

Proposal for LADDER Emoji

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“And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth,
the top of it reaching to heaven;
and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.”
-- Genesis 28:10-19

“Anything that can be reached with a ladder does not interest me.”
-- Ludwig Wittgenstein

Abstract

This proposal requests the inclusion of a new object emoji: LADDER. A ladder is used to move people and things on a vertical plane, but it is also a powerful symbol that dates back at least 64,000 years. The ladder's tool / symbol relationship can be seen in modern popular culture, religion, folklore, and business.

Images



Credit: Apee Messer (Free for use in context of this proposal)

Introduction

Ladders are used to solve the problem of moving along a vertical plane, for instance a ladder can be used to reach a far away object or to move to a higher location, such as to a roof or to tree branches. The earliest known ladder is from depicted in a cave painting made by Neanderthals in Spain approximately 64,000 years ago.¹ This particular depiction is a good example of the ladder as a tool and as a symbol, as it indicates Neanderthals had the ability for language. As Homo sapiens we are very familiar with both physical and metaphorical ladders, which can be found in hardware stores, popular culture, religion, folklore, and business.

Today, there are two general types of physical ladders: movable ladders (temporary structures, sometimes compactable) and roll ladders (fixed permanently with wheels, such as in a library or archives). Physical ladders are fairly common in modern society, and can be rented or purchased from hardware stores.² Decorative ladders can be purchased on Etsy.³ As far as symbolism goes, there seem to be infinite uses for metaphorical ladders. A ladder can be a ranking system, such as in business or sports. Phrases like, "climb the ladder," "the corporate ladder," "the ladder to success," and "another rung of the ladder" address the bottom-up hierarchy associated with climbing a ladder and thus use a ladder as a metaphor for the stages of success. This idea is also used a bit more literally in sports, where game results are display in a hierarchical structure called a "ladder" -- such as the National Football League Ladder, Australian Football League Ladder, and the English Premier League Ladder, to name a few (see Figure A) -- where the team at the top of the ladder leads the league.

Children are introduced to the ladder metaphor through games. Snakes and Ladders is an ancient Indian board game where a roll of the dice can send you up a ladder, or down a snake (see Figure B).⁴ In Snakes and Ladders, life's virtues are represented by ladders and vices are represented by snakes.⁵ In 1862 this game was adapted in Victorian England, where ladders had access to fulfillment, grace, and success, while snakes led to thrift and penitence.⁶ In 1943, this game was adapted for the United States with Chutes and Ladders⁷. Though slides, or "chutes," replaced snakes, in this version at the top of ever ladder was something pleasant -- like a birthday cake -- and at the bottom of every slide awaited something unpleasant, like a skinned knee. These ladder games are based entirely on luck and it is very unlucky for a player to find themselves on their way down a ladder. This idea is also employed in comedy where the process of going down a ladder -- and the injuries sustained -- produce a laugh. The actor and

¹ Zimmer, Carl. "[Neanderthals, the World's First Misunderstood Artists](#)." *New York Times*, 22 February 2018.

² Ladders available at Home Depot: <https://www.homedepot.com/b/Building-Materials-Ladders/N-5yc1vZaqnp>.

³ Ladders available on Etsy: <https://www.etsy.com/search?q=ladder>.






⁴ "[File:Snakes and Ladders.jpg](#)." Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository. 27 Nov 2017, 17:15 UTC.

⁵ Pritchard, D. B. "Snakes and Ladders." *The Family Book of Games*. Brockhampton Press. 1994.

⁶ Bell, R. C. *The boardgame book*. Cavendish House. 1983. pp. 134–35

⁷ Augustyn, Frederick J. *Dictionary of toys and games in American popular culture*. New York: Haworth Reference Press. 2004.

stuntman Buster Keaton used the ladder gag frequently,^{8, 9} and the motif also appears in cartoons, such as Road Runner and Wild E. Coyote.¹⁰

Team	P	W	L	D	%	Pts
1  Richmond	20	16	4	0	139.7	64
2  West Coast Eagles	20	15	5	0	123.4	60
3  GWS Giants	20	13	6	1	120.4	54
4  Hawthorn	20	13	7	0	121.2	52
5  Collingwood	20	13	7	0	118.3	52

More teams

Figure A

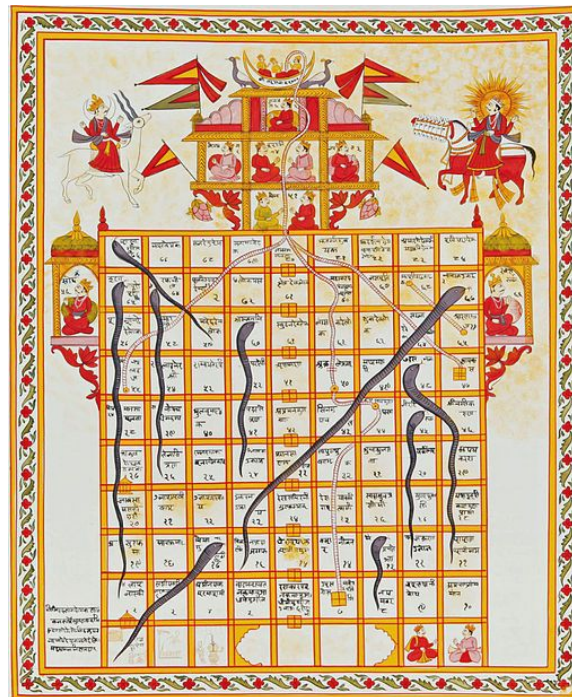


Figure B

⁸ ["Buster Keaton demonstrates the safest way to climb down a ladder."](#) YouTube. Retrieved 14 August 2018.

⁹ ["Buster Keaton's Ladder Gag from COPS."](#) YouTube. Retrieved 14 August 2018.

¹⁰ ["There They Go-Go-Go!"](#) Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. 2 April 2018 20:42 UTC. See also: ["Road Runner & Wile E Coyote 09 - There They Go-Go-Go."](#) Vimeo. Minute 4:14.

The evidence presented thus far suggests that the most desirable place to be is at the top of a ladder (or at least on your way up to the top). Therefore it is not surprising that it is superstitiously very bad to walk under a ladder. Behind this superstition is religion. When a ladder is leaned against a wall it forms a triangle. For many religions a triangle is a sacred shape, which can be seen in the pyramids from ancient Egypt and in the holy trinity in Christianity. To break the integrity of the triangle's shape is very bad.

Ladders in religion have many other interpretations and uses. In the biblical story of Jacob's Ladder, the ladder is a connector between earth and heaven. It is also interpreted as a signifier of the suffering of the Jewish people, as an allusion to the giving of the Torah, as a symbol of Jesus, and as a model of virtue versus sin, to name just a few.¹¹ Similar representations of the ladder as divine can be seen in the iconography from the treatise the Ladder of Divine Ascent, written by John Climacus circa AD 600.¹² In Canto 21 of Dante's *Paradiso*, Dante arrives a golden ladder -- the Ladder of Contemplation -- that leads to a place out of sight, which is said to be the beginning of the end of Dante's journey (the beginning of which in the *Inferno* has another ladder, of sorts, in the nine circles of hell)¹³.



Figure C

In Pueblo culture ladders were used as a way to reach upper level rooms, but were also useful in blocking invaders from accessing since ladders could be easily removed. Pueblo ladders are also thought to connect ancestors, the universe, and spiritual beliefs.¹⁴ In Indonesia, when a Toraja person dies their soul travels from earth to heaven through a series of "ritual

¹¹ Wikipedia contributors. "[Jacob's Ladder](#)." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 5 Aug. 2018. Web. 11 Aug. 2018.

¹² [The Ladder of Divine Ascent](#). Translated by Archimandrite Lazarus Moore (Harper & Brothers, 1959)

¹³ Alighieri, Dante. *Paradiso*. Cantos 21.25-42, 22.68-72.

¹⁴ Mcenaney, Lillia. "[Ladders to Other Worlds](#)." *Sapiens*. 21 March 2016.

ladders” performed by family and friends.¹⁵ At the funeral, the deceased are laid to rest within high cliffs and physical ladders are required at the final burial sites as (see Figure C).¹⁶ In each of these examples, ladders enable mortals to travel to places unattainable on their own. A ladder is a means of divine intervention.

Outside of religion, metaphorical ladders are used to organize logic and philosophy. The “Ladder of Inference” is a way to describe actions based on reasoning, a theory used by British archeologist theorist Christopher Hawkes¹⁷ and organizational psychologist Chris Argyris. Similarly, the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein describes a metaphorical ladder that, once used, is thrown away, arguing that once something is learned, everything understood previously should be discarded.¹⁸ Lastly, in Plato’s *Symposium*, the metaphor of the “Ladder of Love” is used to explain the mental journey from lust to beauty, with physical attraction and desire as the lowest rung and the Form of Beauty itself at the top, since it is the most pure form of love akin to Platonic love, and is a stage of philosophical thinking that cannot be unknown.¹⁹ In each of these examples, philosophy uses ladders to organize thought, reason, and enlightenment, not wholly unlike religious ladders. Therefore, ladders are a means of progression physically, spiritually, and mentally.

Names

CLDR Short Name: ladder

CLDR keywords: ladder, step, stair

Selection Factors Inclusion

A. Compatibility

The proposed LADDER emoji would be an entirely new character for iOS, Android, and Windows. There is not currently a LADDER character that can be applied through a text keyboard. There are ladder games available for iOS and Android: Snakes and Ladders Game

¹⁵ Rappoport, Dana. “[Ritual Music and Christianization in the Toraja Highlands, Sulawesi.](#)” *Ethnomusicology*, vol. 48, no. 3, 2004, pp. 378–404.

¹⁶ Whiteside, Darren. “[“You look so beautiful!”: Indonesians celebrate the dead in ancient ritual.](#)” *Reuters World News*. 28 September 2017.

¹⁷ Evans, Christopher. “Historicism, Chronology and Straw Men: Situating Hawkes’ ‘Ladder of Inference.’” *Antiquity*, vol. 72, no. 276, 1998, pp. 398–404.

¹⁸ “[Wittgenstein’s Ladder.](#)” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 20 July 2017 17:29 UTC.

¹⁹ Bloom, Allan. “The ladder of love.” *Plato’s Symposium*. 2001.

(iOS)²⁰, Snakes and Ladders King (iOS and Android),^{21,22} and Snakes and Ladders (Android),²³ to name a few.²⁴

B. Expected Usage Level

Frequency

Based on Google Trends, the LADDER emoji is a sought after object compared to another similar object-tool: a wrench (see Figures D - E). Trends from a web search and image search shows “ladder” consistently more popular over the past 5 years. In the trends from a Google shopping, however, ladder and wrench are nearly mirrors of each other (see Image F). On its own, “ladder” returns over 31 million results on Bing, and over 244 million results on Google, while “wrench” returns less results on both search engines: 29 million on Bing and 109 million on Google (see Figures G - H).

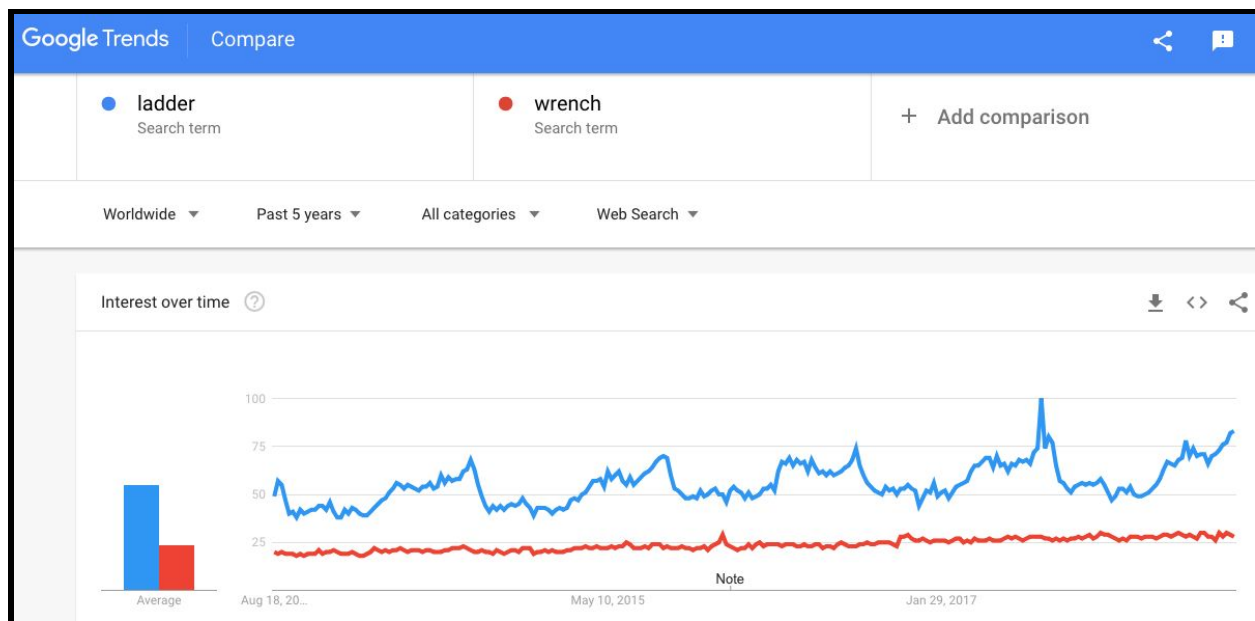


Figure D

²⁰ The Best of All Time! “[Snakes and Ladders Game](#).” iTunes App Store.

²¹ MOBIRIX. “[Snakes and Ladders King](#).” iTunes App Store.

²² MOBIRIX. “[Snakes and Ladders King](#).” Google Play.

²³ Hadiware. “[Snakes and Ladders](#).” Google Play.

²⁴ Link to search for “snakes and ladders” in Google Play:
<https://play.google.com/store/search?q=Snakes+and+Ladders+King&c=apps>.

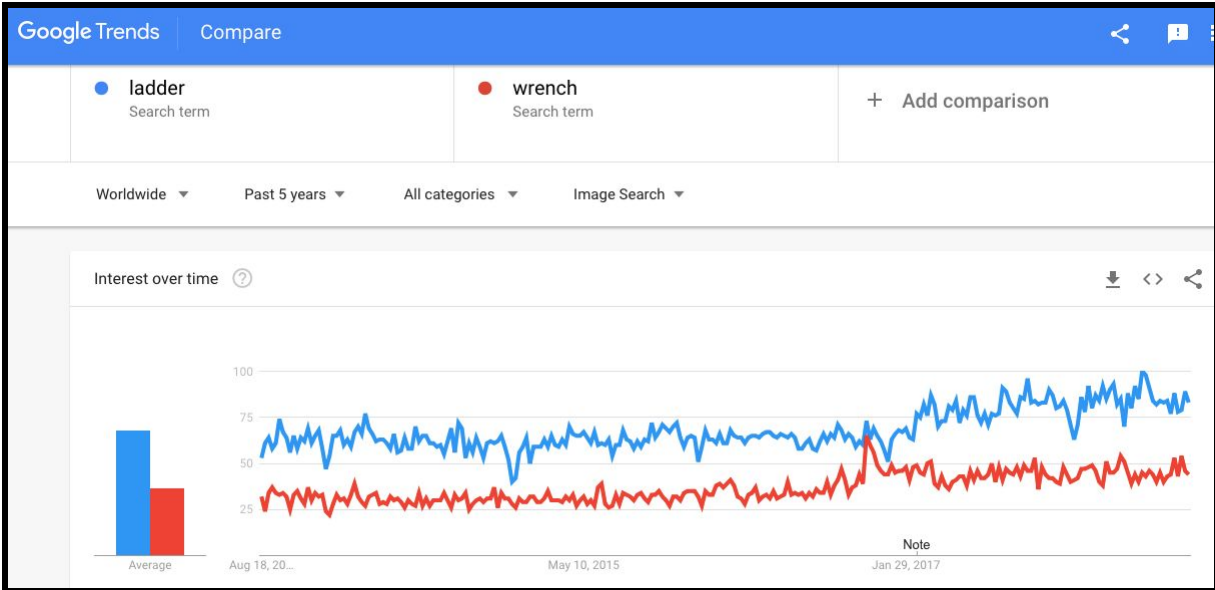


Figure E

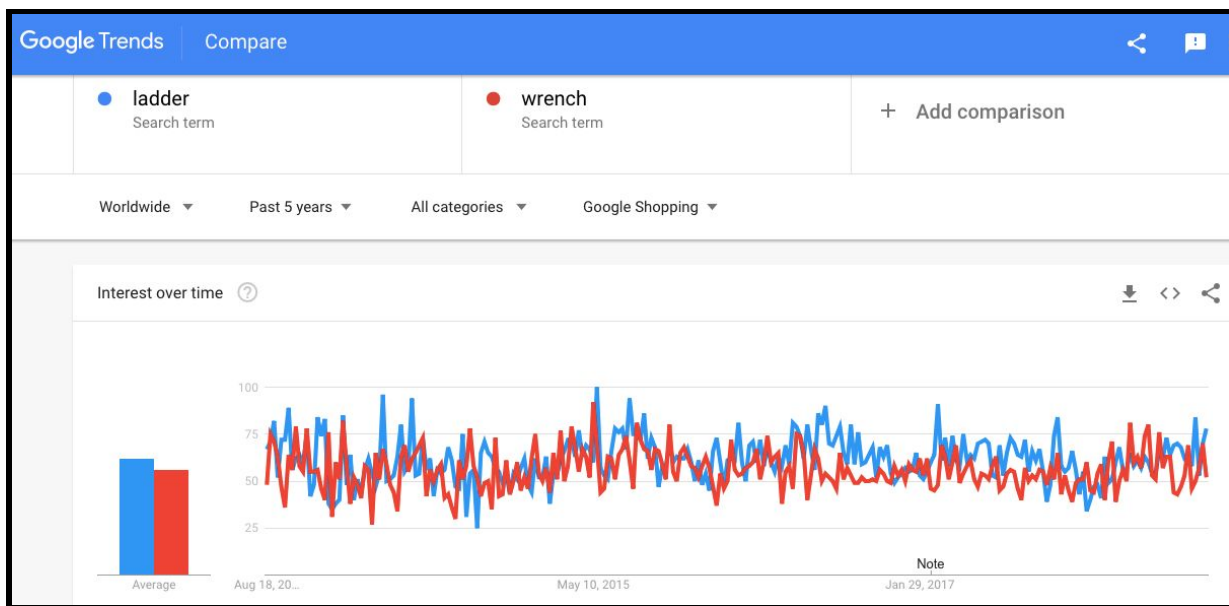


Figure F

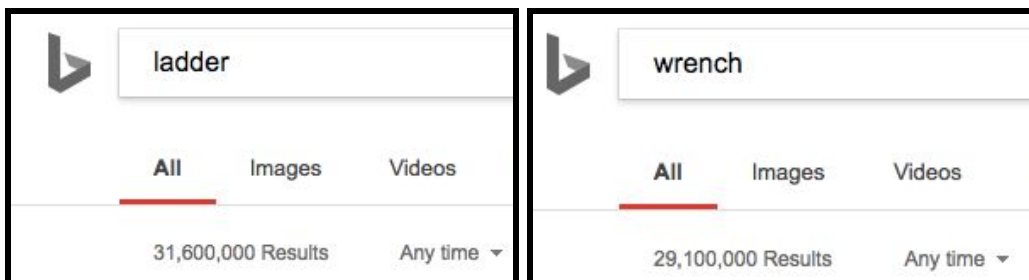


Figure G

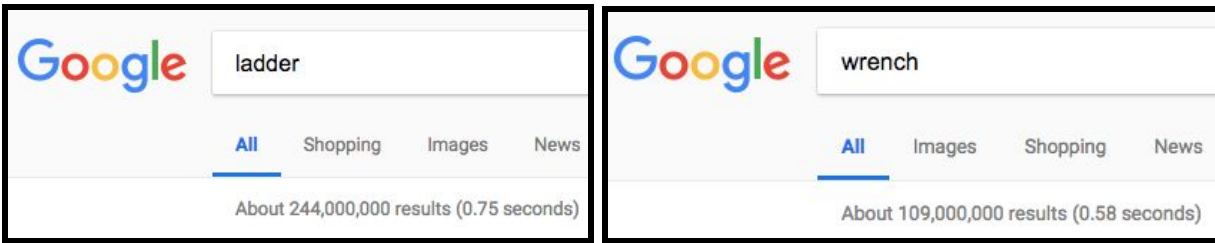


Figure H

Multiple Usages

The LADDER emoji can be used to describe personal gains (“I’m working my way up to the office with a view 🧑 [LADDER emoji] 🏢”), sports rankings (“Here’s my cricket [LADDER emoji], bros: 🍀 🐯 🛡️ 🌩️ 🐓”), and religious themes (“Can you guess my favorite Zeppelin song? [LADDER emoji] ♣️ 🙏”).

Use in Sequences

LADDER + SNAKE = Snakes and Ladders, or Chutes and Ladders

LADDER + PERSON IN LOTUS POSITION = Heaven or enlightenment

LADDER + CLOUD + FOLDED HANDS = Heaven, or Stairway to Heaven

PERSON RUNNING + [NEW LINE] + LADDER = Climbing the ladder

LADDER + NECKTIE = Ladder to success, or corporate ladder

LADDER + LIGHT BULB = Change the light bulb

FIRE ENGINE + LADDER + CAT = Cat rescue

LADDER + CASTLE = Romeo & Juliet, or Rapunzel

PILE OF POO + LADDER + CROWN = Rags to riches

BROOM + LADDER + PRINCESS = Cinderella

LADDER + PERSON WALKING + CROSSED FINGERS = Superstition

C. Image Distinctiveness

The proposed LADDER emoji is intended for the object category. Other emoji in this category include involve technology (🕒 WATCH, 🎮 VIDEO GAME, 🎮 JOYSTICK), tools (🔨 HAMMER, ⚖️ BALANCE SCALE, 🗉 CLAMP), and science (💉 SYRINGE, 🧪 ALEMBIC, 💊 PILL). The ladder emoji -- while distinctively an object, often a tool, and arguably a form a technology -- will stand out from the current set as the only emoji of its kind, as there are not other object emojis depicting stairs or steps.

D. Completeness

The addition of a LADDER emoji will compliment other emoji categories, such as in the object-tool category (🔗 CHAINS, 🔨 HAMMER, 🛠️ NUT AND BOLT) as well as the object-home category (🚪 DOOR, 🔑 KEY, 🚽 TOILET). Due to the versatility of the proposed

LADDER emoji, it will also compliment other available emojis when used in sequences (see Section B: Use in Sequences).

E. Frequently requested

In July 2017, Jennifer 8 Lee (@jenny8lee) asked Twitter if anyone would like to have a LADDER emoji (see Figure I). With 7 replies and 10 likes to date, the consensus is positive (see Figure J). Additional requests for the LADDER emoji come by way of journalist Jennifer Mendelhsen (see Figure K), as game references (see Figure L), from MC Jamie Adenuga (see Figure M), and to celebrate career gains (see Figure N). At least one Twitter user employed the ladder as a metaphor of success by gaining a new emoji (see Figure O). In August 2018, fans of K-pop (or popular music in South Korea) took to twitter to utilize the “bottom of the ladder” metaphor as it relates to hard truths (see Figure P). A LADDER emoji would surely help them do this better!

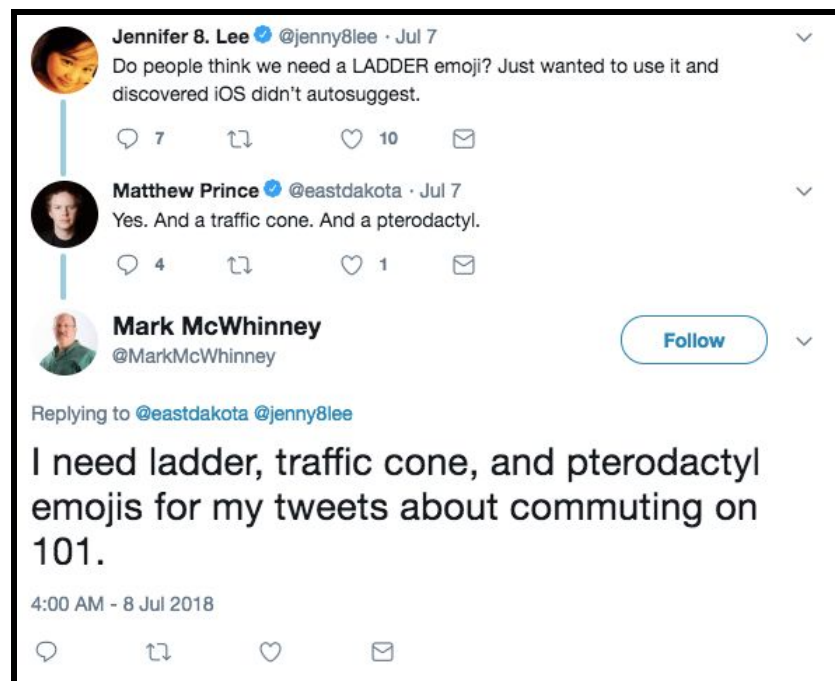


Figure I



Figure J



Figure K



Figure L



Figure M



Figure N



Figure O



Figure P²⁵

Selection Factors Exclusion

F. Overly Specific


The LADDER emoji would be the first of its specific type, as there is not currently an option for steps or stairs.

G. Open Ended

A LADDER emoji would be a unique addition to Unicode characters. It would complement emoji in the object category and as well as in many other categories.

²⁵ Twitter search for “bottom of the ladder”:
<https://twitter.com/search?q=%22bottom%20of%20the%20ladder%22&src=typd>

H. Already Representable

There are not any other emojis or characters that indicate the proposed LADDER emoji shape or purpose. Possible alternatives include  TRIGRAM FOR HEAVEN, which was previously available in Unicode 1.1, or by using a capitalized letter H as a sequence (see Figure M).

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

The proposed LADDER emoji does not represent a specific logo, brand, UI icon, sign, person or deity. No one person or entity can hold a copyright, trademark or claim over the general shape of a ladder.

J. Transient

Ladders have been used since at least 64,000 years ago, and will likely not change its form.



K. Faulty Comparison

Since there is currently not an emoji for steps or stairs, and because TRIGRAM FOR HEAVEN is not included in Unicode 11.0, there will be no possibility for a faulty comparison with the proposed LADDER emoji.

Exact Images

The proposed emoji does not require an exact image to be distinguishable. It allows for many variations in colour and style that will still be identifiable given the basic form.

Sort location

The LADDER emoji is proposed in the “tool” category, after  GEM STONE and before  BALANCE SCALE.

Other Information

(optional)

Character Properties

The other character properties are suggested to be defined as follows.

General Category:

Canonical Combining Class:

Bidirectional Class:

Decomposition Type:

Numeric Type:

Numeric Value:

Bidirectional Mirrored: N Unicode 1 Name:

ISO Comment:

Simple Uppercase Mapping:

Simple Lowercase Mapping:

Simple Title case Mapping:

Author Bios

Kelly Marie Blanchat (kelly.blanchat@gmail.com) is a librarian in New Haven, Connecticut.

She uses social media (#hashtags, sharing, likes) to scaffold (a type of ladder!) learning outcomes for information retrieval and using information in socially conscious ways. She is 5'3" tall, and needs a ladder to clean the top of her refrigerator and to water her hard-to-reach plants.