

# ESR Priorities for Unicode Version 18.0 & Beyond

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## Introduction 🖐️

The ESR has outlined a number of priorities for future emoji releases to address pain points related to the experience using emoji and interoperability of these characters.

This document provides the UTC with an update on these goals as well as future goals that could result in the addition of new code points, sequences, or changes to emoji intake processes.

Priorities may change over time; however, this gives a view of the past and future aspirations of the Emoji Standard & Research Group to execute on encoding a stable emoji set that can operate at the speed of language in digital spaces.

## Background 🔥

Of the six goals set out in the 2019 and 2020 priorities documents, all goals have been achieved or part of active workstreams as outlined in [L2/23-091](#). As we roadmap into both the immediate and long term future the ESR is prioritizing work streams to support how the general public use emoji to ensure they are useful and globally relevant. **The optimal path forward fixes old issues without creating new ones. This follows priorities set out in [L2/19-101](#).**

## Priorities 📋 1 2 3 4

Areas the Emoji Subcommittee will be prioritizing for Emoji 18.0+ include the following categories:

### (1) User Experience pain points

In 2023, the ESR outlined a number of priorities for future emoji releases to address pain points related to the experience using emoji and interoperability of these characters ([L2/23-091](#)). Many of these have been addressed and as of the Emoji 17.0 update will be considered complete. That being said, there are ways to improve the legibility of emoji especially in light and dark mode or colors backgrounds. An audit will be required to identify which emoji can be simply recolored and which emoji would benefit from better guidance. As a result, the ESR is looking at documenting some best practices.

- There are a small set of emoji that lack a 3:1 contrast ratio with itself (regardless of the background it appears on) as well as a number of others that not render well on dark backgrounds, as an example:
  - Color is inherent (🐘, ▪, ■, ●, 🐦, ❤️, ✔️, etc.)

- Color is not inherent (✖, ÷, =, etc.)

## (2) Interoperability

- Design Inconsistencies
  - The main focus for the Unicode Technical Committee is to ensure compatibility between platforms. Since our last design audit (2020) some emoji have design inconsistencies that change the meaning of the emoji. This year will be dedicated to reconciling these problems by either (1) redesigning existing codepoints or (2) adding new emoji to split the difference.
    - Top priorities
      - Color that is changing of the meaning of an emoji Ex: 🌐 vs 🏠
      - Microexpressions in smiley emoji Ex: 😊 vs 😊

## Emoji 19.0 (2026+)

As we hit the limitations of the value of new sequences, the ESR is considering how we might hold a higher benchmark for future additions into the Unicode Standard.

Areas of focus for intake include:

1. Requiring empirical evidence of use, with citation
2. Emphasizing a need for compatibility with social apps, other standards, and/or operating systems
3. General focus on improving user experience with existing emoji

(Stretch) Areas of focus for evolving the Unicode Standard include:

1. Standardization of inline image protocol

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*Note: Some 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.*