

Proposal for Emoji: INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER

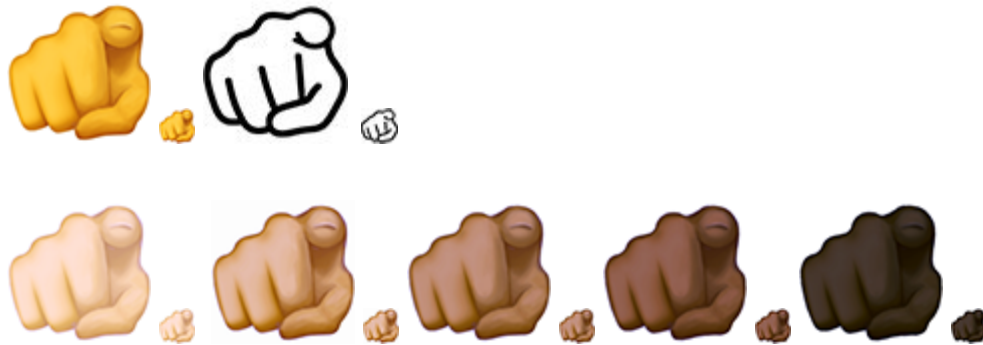
Submitter: Marcel Pauluk; Ci Pschk.

Date: orig. March 30, 2020, rev. June 24, 2020.

1. Identification

- A. **CLDR Short name:** INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER.
- B. **CLDR keywords:** finger, hand, index, point, viewer.

2. Images



Credit: Ci Pschk. Free for use in conjunction with this proposal.

- 3. **Sort Order:** in the “hand-single-finger” category, after INDEX POINTING UP.

Abstract

We are requesting the addition of an INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER emoji. It would complement the existing INDICES POINTING emoji set and is almost universally used for drawing the attention of the receptor of the message to themselves.

Introduction

Emerging in humankind from the intersection of the realms of nature and nurture, the gesture of pointing is the first and most fundamental human gesture. At around 12 months of age we are already pointing,¹ mainly with our *digitus secundus* (forefinger or index finger), no matter where we live, no matter in what culture we are brought up.² It is also a unique human feature, since we are the only primate species who communicates with each other through pointing gestures.³

Culturally speaking, the visual representation of the pointing finger (also called *manicule*, fig. 1) is also pretty old. Although impossible to establish with certainty, at least from the 12th century on it was one of the most common graphical signs to be found on the margins of manuscripts and printed books.⁴ Those *manicules* were already coded as *Miscellaneous Dingbats* by Unicode since its very first version 1.0.0, way before emoji had joined the Standard. Today, despite not being technically part of Unicode's emoji subset, some of these codepoints were emojiified and bear the same graphic rendering as other emoji.⁵

This emoji subset category of INDICES POINTING, however, lacks an important item: the INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER. This visual representation does not have such an ancient history as the *manicule*, but it is deeply ingrained in our contemporary culture. One of the oldest drawings to explore this perspective of the pointing finger is that of Pontormo, an Italian painter of the 16th century (fig. 2).



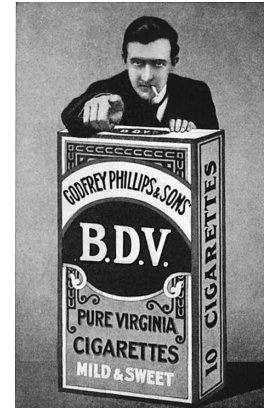
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Leiden VLQMS99 (13th c.) Jacopo Pontormo, IT (1525) Bartolomé Murillo, ES (1660) Unknown, UK (ca. 1910)

¹ Liszkowski, U., Brown, P., Callaghan, T., Takada, A. and de Vos, C. (2012), A Prelinguistic Gestural Universal of Human Communication. *Cognitive Science*, 36: 698-713.

² For a relativization of this claim, cf. Wilkins, D. (2003). Why Pointing With the Index Finger is Not a Universal (in Sociocultural and Semiotic Terms). In S. Kita S (Ed.), *Pointing: Where language, culture, and cognition meet* (pp. 171-215). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

³ Tomasello, M. (2006). Why don't apes point? In N. Enfield & S. Levinson (Eds.), *The roots of human sociality: Culture, cognition, and interaction*. (pp. 506-524) Oxford, UK: Berg.

⁴ Sherman, W. H. (2005). Toward a History of the Manicule. In R. Myers, M. Harris, & G. Mandelbrot (Eds.), *OWNERS, ANNOTATORS AND THE SIGNS OF READING* (pp. 19-48). Oak Knoll Press.

⁵ Gawne, L., & McCulloch, G. (2019). Emoji as digital gestures. *Language@Internet*, 17, article 2.

During the Baroque period, a handful of examples can also be found, like Murillo's "El joven gallero" (fig. 3). Explanations of the artists' intention with these pointing hands are, however, controversial. The first acquainted use of the pointing index as a rhetorical device to address the receptor of the message is Godfrey Phillips and Sons' Pure Virginia cigarettes ad (fig. 4), ca. 1910. In 1914, influenced by this ad and by advertisement rhetoric in general, the British graphic designer Alfred Leete created the first recruitment poster of its kind (fig. 5). Actually, Leete's poster worked so well and became so popular that it did not take long for lots of similar posters to start popping up all over the world (figs. 5-12), as put by Italian historian Carlo Ginzburg:

During the war, or immediately after the war, more or less reworked versions of the Kitchener poster were made in Italy, Hungary, and Germany. In the United States and the Soviet Union Lord Kitchener reappeared, disguised as, respectively, Uncle Sam and Trotsky. This long series of imitations and variations (along with, as we shall see, inversions and parodies) proves the effectiveness of Lord Kitchener's poster: arguably the most successful ever.⁶



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Alfred Leete, UK (1914)



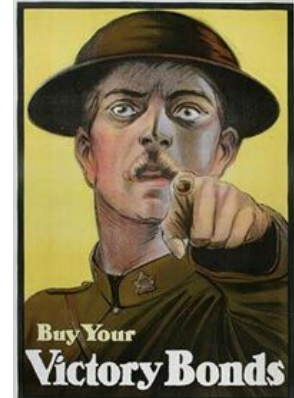
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Unknown, UK (1915)



7

James Flagg, US (1917)



8

Unknown, CA (ca. 1918)



9

Unknown, US (ca. 1917)



10

Julius Engelhard, DE (1919)



11

Dmitry Moor, RU (1920)



12

Unknown, BR (1932)

⁶ Ginzburg, C. (2001). "Your Country Needs You": a Case Study in Political Iconography. *History Workshop Journal*, n°.52.

Since then, the number of parodies, pastiches, remakings, plagiarisms, appropriations, homages, samplings, remixes etc. of those posters (figs. 13-16)—in particular of the 1917 James Flagg's Uncle-Sams-wants-you poster (fig. 7)—have grown immensely.



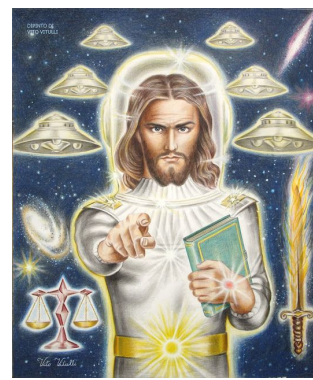
13

Norman Mingo, US (1969)



14

Roy Lichtenstein, US (1973)



15

Vito Vitulli, IT (1976)



16

Wolfe, US (1989)

The high popularity of the INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER representation makes it a very demanded image on the internet. All stock image providers and similar sites offer a large variety of photos, images, illustrations (and even emoji-like pictures) featuring it (fig. 17-28). It is important to note how this specific gesture can be combined with a great array of emotional states to convey very clearly addressed messages.



17

[iStockphoto](#)



18

[Shutterstock](#)



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[Adobe](#)



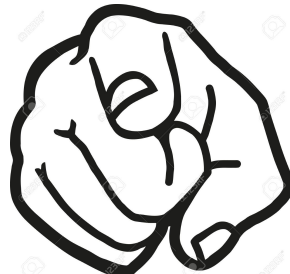
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[123rf](#)



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[pngfind](#)



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[123rf](#)



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[Vectorstock](#)



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[Pixtastock](#)



25
EmojiRequest



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pngfind

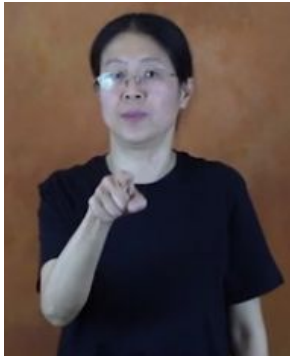


27
Vectorstock

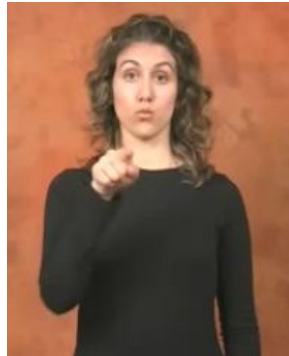


28
Dreamstime

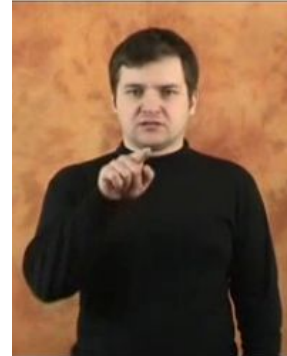
But the extent of use of this sign goes even further: According to a comparative search done in the multilingual dictionary of sign languages from the European Sign Language Centre, the visual-gestural representation for the second-person singular personal pronoun "you" is the INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER for at least 30 languages.⁷



29
Chinese “你”



30
Spanish “tú”



31
Russian “ты”



32
Urdu “تو”

To conclude this introduction, the importance of INDICES POINTING to us humans can never be highlighted enough, as said one of the first philosophers to theorize *Deixis*⁸, Karl Bühler:⁹

Nonetheless, one proposition remains phenomenologically valid: although *the index finger*, the natural tool of ocular demonstration, may well be replaced by other deictic clues, although it is even replaced in speech concerning things that are present, the assistance it and its equivalents provide *can never completely cease and simply be dispensed with*, not even in anaphora, the most remarkable mode of pointing, the one specific to language.

⁷ English (UK, USA, India), Portuguese (Brazil, Portugal), Polish, Lithuanian, Icelandic, Spanish (Spain, Argentina, Chile), Turkish, French, Swedish, German (Germany, Austria), Croatian, Russian, Belarusian, Bulgarian, Czech, Estonian, Hindi, Italian, Latvian, Romanian, Slovak, Urdu, Chinese (spreadthesign.com).

⁸ “*Deixis* is derived from the Greek δεικνύναι meaning “to show”. Pointing is a *deictic* gesture used to reorient the attention of another person so that an object becomes the shared focus for attention.” From: Kita, S. (2003). *Pointing: Where language, culture, and cognition meet*. Mahwah, N.J: L. Erlbaum Associates.

⁹ Bühler, K. (1934). *Sprachtheorie*. Die Darstellungsfunktion der Sprache. Jena: Fischer.

Selection Factors – Inclusion

Compatibility

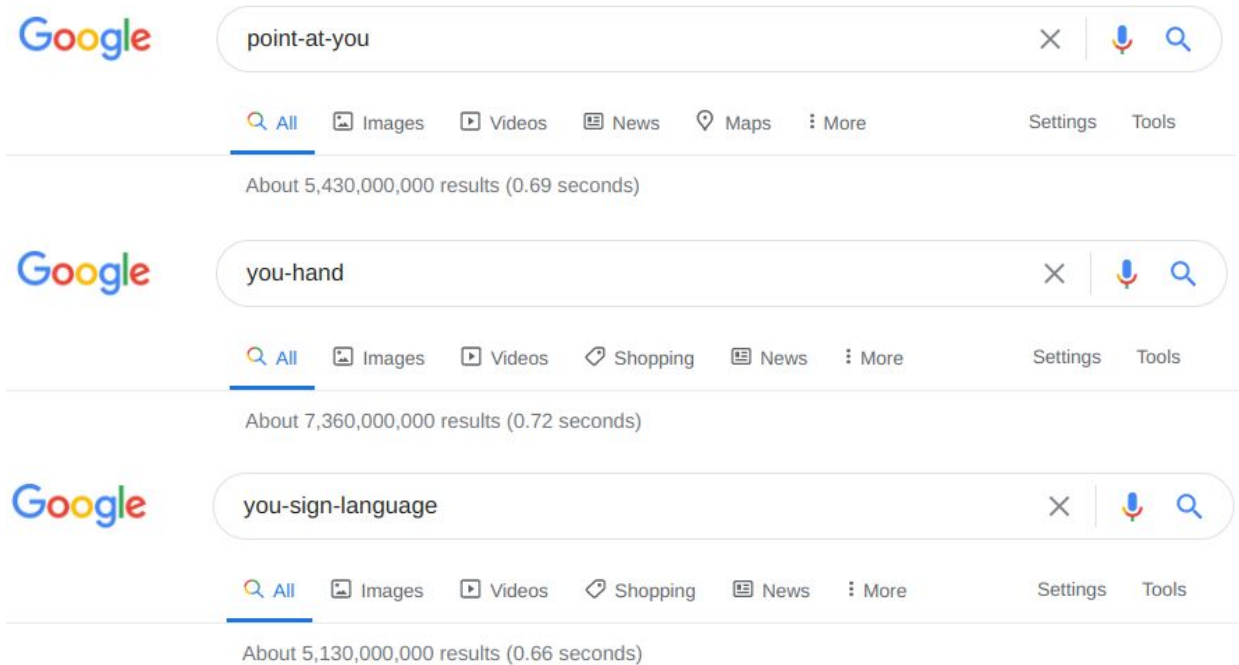
Not applicable.

Expected Usage Level

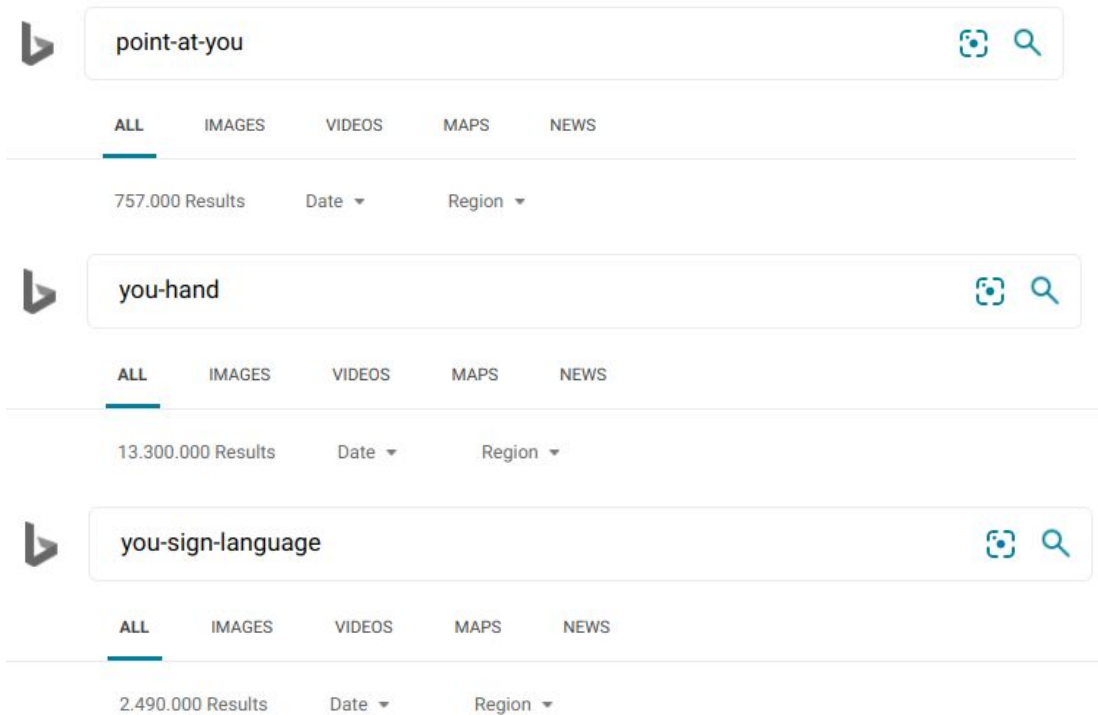
Frequency

The expected usage of the INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER emoji is very high, in part because making reference to/ pointing at the receiver of the message is something natural to almost all human beings, in part because its image is already so deeply rooted in our culture, both as a recurring visual symbol and as a gestural word in most sign languages vocabularies. However, producing statistics for it is somewhat difficult because there is neither a single word to name this gesture nor a consensual way to describe it. Since it appears to be sufficient—and also to simplify things—, only the verbal construction “point-at-you” and the descriptive constructions “you-hand” and “you-sign-language” will be tested for frequency.

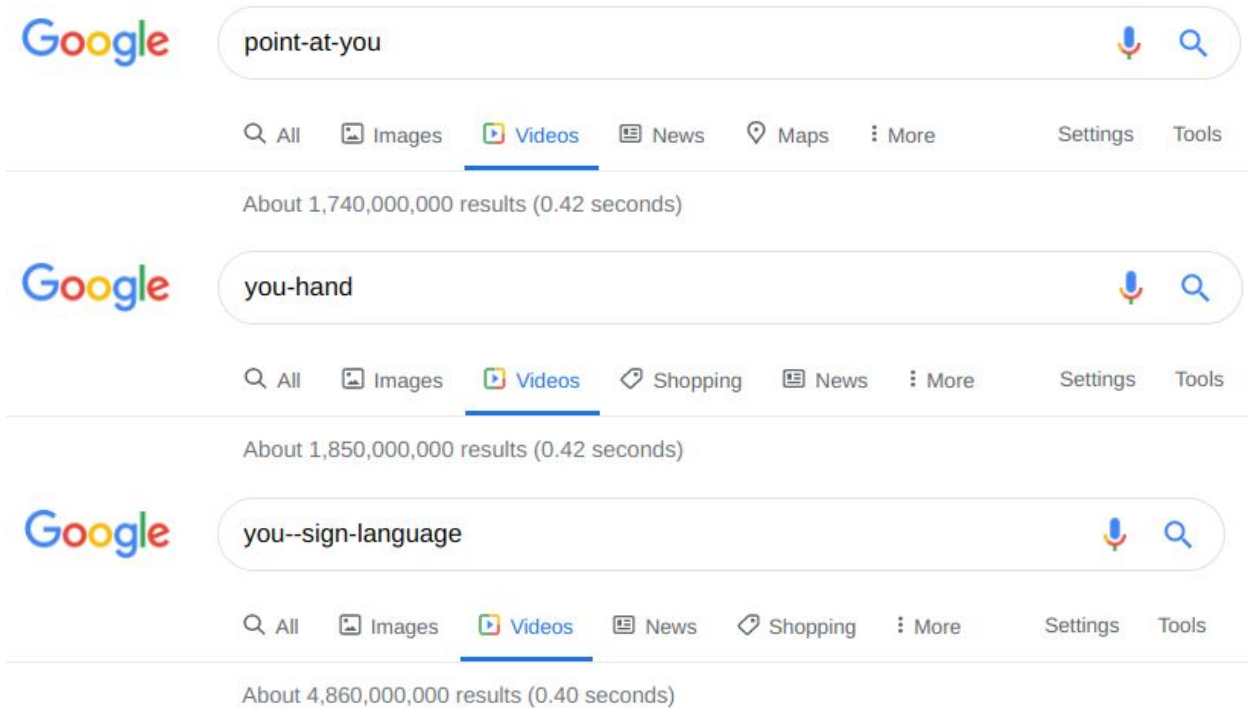
Google Search



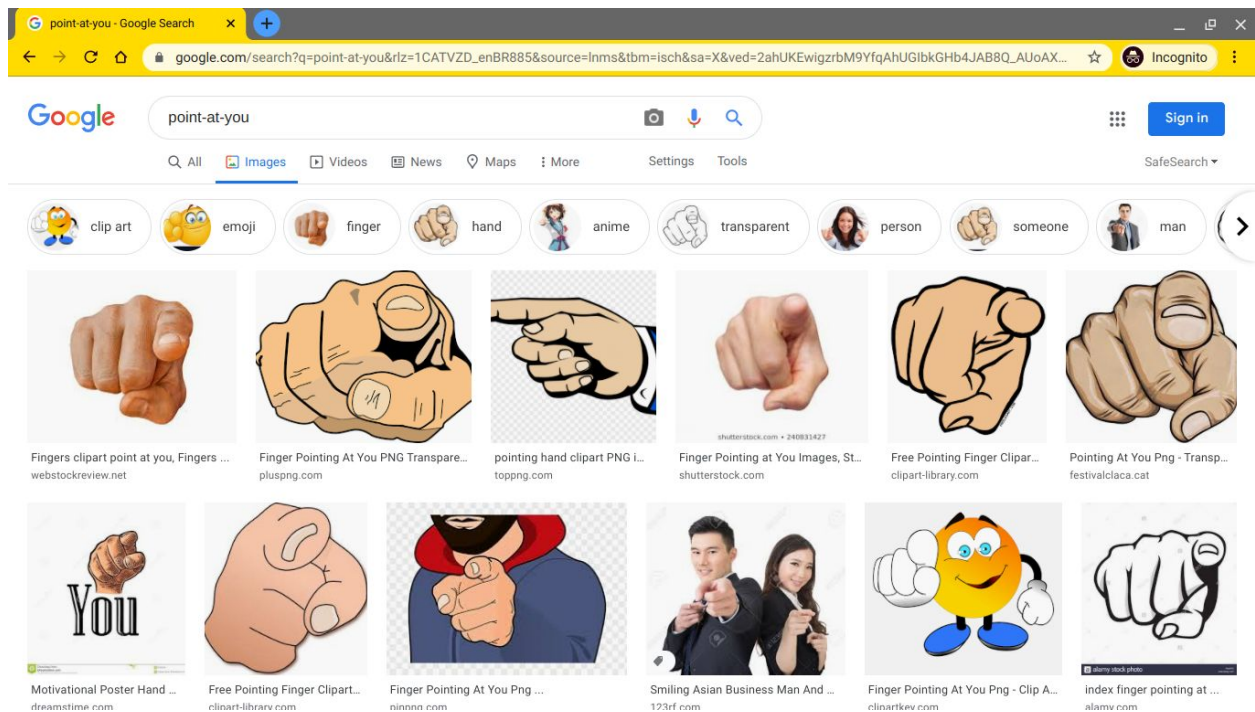
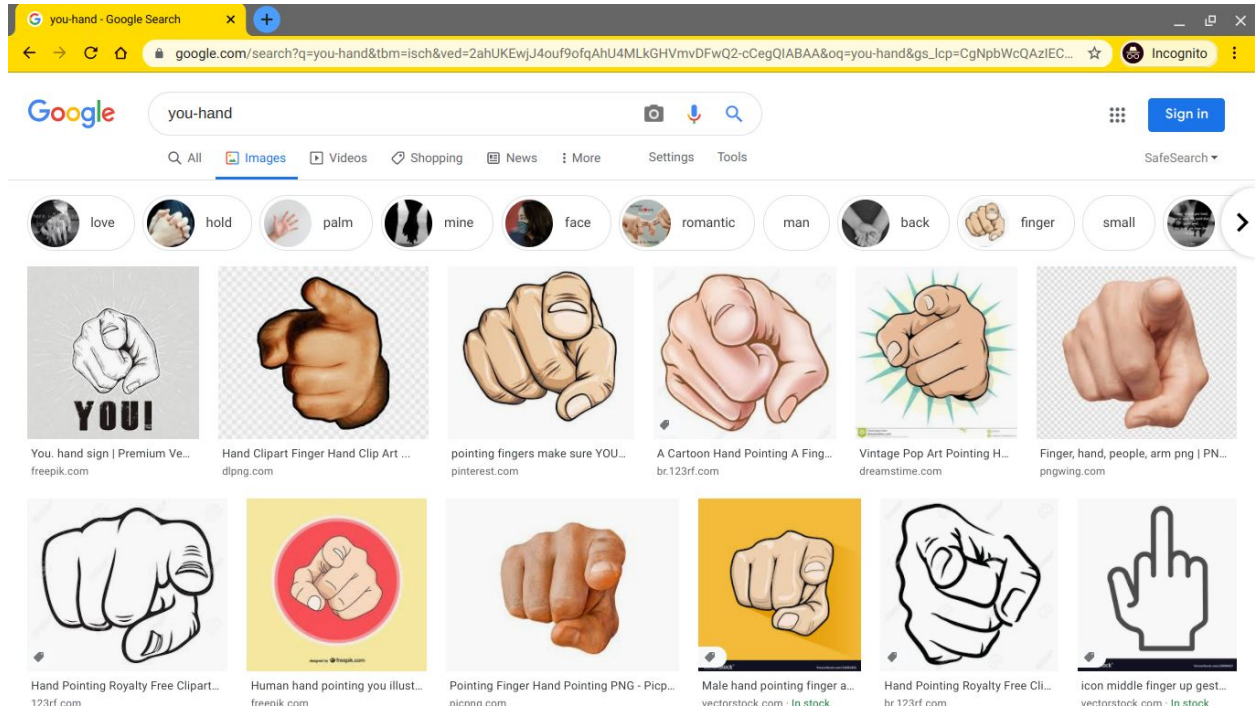
Bing Search



Google Video Search

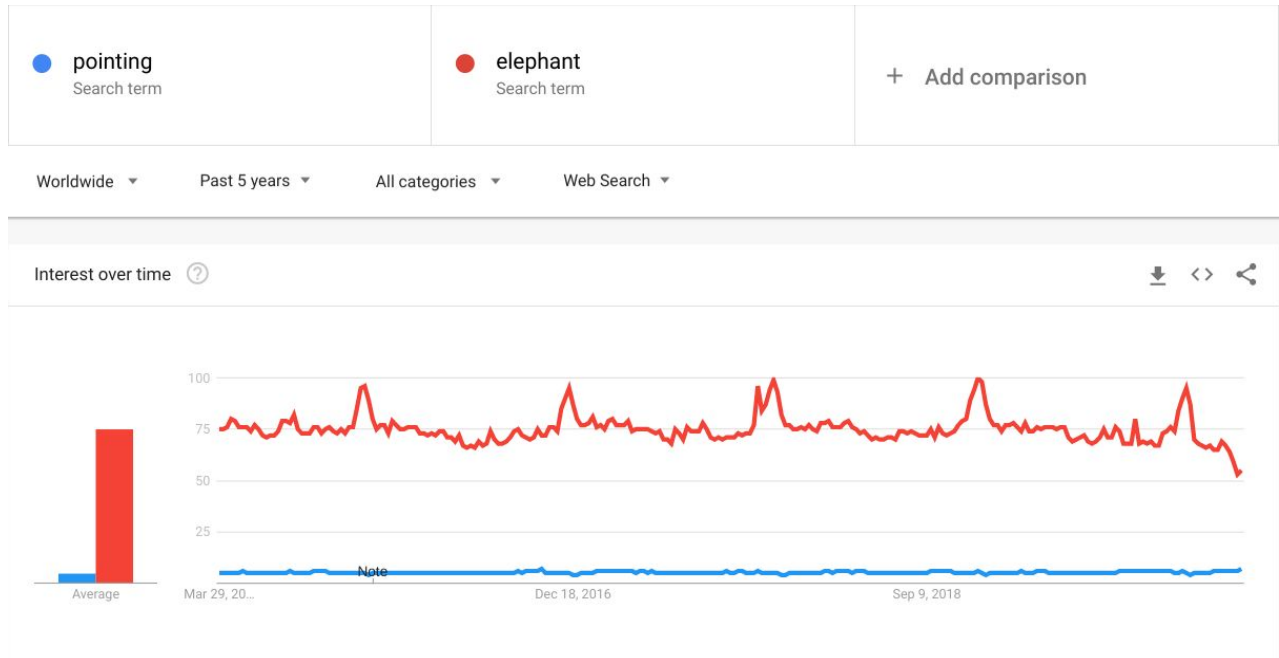


Google Images

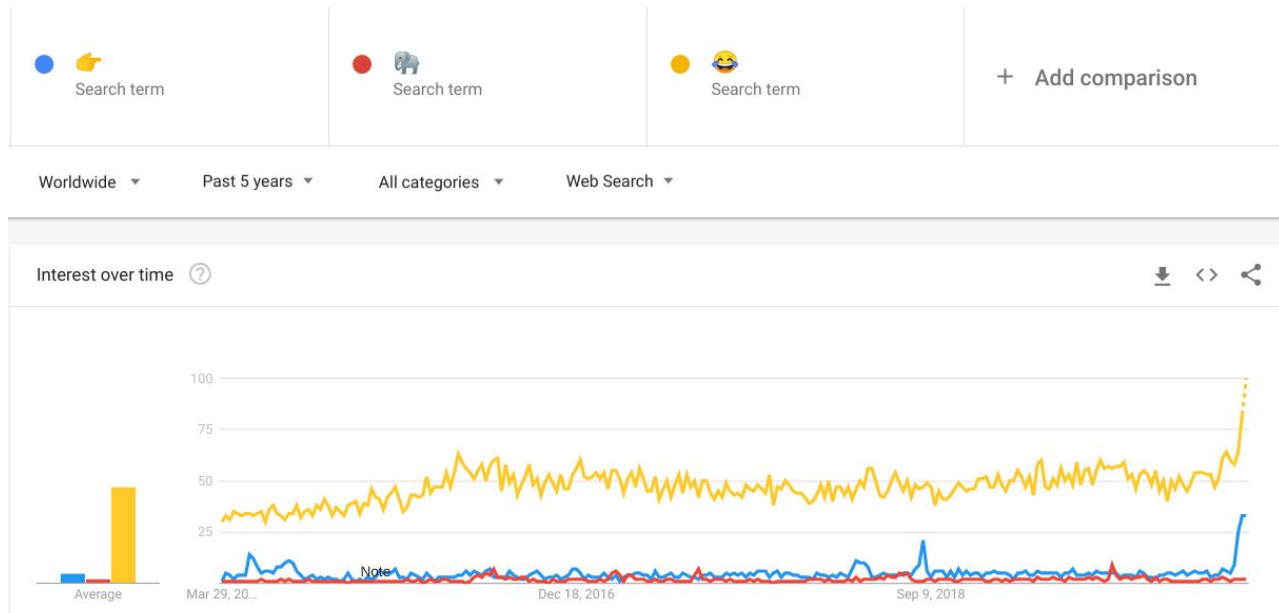


Google Trends: Web Search

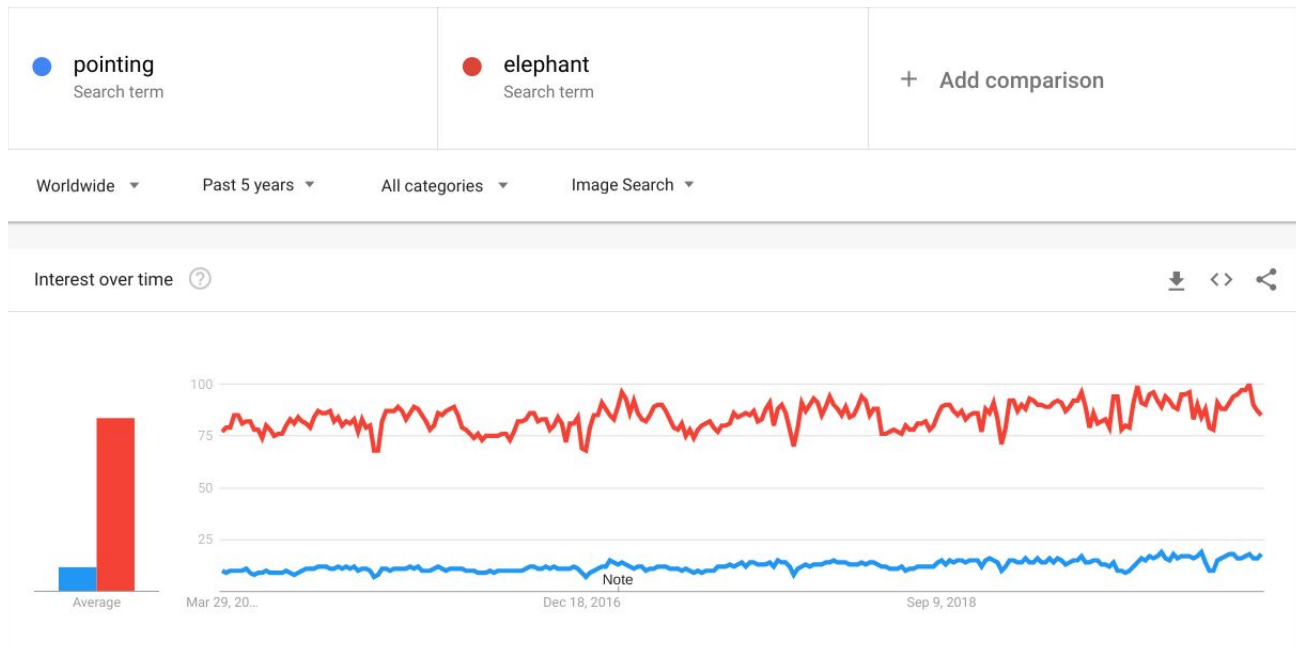
To make comparisons viable, just the word “pointing” was used here. It may not seem so, but the meaning of the gerund “pointing” is pretty specific, and even when it does not envisage a finger doing the job, it could *a/ways* be a finger (even an imaginary one) doing it.



There is no scientific proof of it, but it is a very plausible hypothesis that INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER would have a similar usage frequency like all other INDICES POINTING. Trends toward BACKHAND INDEX POINTING RIGHT and ELEPHANT emoji were very similar until recently, when the former simply skyrocketed. ROFL emoji was also added for reference.



Google Trends: Image Search




Multiple Usages

The INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER emoji represents the following concepts:

- First and above all, this emoji depicts a frontal one-point perspective drawing of a hand with its palm facing downward, index finger extended and remaining fingers curled under the hand with the thumb held down, and this very description is its denotative meaning.
- Semiotically speaking, it works mainly as an indexical sign that draws attention to the receptor of the message.
- Grammatically, it is equivalent to the personal pronoun “you”, both in general non-verbal communication and in sign languages around the world.
- It can work as an archetype: The *j'accuse* finger-pointing gesture.
- It can metaphorically represent a hierarchical relation or authority figures, like parents, bosses, teachers, etc.
- Rhetorically, it can work fallaciously as a *tu quoque*.
- It can symbolize all recruitment posters and visual communications alike.

Use in sequences

This emoji candidate has great combinatorial capabilities, but one of these sequential combinations has the potential of surpassing all others and becoming a global hit. Take, for instance, Milton Glaser's world famous logotype **I♥NY** and mix it with Paul Rand's also renowned  **M** rebus poster for IBM. By now, it may already be clear where I am heading to:



“I Love New York” (1977)



“Eye Bee M” (1981)



“I Love You”

The day Unicode shall spread an emoji-only message of love *between* people all around the world is on the horizon! Even if spelling out words with emojis is not so usual¹⁰ (the 👁 should be read as the first-person singular personal pronoun “I”), the expectation of usage of this sequence can be considered very high.

But the possibilities are many: The first six examples below could be zwidged to a new glyph, although that seems unnecessary. Among them, the first four manifest emotions, the last two represent characters. The last six examples can be either literal (9, 11), metaphorical (7, 8, 10), or both (12). And of course these are just examples, they do not exhaust the possibilities.

1. INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER + STAR-STRUCK → YOU LOOK INCREDIBLE!
2. INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER + FLUSHED FACE → YOU... DID... THAT?
3. INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER + ROFL → LAUGHING AT YOU
4. INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER + TIRED FACE → IT IS ALL YOUR FAULT!



1



2

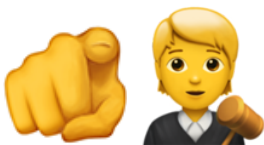


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5. INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER + JUDGE → YOU HAVE BEEN FOUND GUILTY!
6. INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER + BEAR → SMOKEY BEAR
7. INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER + BELLHOP BELL → THIS WILL RING A BELL
8. EYE + INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER → KEEPING AN EYE ON YOU



5



6



7



8

¹⁰ Solomon, J. (2020). Emoji Spelling is Peachy. *Emojipedia Blog*.

9. INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER + PERSON BOWING → I SAY, YOU OBEY!
10. INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER + SPARKLES → MAGIC TOUCH
11. INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER + DROP OF BLOOD → FINGER-PRICK BLOOD
12. INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER + COFFIN → MEMENTO MORI or YOU DIE!



Breaking new ground


Yes! All existing deictic emoji  are primarily *endophoric*, i.e. they can mainly refer to language (words, images or other emoji) inside the text in which they are found.¹¹ That was a technical limitation, because those signs were acting between the x and y axes in a constrained two-dimensional space. This candidate emoji will add to the deictic set the capacity to reach the z-axis of the third dimension, making it the *first* of all to be capable of exophoric reference, i.e. to refer to something that *is not* inside the text. Exophoric references are a little bit difficult to be done visually, and the INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER is one of few possibilities available.

Image Distinctiveness

Although not exactly an easy perspective drawing, the INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER is a very popular and recognizable image, as shown in the introduction of this proposal. Even on a very small scale, this emoji is easily distinctable from other similar ones, like the ONCOMING FIST or the RAISED FIST.



size: 10 pt (typographic unit)



size: 40 pt (typographic unit)

¹¹ Actually, they can also be tricked to convey an exophoric reference, like in the following example:
“😬... she’s near you! Look slightly to your left ➡️”. Nevertheless, they still can not draw the receptor’s attention to themselves.

Completeness

The addition of this INDEX POINTING AT THE VIEWER to the previous set of five INDICES POINTING (left, right, 2x up, down) would fill an obvious gap: As the four main two-dimensional directional positions of the hand are already coded, this one will probably complete the set for good.

Frequently Requested



Not Applicable.

Selection Factors – Exclusion

Overly Specific

Not Applicable.

Open-ended

This will not be an open-ended inclusion. In theory, INDICES POINTING versions of the UP-RIGHT, DOWN-RIGHT, UP-LEFT and DOWN-LEFT ARROWS  could be proposed, but their function would not be any different from those arrows' function (they would fall in the “already representable” category). A proposal of a FIRST-PERSON VIEW OF INDEX POINTING emoji could also be conceived, but it would have almost no semantic nor deictic function since it would not point to anything unless it could be superimposed on another image. Furthermore, it would be easily mistaken for the BACKHAND INDEX POINTING UP .

Already Representable

There is currently no other way to directly draw the attention of the receiver of a message to themselves with an emoji—in other words: it is impossible to point to the viewer meaning “YOU!”

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

Although the INDEX POINTING TO THE VIEWER promptly brings to mind the famous “Uncle-Sam-wants-you” poster and other derivative works, the gesture of pointing towards someone cannot be registered, copyrighted or trademarked. It is and will ever be a natural human gesture.

Transient

As long as humans still have hands with fingers on them and are still capable of using language at least in its most simple form, this emoji will be meaningful and relevant. 😊

Faulty Comparison

All comparisons are mostly to other INDICES POINTING emoji, this one being simply a directional variation of those. There is no comparison to any existing compatibility emoji.

Exact Images

Like all other emoji representing hands or any other body part, this proposal does not require a specific representation.

Author Biographies



Marcel Pauluk (marcelpauluk@ufpr.br) loves melancholic comics, abstract pictograms and oxymora. He teaches (Emoji) Design History, (Emoji) Communication Theory and (Emoji) Semiotics. One day at the University he overheard that emoji were *pointless*. He knew he must take action.



Ci Pschk (pschk.ci@gmail.com) loves spicy food, Quantum Physics and the Moomins. She is a UWCer living, drawing and washing her clothes in Դիլիջան, Armenia. She thinks there is no *point* in rejecting this proposal.