

Clarifying Emojification Strategies and Strengthening ESC Processes

From: Jennifer Daniel via The Emoji Subcommittee (ESC)

To: Unicode Technical Committee (UTC)

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Background

Since 2010, we have gone from under 719 emojis to well over 3,000 today. While the demand for emoji drives frequent vendor upgrades and improved language support we seem to emojify concepts that are not frequently used [SEE TABLE 1], are at a great cost to vendors who surface this content [SEE TABLE 2]. As a result, users seem to have little use for what has recently been emojified.

Proposal

We want to do three things:

1. Craft a strategy to be more focused on what is useful
2. Reduce the number of emoji we encode per year
3. Slightly modify our process in support of these goals

Invest in North Star Strategy

[ESC's priority doc](#) was largely why we made so much progress this year. We'd like to continue the tradition of prioritization for Unicode 14.0 so we can continue to think of emoji in a less piecemeal way. Instead, we want to look at each release as a set with certain kinds of consistency that we identify each year with an eye on long term sustainability.

Conversations with vendors indicate top priorities are:

1. Globally relevant, communicative emojis
2. Converge on designs earlier with respect to cross platform consistency

Tighter Quota

Our current cadence of 50-60 new emojis a year is reducing their semiotic function. We would like to see this significantly cut down. Extraordinary exceptions can be made.

Note: Our overall goal is to have all new emoji be above median frequency. That is not a high bar, since statistically there is a very long tail. The last few releases of emoji have not met that goal: about half of them are above median. Now, in light of the [data published last Fall](#), we intend to focus on raising the bar.

Process Change

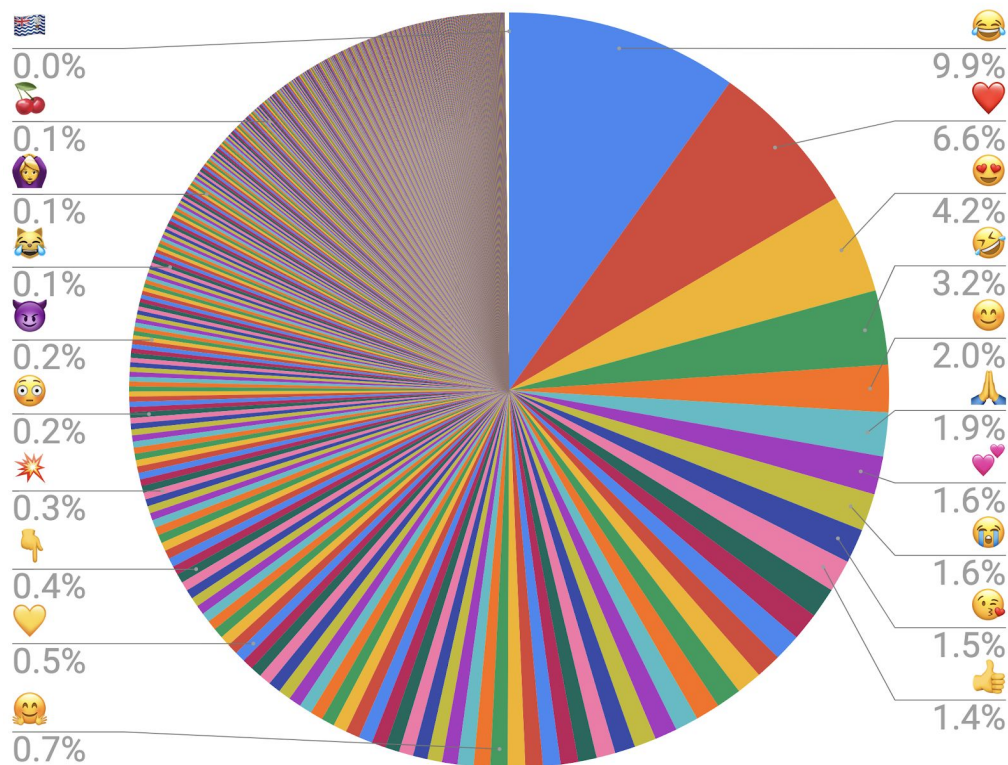
The current process forwards proposals that meet the criteria in [Submitting Emoji Proposals](#). Starting with 14.0, the ESC would like to only forward proposals to the UTC that are supportive of established priorities (aka a North Star Document) for that year.

Passing random one-off emojis every quarter reinforces a first-come-first-serve singleton emojiification strategy. **This new process will result in forwarding fewer proposals each quarter and asking more of the category managers.**

Instead of well-formed proposals being forwarded to UTC they will be fwd'd to the category manager's records (aka larger lists). These lists will be a valuable resource the ESC will reference once a month, and quarterly with the UTC. Category managers will be responsible for prioritizing/stack ranking the emojis on their lists to share with the UTC without making recommendations. Then, at the Q3 UTC 2020 meeting we will submit as a collection. Each category receives a certain weight based on anticipated frequency of use.

When the ESC wants to forward a proposal that does not meet our requirements we will have a clear rationale to the UTC of why it's an exception to the rule.

Table 1: Frequently Used Emoji



(above) Frequently used emojis.

Table 2: Vendor Burden

Work required to implement Emoji is measurably taxing on vendors. In addition to the labor put into evaluating proposals, editing and writing proposals, and researching documentation, adopting new emojis means offering special input methods for their users to input these emojis (and sizable font additions). Having such input methods entails a significant amount of resources to “get it right”, and can be a significant memory burden on users around the world.

General Work:

- Importing new Unicode data
- Implementation of unit tests for novel data, behaviors, and new features (hair styles, skin tones, etc.)

Visual Design

- Research, design, and illustration of the emojis

String Generation:

- English string trigger generation (requires linguistic expertise)
- Accessibility descriptions and screen reader string generation
- Text-To-Speech (digital assistant) name and trigger generation

Renderings, Images, and Fonts:

- Image generation at many sizes for the renderings
- Integration of the renderings into the font
- Investment in technologies that can scale as the emoji font balloons

Localization (bringing up support for 40+ languages):

- Transcreation of source trigger strings
- Localization linguistic and functional testing
- Management of vendors and full-time employees

Product Marketing and PR:

- Marketing burden for the new emoji because of the new release cycle: customers want the new emoji as soon as they are announced in March, while major Vendors release in September
- Preparing for any dissatisfaction of new emoji seen from customer basis (some vendors share more of this burden than others)

State of 14.0

The ESC is working on recommending a list of emoji for 14.0 that will be stack-ranked as described above. This will be provided at the 2020Q3 UTC Meeting.