Priorities for Emoji Updates 2021+

From: Jeremy Burge on behalf of the Unicode Emoji Subcommittee
To: Unicode Technical Committee
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Introduction

A 2019 document from the Emoji Subcommittee (L2/19-101) outlined a number of priorities for future emoji releases, particularly in relation to diversity and consistency on the emoji keyboard.

This document is to provide the UTC with an updated set of goals from the Emoji Subcommittee, particularly around emoji updates which may require a large number of code points, sequences, or changes to emoji intake processes.

This is not a proposal, and separate proposals would be required for any additions listed below. Goals may change over time, however this gives a view of the current aspirations of the Emoji Subcommittee in ensuring a diverse and consistent emoji set over time.

Background

Of the six goals set out in the 2019 priorities document, three have been achieved or are underway. The status of these prior goals is as follows:

1. Gender neutral / gender inclusive emoji (eg Artist, Person With Probing Cane)
   - ✅ Added in Emoji 12.1
2. Mixed skin tone support for multi-person groupings (Kiss, and Couples With Hearts)
   - ✅ Drafted for Emoji 13.1
3. Mixed skin tone support for Handshake
   - ✅ Drafted for Emoji 14.0
4. Mixed skin tone support for Families
   - ⛔ Consensus is that no action be taken (documented in L2/20-114)
5. Emoji direction sequences (eg orientation / left-right)
   - ⏸ Consensus is that no action to be taken on this
6. Color variation sequences (eg colored ribbon, white wine)
   - ⏸ Consensus is that no action to be taken on this. Color variations such as 'colored ribbons' for any existing emoji are not being considered at this time.

Future Goals

Areas the Emoji Subcommittee will be prioritizing for Emoji 15.0 include the following categories:

Process
- Improvements to Emoji Intake Process
- Update to Emoji Selection Factors
- Focus on globally relevant, communicative emojis
- Cross platform design consistency for new emoji additions

Emoji
- Gender and skin tone inconsistencies
- Emoji Shortcode support

Emoji 14.0 (2021)

Gender and Skin Tone Inconsistencies [L2/20-196]

- Resolve remaining gender inconsistencies for the following emoji:
    a. Princess *(proposal submitted)*
    b. Prince *(proposal submitted)*
    c. Pregnant Woman *(proposal submitted)*
    d. Woman Dancing *(ESC currently investigating possible paths forward)*
    e. Man Dancing *(ESC currently investigating possible paths forward)*

Some gender options remain explicitly gendered with no additional gender support (Woman With Headscarf) and others offer only an inclusive representation without male or female designs (e.g. Person in Suit Levitating).

Emoji Short Codes

A number of platforms implement text-based input for the RGI emoji set using emoji codes or emoji short codes. These use a format such as :watermelon: to display 🍉 U+1F349 WATERMELON in supported software.

These codes are not standardized by Unicode and vary by app or web service. The Emoji Subcommittee aims to look into Emoji Shortcodes and:

1. Whether Unicode has the resources to standardize a set of emoji codes
2. If platforms using shortcodes express an interest in using a standardized set
3. What a standardized set of shortcodes might look like, particularly regarding backward-compatibility with existing platforms
4. How such a set of shortcodes might handle future CLDR name changes, or if the shortcodes are to be independently decided separately from CLDR

If the ESC decides to pursue this goal, it will need to produce documentation about how the process to determine shortcodes will work, as well as the format in which these will be published with future emoji releases.

Emoji 15.0 (2022)

Emoji Intake

The current emoji intake process has evolved over time, updating to cater to the specific demands that apply to emoji proposals which are less relevant for other character proposals.

It is a goal of the Emoji Subcommittee to identify useful, globally relevant emoji.

To accomplish this goal, we are looking to improve the proposal submission form with a new process that will guide proposers to produce more consistent, actionable proposals.

Given the growth of emoji, there is a need to streamline the internal review and intake processes for these proposals.

Skin Tone Inconsistencies [L2/20-196]

- With the exception of the previously-noted multi-skin toned family emoji (L2/20-114), there are a number of remaining skin tone sequence inconsistencies for the following emoji:

    a. People With Bunny Ears
    b. Women With Bunny Ears
    c. Men With Bunny Ears
    d. People Wrestling
    e. Women Wrestling
    f. Men Wrestling

No determination has yet been reached about whether mixed skin tone support for these emojis is justified.

If these are considered for mixed skin tone support, Emoji 15.0 would be the earliest release that could include such changes.

Emoji 16.0+ (2023+)

The Emoji Subcommittee is aware of the following areas of expansion, and has no specified goal or timeframe regarding the following types of sequences.

These are not currently considered a priority, but may be considered in future releases from Emoji 16.0+.

1. Emoji Direction / Orientation

2. Color Variation Sequences
3. QID Emoji

Note

Some of the areas within this document may involve public consultation (PRI) at the appropriate time.

Emoji groupings and priorities included in this document are not an exhaustive list of possibilities. Recommendations and timelines may change over time.