

{DONKEY Emoji Proposal

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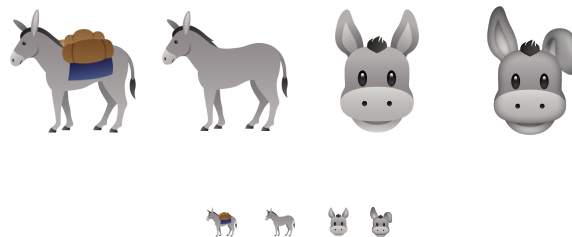
Date: March 31, 2019 -- Revised January 20, 2020

Emoji Name: DONKEY/MULE

Sort Order: in the ANIMALS category, after HORSE

Reference Emoji: WRENCH

Keywords: donkey, mule, burro, Democrat, ass, jackass



*Credit: Apee Messer. Free for use in conjunction with this proposal
Black and white images available on request when the final color image is determined.*

This proposal was updated 1/20/20 based on ESC feedback to include an image with a floppy ear, so as to distinguish the image from HORSE HEAD. The stats were also updated to compare against ELEPHANT.

Abstract

This proposal requests the addition of the DONKEY or MULE emoji to the Unicode emoji library.

While we understand that this might look similar to a HORSE, we feel there are significant ways to differentiate it: including a head-only shot that can emphasize the length of the ears, as well as putting sacks on the back. The distinct color pattern (gray and black) will help differentiate it as well.

The DONKEY/MULE also is culturally significant in Middle Eastern and American culture in ways that horses cannot begin to emulate. For one, DONKEYS represent the Democratic party, which is key given that ELEPHANT represents the Republican Party. In addition, DONKEYS were domesticated long before horses in the Middle East; research indicates that the creatures were being ridden and used in work during the

Bronze Age, which began in 3300 B.C.E.¹ As will be noted below, the sacred texts originating in these nations, too, feature repeated mentions of “the ass,” another name for DONKEY. As one of the most important animals in the history of mankind--they have, quite literally, borne us across the world--DONKEYS deserve an emoji of their own.

Introduction

In addition to being a political symbol for the Democratic Party in the United States, the DONKEY has a long and storied history from classical literature to recent pop culture to everyday use as a beast of burden in agrarian societies.

DONKEYS and MULES are prominently featured in the following works:

- **Winnie the Pooh Series:** The lovably morose DONKEY Eeyore made his first appearance in 1926 in the Winnie the Pooh series, by A.A. Milne, and continues to be a lovable stuffed animal and animated star of children’s films today.
- **Don Quijote:** In Miguel de Cervantes’ Spanish classic *Don Quijote*, his sidekick Sancho Panza rides a DONKEY named Dapple. The statue of Don Quijote and Sancho Panza in the Plaza de España in Madrid is a popular tourist destination.²
- **George Washington** is recognized as the first mule breeder in the United States.³
- **Shrek:** The famous comedian Eddie Murphy did the voice acting for the character simply known as DONKEY in the blockbuster animated film *Shrek*, which grossed nearly \$500 million in 2001, the fourth-highest worldwide box office of the year.⁴
- **Shakespeare:** In the Bard’s rollicking comedy *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, know-it-all Nick Bottom finds himself bewitched by trickster fairies and “all translated,” with the mischievous sprite Puck giving him an ass’s head to match his inner foolishness.⁵ Titania, the Fairy Queen, is enchanted to love the transmuted Bottom (who demonstrates a fondness for hay and desire to have his ears scratched), and when the various spells are broken, the man fondly recalls his time among beasts.

1

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/donkeys-ancient-middle-near-east-archaeology-horses-bit-wear-tell-essafi-israel-a8354511.html>

2

<https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/photo/plaza-de-espana-madrid-sculptures-of-don-high-res-stock-photography/543038310>

³ <http://www.mulemuseum.org/history-of-the-mule.html>

⁴ <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/yearly/chart/?view2=worldwide&yr=2001&p=.htm>

⁵ <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/midsummer/midsummer.3.1.html>

- **Ancient Egypt:** According to a 2016 article in the *New York Times*, “About 5,000 years ago, 10 DONKEYS were laid to rest in painstakingly constructed brick grave chambers at a site connected with one of the earliest Egyptian kings. They were buried in a place of importance, ‘where the highest lords would be,’ said Fiona Marshall, an archaeologist at Washington University in St. Louis who studies the domestication of DONKEYS. Because of their importance in trade across the Sahara, she said, DONKEYS had ‘superhigh status.’”⁶
- **Biblical:** Balaam’s DONKEY is the only animal to speak in the Bible besides the serpent that tricked Adam and Eve. As Balaam is traveling to misguidedly curse the people of Israel, his DONKEY recognizes an angel of God (Yahweh) and stops. Balaam strikes the DONKEY three times, failing to see the angel. Only upon his DONKEY speaking are Balaam’s eyes opened to the presence of an angel, who castigates him for striking his ASS. Balaam then realizes it’s the will of Yahweh to bless the people of Israel, which he does, over the objections of his fellow travelers.⁷⁸ So, it’s not much of a stretch to suggest that a talking DONKEY may have saved the Israelites. Later, in the New Testament, Jesus Christ rides in Jerusalem on the back of a DONKEY, fulfilling an ancient prophecy and symbolizing His humility and position as the Savior of all mankind, especially the poor and downtrodden.⁹
- **English Language:** The term “MULE” has come to refer to any person or entity that smuggles illegal drugs across border lines, reflecting the storied history of the DONKEY as the original “beast of burden”--that is, anything that carries a heavy load. In just one example, Clint Eastwood’s 2018 film *The Mule* tells the (true) story of an elderly Korean War veteran (played by Eastwood himself) who finds himself smuggling heroin for gangs.¹⁰ Another popular (if less “mature”) term for DONKEY is *jackass*, which, over time, has come to mean anyone who acts in a thoughtless, rude, braying manner (it is no coincidence that the obnoxious Johnny Knoxville’s invasive prank show is called *Jackass*).¹¹ Like the *snake in the grass* and *sleeping dog*, the DONKEY’s presence in the English lexicon denotes its long history and close ties to mankind.

⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/01/science/donkeys.html>

⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Balaam>

⁸ <https://www.cgi.org/salaam-the-prophet-of-error>

⁹ <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+21%3A1-11&version=NIV>

¹⁰ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Mule_\(2018_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Mule_(2018_film))

¹¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jackass_\(franchise\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jackass_(franchise))

Compatibility

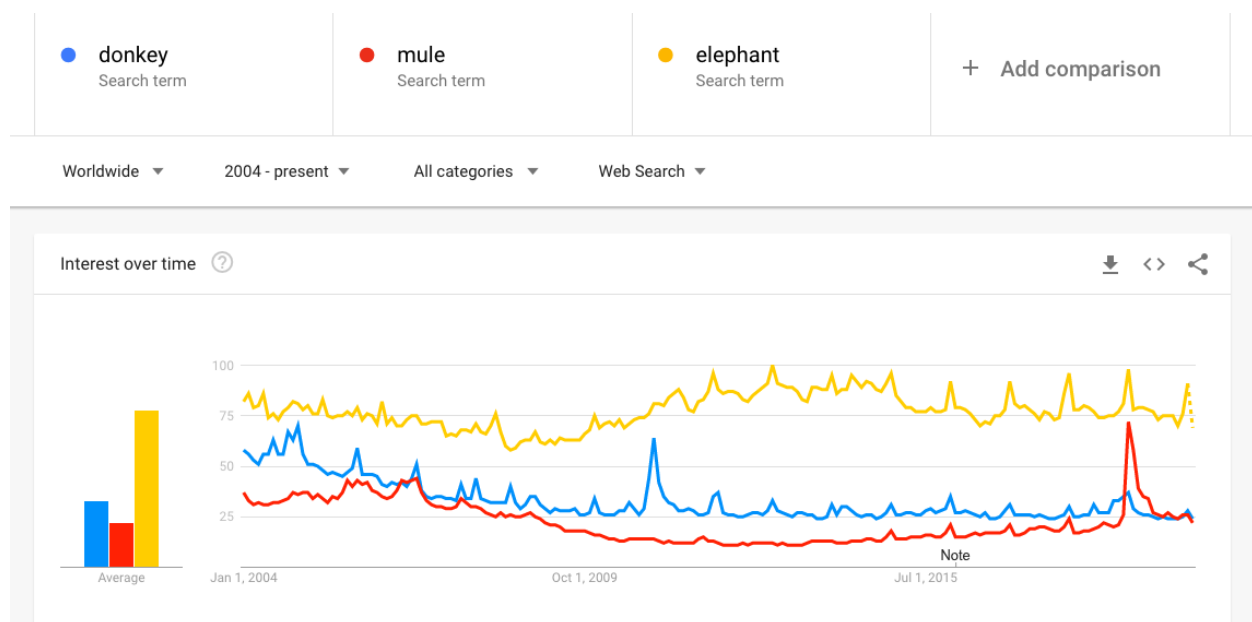
Both [WeChat](#) and [Skype](#) have DONKEY emoji-like icons, though Google, Apple, Facebook and Microsoft do not.

Expected Usage Level

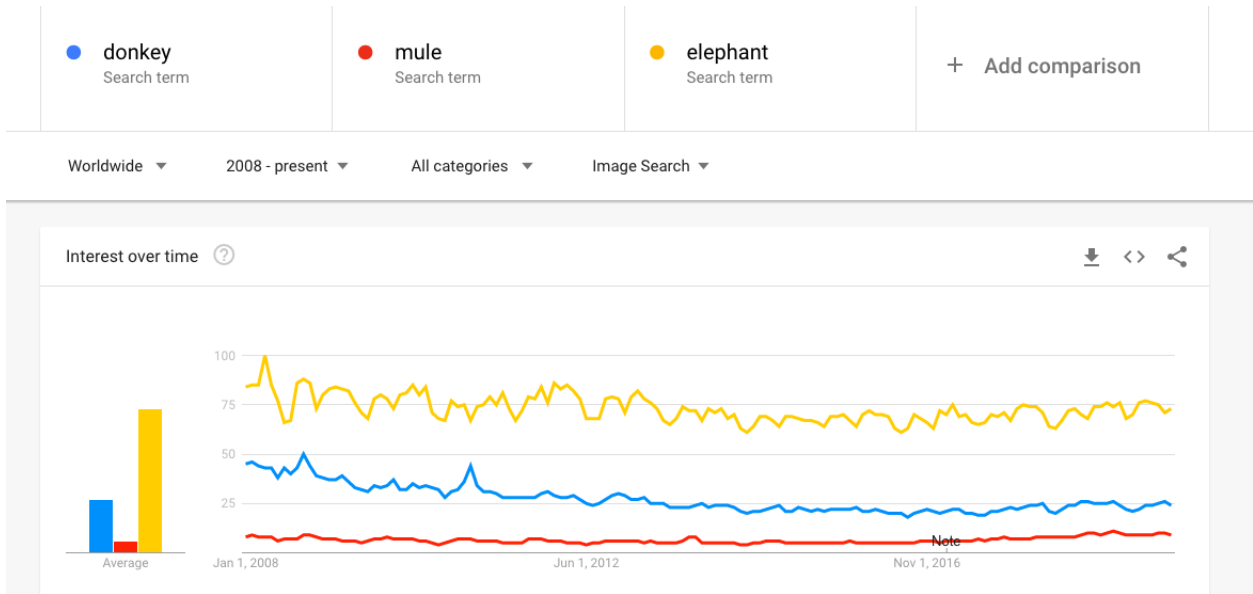
- Frequency

The DONKEY and MULE can be found in both Americas, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, serving as “beasts of burden” (that is, laboring animals), creatures designed to ride, or exhibits in zoos. Given that DONKEYs have been used for millennia, we anticipate that people will use this new emoji frequently.

Google Trends: Web Search

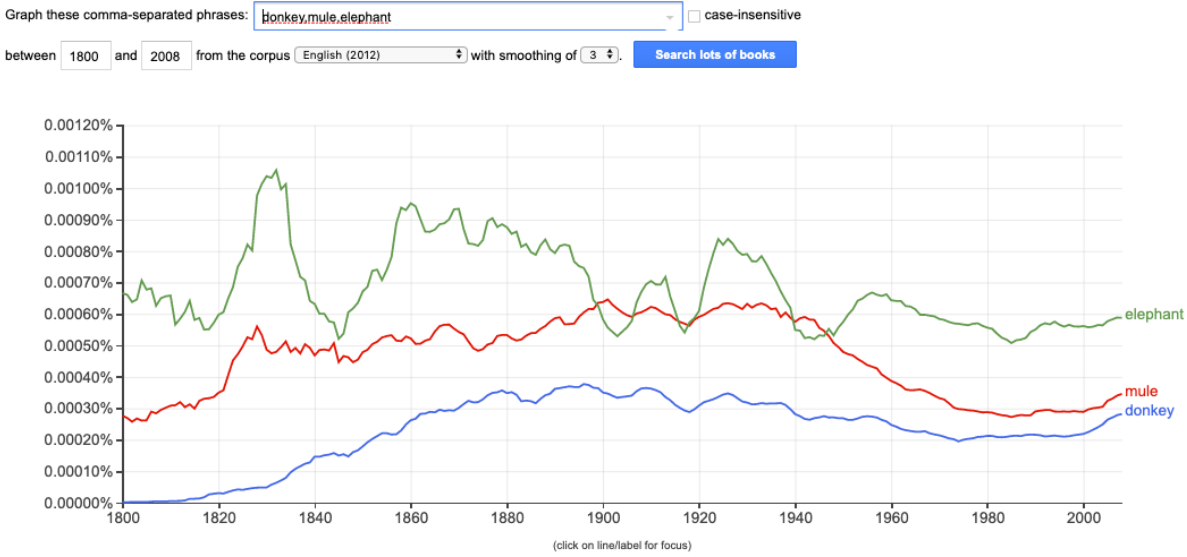


Google Trends: Image Search



Google NGram Viewer

Google Books Ngram Viewer



Google Search



donkey

All Images Videos News Shopping

About 181,000,000 results (0.54 seconds)



mule

All Images Shopping Videos News More

About 541,000,000 results (0.66 seconds)



elephant

All Images News Videos

About 749,000,000 results (1.13 seconds)

Google Video Search



donkey

All Images **Videos** News

About 37,800,000 results (0.27 seconds)



mule

[All](#) [Images](#) [Shopping](#) [Videos](#) [News](#)

About 17,900,000 results (0.70 seconds)



elephant

[All](#) [Images](#) [News](#) [Videos](#)

About 131,000,000 results (0.29 seconds)

Bing Search

Show apps

donkey

[All](#) [Images](#) [Videos](#) [Maps](#) [News](#) [Shopping](#)

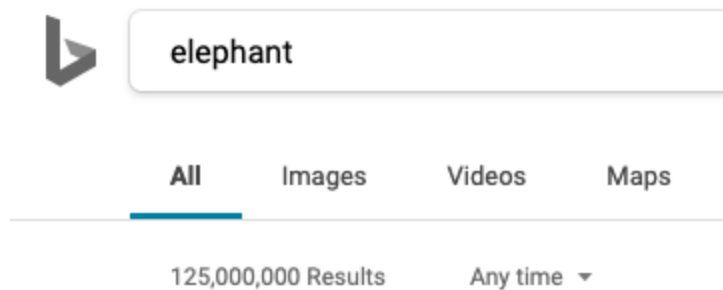
25,200,000 Results [Any time](#) ▾



mule

[All](#) [News](#) [Images](#) [Videos](#) [Maps](#) [Shopping](#)

27,000,000 Results [Any time](#) ▾



- **Multiple Usages**

The DONKEY's use in agriculture, transport, riding (the famous burros of the Grand Canyon come to mind), politics (the Democratic Party of the United States are symbolized by donkeys), metaphor ("jackass" and "stubborn as a mule"), and the arts suggest that many people worldwide will be able to find a use for this ass of an emoji!

- **Use in sequences**

DONKEY + FLAT SHOE = MULE (a type of popular woman's shoe)

FLAG (RUSSIA) + DONKEY (possibly + COCKTAIL GLASS)= MOSCOW MULE (a popular cocktail made of vodka, ginger beer, and lime juice)

DONKEY + POUTING FACE= "STUBBORN MULE/STUBBORN AS A MULE" (an expression used to refer to someone particularly unyielding or grumpy in their refusal to cooperate)

DONKEY + BLUE CIRCLE= DEMOCRAT (the donkey and the color blue are symbols of the Democratic Party)

- **Breaking new ground.**

As research by [Ranjitha Kumar](#), a computer science professor at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has demonstrated, animal emoji are often used as adjectives. As such DONKEY, MULE and ASS can be used to demonstrate a few concepts associated with the animals: stubborn, foolish, or hard-working. These are not concepts that are easily captured with current emoji.

Image Distinctiveness

While we understand that DONKEY/MULE has previously been rejected for resembling a HORSE too much, we feel there are two ways to address this.

- 1) We only use the headshot of the DONKEY/MULE which is differentiated given that most vendors use a full body HORSE. This allows us to emphasize the length of the ears as a differentiating factor.
- 2) Putting sacks on the back of DONKEY/MULE to emphasize this are often pack animals, and hard working.

Completeness

There are two arguments for completeness. The first is that the DONKEY is the only member of the Equus genus currently missing in the emoji set. The other two are ZEBRA and HORSE.

The other is for political symbolism specific to the United States — an important media market. The DONKEY is used as the symbol of the Democratic Party in the United States, one of the two major political parties, while the ELEPHANT is used as the symbol of the Republican Party. Having an ELEPHANT without a DONKEY leaves an obvious political imbalance between Republicans and Democrats. Given that Emoji usage is highest among Millennials, who are much more likely to be registered Democrats and vote Democratically in recent elections, this imbalance skews against the Emoji-using population.¹²¹³

In fact, the DONKEY symbolizing the Democrats may have predated usage of the ELEPHANT for Republicans by as much as 46 years. According to CBS, the DONKEY first emerged as a symbol of the Democratic Party when Andrew Jackson's opponents called him a "jackass" for his populist views. Jackson embraced the characterization by portraying a strong-willed donkey on his campaign posters. Only in 1874 did Thomas Nast, whose name is most affiliated with Conde-Nast today, give Republicans the ELEPHANT in a political cartoon.¹⁴

¹²

https://www.upf.edu/documents/3966940/6839730/Working+Paper_Emoji_Substantive.pdf/bbbf386b-864f-3116-b8fb-dece14760a45

¹³ <https://www.people-press.org/2018/03/20/1-trends-in-party-affiliation-among-demographic-groups/>

¹⁴ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/how-the-parties-got-their-animal-symbols/>

Selection Factors – Exclusion

Overly Specific

DONKEY and MULE are not overly specific, given how broadly they are used as animals — from ancient times in the Middle East, to 18th century United States, to modern day Latin America and parts of Asia. These are broadly recognized animals with a huge following and multiple uses around the world.

Open Ended

We are completing the major set of *Equus* genus — HORSE, ZEBRA, and DONKEY. This is a fairly closed set of animals. Even among extinct variations, creatures in *Equus* fall into one of these sets.

Already Representable

While HORSE and ZEBRA are both also of the *Equus* genus, they do not substitute for the cultural and political significance of DONKEY and MULE.

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

While the DONKEY is a symbol of the Democratic party in the United States, the party does not have any trademark, logo or icon issues.

Transient

DONKEYS were first domesticated around 5,000 years ago in the Middle East, and spread from there around the world. So they have quite some staying power — older than all countries on this planet.

Faulty Comparison

HORSES and ZEBRAS are known for their distinct colors and patterns. DONKEYS, contrariwise, largely come in gray and black, and lack the “pedigree” of the HORSE (that is, HORSES are used for equestrian events, while DONKEY riding is more practical).

Exact Images

There is some flexibility around the portrayal of a DONKEY, MULE in terms of whether it has something on its back, and whether it is a face-only emoji. But we should be careful about being distinguished from HORSE.

Other Character Properties

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

General Category: So

Canonical Combining Class: 0

Bidirectional Class: ON

Decomposition Type: Decomposition Mapping:

Numeric Type:

Numeric Value:

Bidirectional Mirrored: N Unicode 1 Name:

ISO Comment:

Simple Uppercase Mapping:

Simple Lowercase Mapping:

Simple Titlecase Mapping:

Author Biographies

Christian Krenek (Christian.Krenek@gmail.com) has a tendency to bray when he laughs and occasionally makes an ass of himself, so it seemed apropos that he help write the DONKEY proposal. A Democratic-Socialist donkey who lives in Medford, Massachusetts, he has fond memories of visiting farms and zoos in his native New Jersey, happily riding mules. He reminds everyone that donkeys can teach us many things: as Annie Oakley sings in *Annie Get Your Gun*, "You don't have to go to a private school not to pick up a penny near a stubborn mule!"

