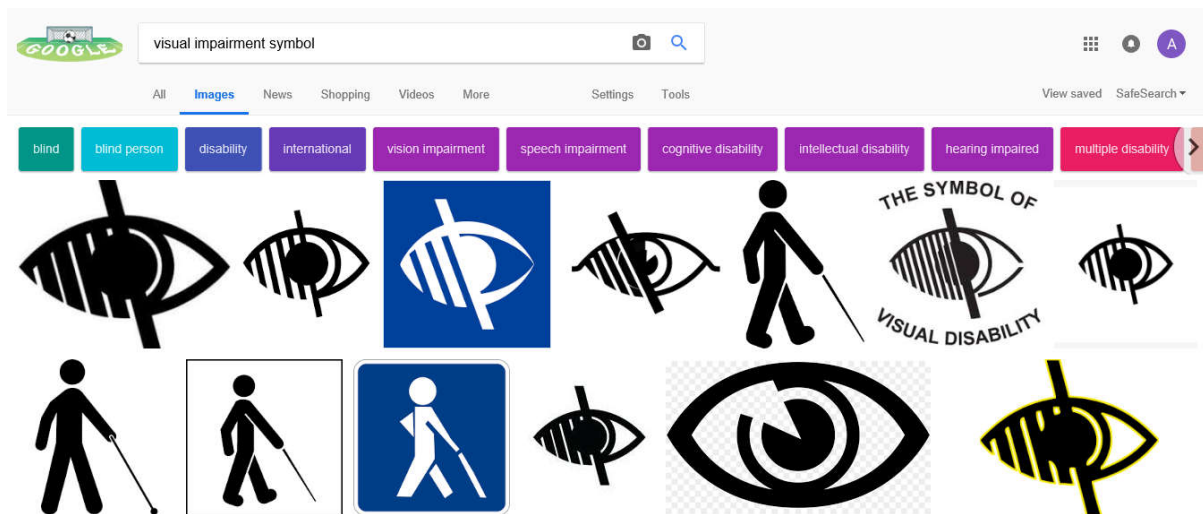
PROBING CAN

It is of course very admirable to want to improve accessibility on computers and mobile devices for people with various impairments, but there is no evidence that encoding emoji representing various physical impairments will be of any use in improving accessibility or any benefit to people with physical impairments.

What are the supposed use cases for these various accessibility emoji? How will someone with impaired sight use the probing cane emoji? How will this emoji be helpful to them? The only use I can think of is for including on a social media profile to indicate the user has visual impairment, but why is an emoji needed for this purpose?

More useful and widely-used symbols for visual impairment already exist, in particular the symbol of a half-shaded eye with a line through it, and these should be considered for encoding in preference to adding a probing can emoji.
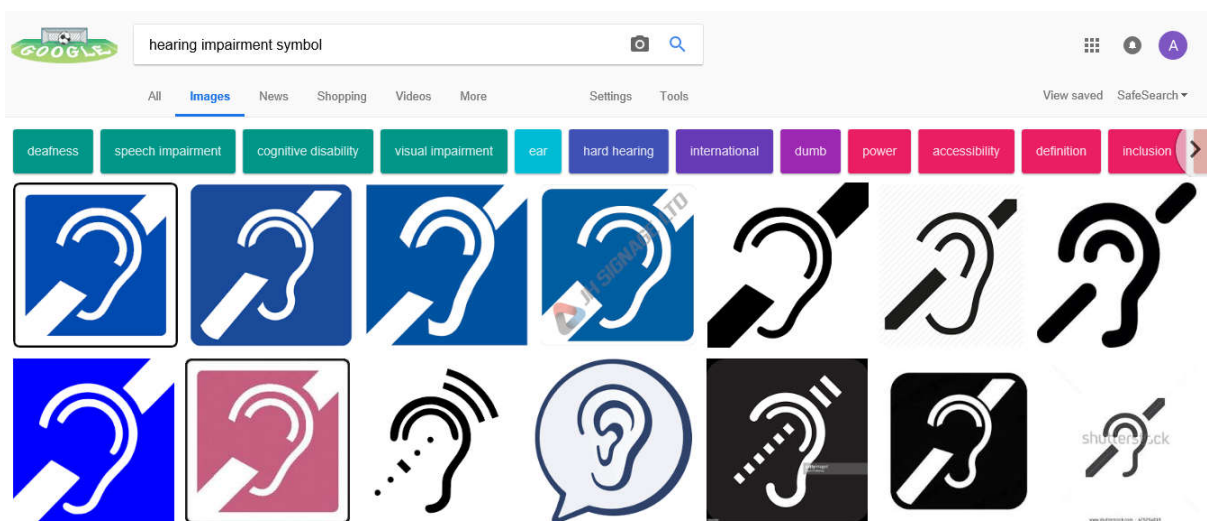
MECHANICAL ARM, MECHANICAL LEG

It is hard to imagine how these two emoji could be useful for people with an artificial arm or leg. What are the use cases for disembodied robot arms and legs? I think the proposers need to put forward a much stronger case for encoding these, and discussion of how they might be used in practice, before they are accepted for encoding.

EAR WITH HEARING AID

Hearing aids are nowadays typically very small and discrete, and in a few years time they will almost certainly become entirely invisible. The hearing aid shown in the image is not representative of modern devices, and I have had feedback that the emoji as illustrated is rather offensive, and that the hearing aid should be smaller and less noticeable. However, making the hearing aid small and unnoticeable would make the emoji indistinguishable at emoji sizes from the ear 👂 emoji, so that is not a good solution.

Actually, there already exists a widely-used symbol for impaired hearing, showing a crossed ear, and it would be preferable to encode this symbol rather than the ear with hearing aid emoji.

SARI

This seems reasonable, given there is already a range of clothing items, although the illustrated glyph is not easily recognisable as a sari to me. Probably users would prefer to have an emoji depicting a woman wearing a sari, but that would not be a good idea.

ONE-PIECE SWIMSUIT

There is already a BIKINI 👙 emoji that can represent the concepts of swimming and sun-bathing. There is no need for an additional one-piece swimsuit emoji.

SERVICE ANIMAL VEST

This emoji is totally unrecognizable, and should not be encoded as an individual emoji. I understand that it was thought more flexible to encode an animal service vest separately so it could be combined with a dog, cat, monkey or horse, etc., but I think this is overthinking the issue. If a service animal emoji really is needed, then it is sufficient to just encode a single emoji showing a dog wearing a vest.

GARLIC, ONION

Garlic and onion are quite similar in appearance, and probably difficult to distinguish at emoji sizes. They are both used for flavouring food, so are both garlic and onion needed? Encoding both would seem to go against the emoji selection factors C (image distinctiveness) and F (overly specific).

FALAFEL

This emoji was specifically proposed as an emoji representing vegetarian food that is not just fruit or vegetable. However, the keyword meatball has been suggested for it by the ESC. It seems perverse to me to try to unify an overtly vegetarian dish with a meat dish, and risks causing serious miscommunications between users if one person uses it to mean vegetarian food and another person uses it to mean meaty food. The "meatball" keyword should be removed, and the colour of the falafels changed to be greenish brown to make is clear that these are not meatballs.

ICE CUBE

The proposal (L2/18-111) was for ICEBERG, which is completely different from ICE CUBE. ICEBERG seems reasonable to encode as it can represent a looming danger or something that is largely hidden from view (tip of the iceberg).

On the other hand, ICE CUBE has very little possible use in isolation, and would only be useful if combined with a glass to indicate an iced drink.

In any case, there is no proposal for ICE CUBE, and so it should be summarily rejected. If the ESC wants to encode an ICE CUBE emoji or an ICED DRINK emoji they should propose one using the proper procedure rather than hijacking someone else's ICEBERG proposal.

MOTORIZED WHEELCHAIR, MANUAL WHEELCHAIR

I don't really see the need for two types of wheelchair emoji. Surely encoding both motorized and manual wheelchair goes against selection factor F (overly specific). In any case there already exists a wheelchair symbol ♿ which is very widely used, so there is no real need for either of these two new wheelchair emoji.

BANJO

I don't think that banjo is a significant enough musical instrument to encode. We cannot possibly encode emoji for all musical instruments, and accepting banjo seems like it would be opening the floodgates for requests to encode everyone's favourite musical instrument as an emoji. I think it should be sufficient for guitar 🎸 to represent all plucked stringed instruments, including banjo, but if banjo is accepted because its shape is distinct from guitar then LUTE should also be encoded as it has a distinctive pear-shaped body. CELLO and HARP are probably more significant and more widely-recognized stringed instruments than banjo, and should also be encoded if banjo is accepted. There are also well-known Asian stringed instruments such as the SITAR and QIN/KOTO which should also be considered for encoding if banjo is accepted.

STETHOSCOPE

We already have STAFF OF AESCULAPIUS ⚕ to represent the medical profession, and the emoji sequences 👨‍⚕️ and 👩‍⚕️ (typically depicted with a stethoscope around the neck) to represent doctors, so there really is no need for a separate stethoscope emoji.