

Filling the Gaps in the Emoji 5.0 Repertoire

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1. Introduction

After reviewing the draft data for Emoji 5.0 I noticed that there still are a lot of gender variants missing. This proposal seeks to fill these gaps. Since I have already written to the Unicode Consortium twice on this issue I will not reiterate the reasons for why these emoji are absolutely necessary. See documents 16-169 and 16-193.

2. Proposed Emoji

In total I propose 3 new emoji characters and 92 new ZWJ sequences (242 when accounting for sequences with emoji modifiers). All ZWJ sequences should be included in the emoji data as soon as possible.

Where there exist two separate emoji characters that represent the same concept, just with different gender, I propose adding a third character that represents this concept without any gender connotations. This includes:

-  PERSON DANCING, to complement DANCER and MAN DANCING
-  PERSON WITH CHRISTMAS HAT, to complement FATHER CHRISTMAS and MOTHER CHRISTMAS
-  PERSON WITH CROWN, to complement PRINCESS and PRINCE

While it would in theory be possible to implement all these as sequences of Unicode 10 characters, this is definitely not something I recommend. Doing so would imply that the neutral option is some kind of weird, unimportant hack awkwardly stacked on top of the “real” default representation (either male or female, and who is going to decide that?), rather than being the default state itself as is the case with all other emoji. On the same note it should not cost more characters to *not* explicitly specify gender. Therefore encoding separate characters is the only sensible option in my opinion, even if it means that these three emoji won’t be available until at least June 2018.

PERSON WITH CHRISTMAS HAT is an unfortunate compromise since the personification of Christmas has always been male-only in Western culture and traditionally no genderless or gender non-binary derivative exists to my knowledge. However, because Christmas is now explicitly gendered as of Unicode 9, this character must nevertheless exist.

Where two existing characters form a gender pair even though they represent different concepts, and where a character has been restricted to one single gender only with no options available, I propose adding ZWJ sequences using FEMALE SIGN and MALE SIGN respectively, and redefining the affected characters as genderless. This affects:

- MAN WITH GUA PI MAO
- BRIDE WITH VEIL
- MAN IN TUXEDO
- MAN IN BUSINESS SUIT LEVITATING
- PREGNANT WOMAN

- PERSON WITH HEADSCARF
- BEARDED PERSON
- BREAST-FEEDING

The third group of emoji is ZWJ sequences representing professions using ADULT as the base. I assume that these emoji already exist in some internal draft file since they have been discussed for quite a long time. I still included them in this proposal just to be sure.

- Health worker (ADULT + STAFF OF AESCULAPIUS)
- Judge (ADULT + SCALES)
- Pilot (ADULT + AIRPLANE)
- Farmer (ADULT + EAR OF RICE)
- Cook (ADULT + COOKING)
- Student (ADULT + GRADUATION CAP)
- Singer (ADULT + MICROPHONE)
- Artist (ADULT + ARTIST PALETTE)
- Teacher (ADULT + SCHOOL)
- Factory Worker (ADULT + FACTORY)
- Technologist (ADULT + PERSONAL COMPUTER)
- Office Worker (ADULT + BRIEFCASE)
- Mechanic (ADULT + WRENCH)
- Scientist (ADULT + MICROSCOPE)
- Astronaut (ADULT + ROCKET)
- Firefighter (ADULT + FIRE ENGINE)

The fourth group of emoji is Family, Kiss and Couple With Heart sequences using ADULT and CHILD. This includes:

- Kiss (Man, Adult)
- Kiss (Woman, Adult)
- Kiss (Adult, Adult)
- Couple with Heart (Man, Adult)
- Couple with Heart (Woman, Adult)
- Couple with Heart (Adult, Adult)
- Family (Man, Child)
- Family (Man, Girl, Child)
- Family (Man, Boy, Child)
- Family (Man, Child, Child)
- Family (Man, Man, Child)
- Family (Man, Man, Girl, Child)
- Family (Man, Man, Boy, Child)
- Family (Man, Man, Child, Child)
- Family (Man, Woman, Child)
- Family (Man, Woman, Girl, Child)

- Family (Man, Woman, Boy, Child)
- Family (Man, Woman, Child, Child)

- Family (Man, Adult, Girl)
- Family (Man, Adult, Girl, Girl)
- Family (Man, Adult, Girl, Boy)
- Family (Man, Adult, Girl, Child)
- Family (Man, Adult, Boy)
- Family (Man, Adult, Boy, Boy)
- Family (Man, Adult, Boy, Child)
- Family (Man, Adult, Child)
- Family (Man, Adult, Child, Child)

- Family (Woman, Child)
- Family (Woman, Girl, Child)
- Family (Woman, Boy, Child)
- Family (Woman, Child, Child)

- Family (Woman, Woman, Child)
- Family (Woman, Woman, Girl, Child)
- Family (Woman, Woman, Boy, Child)
- Family (Woman, Woman, Child, Child)

- Family (Woman, Adult, Girl)
- Family (Woman, Adult, Girl, Girl)
- Family (Woman, Adult, Girl, Boy)
- Family (Woman, Adult, Girl, Child)
- Family (Woman, Adult, Boy)
- Family (Woman, Adult, Boy, Boy)
- Family (Woman, Adult, Boy, Child)
- Family (Woman, Adult, Child)
- Family (Woman, Adult, Child, Child)

- Family (Adult, Girl)
- Family (Adult, Girl, Girl)
- Family (Adult, Girl, Boy)
- Family (Adult, Girl, Child)
- Family (Adult, Boy)
- Family (Adult, Boy, Boy)
- Family (Adult, Boy, Child)
- Family (Adult, Child)
- Family (Adult, Child, Child)

- Family (Adult, Adult, Girl)
- Family (Adult, Adult, Girl, Girl)

- Family (Adult, Adult, Girl, Boy)
- Family (Adult, Adult, Girl, Child)
- Family (Adult, Adult, Boy)
- Family (Adult, Adult, Boy, Boy)
- Family (Adult, Adult, Boy, Child)
- Family (Adult, Adult, Child)
- Family (Adult, Adult, Child, Child)

3. Justification

The UTC itself already justified the addition of all the emoji proposed in this document by approving gendered ZWJ sequences in Emoji 4.0 and three explicitly genderless emoji in Unicode 10.

Characters like MOTHER CHRISTMAS were added for the sole purpose of filling perceived gender gaps but without any noteworthy interest in their existence from the public. It would be unfair to hold the emoji proposed here to any higher standard than that, especially considering that – unlike MOTHER CHRISTMAS – the people represented by my proposed emoji actually exist in the real world and currently cannot properly express themselves through emoji.

Factors for Inclusion

A. Compatibility

Not applicable.

B. Expected usage level

The Consortium surely would not have approved gendered variants of existing emoji if there had not been strong demand for them. This proposal merely does the same for the few characters that were missed the first time around. Affected characters are either pure compatibility characters from legacy sets for which the expected usage argument does not apply, or were added after various proposals proved their usefulness and popularity.

C. Image distinctiveness

The only differences between male and female emoji variants in most existing fonts are hair style, breast size, the general shape of the face, and colour of clothing. These subtle differences can be very hard to make out especially at small font sizes (and don't have anything to do with gender, but that's another issue entirely). Genderless emoji variants would likely be no exception to this rule. Vendors are probably going to base their gender-neutral emoji on their design for ADULT, the same way their male and female emoji are based on MAN and WOMAN. Hopefully they will be able to create distinct appearances.

D. Completeness

The holes in the current Emoji 5.0 draft repertoire are very obvious by simply looking at a list of all available emoji. The omissions appear to follow no regular pattern; variants are missing seemingly at random. The singular, male-only MAN WITH GUA PI MAO for example is surrounded by a whole army of themed gender pairs on an emoji keyboard. Clothes like the turban or bunny ears are available for two or more genders, even though they are traditionally primarily worn by only men or women respectively. One would expect the same to be true for the guā pí mào, however this specific item cannot be worn by pictographic women. How does this make sense?

E. Frequently requested

In addition to myself writing to the UTC numerous times, several people provided feedback on various public review issues, stating their support for a third gender option and for additional gender options for single-gender characters:

- PRI 312: one person (Rainer Seitel)
- PRI 321: one person (KC Saff)
- PRI 330: two people (E., Alex Dunn), not counting myself

Furthermore three gender-neutral emoji were part of a successful proposal by Paul D. Hunt (L2/16-317). While that specific proposal only requested the addition of ADULT, CHILD and OLDER ADULT, it also laid out more general arguments for full gender inclusion.

Factors for Exclusion***F. Overly specific***

The genderless emoji proposed here are actually *less* specific than their already existing, gendered counterparts.

While gendered variants of pictographs representing simple activities indeed are overly specific, the Unicode Consortium has decided that this overspecification is wanted, so this point is mute.

G. Open-ended

The neutral gender option is meant to be used for all genders that aren't male or female, and for use cases where gender information is not required or wanted. Thus, the number of gender options for emoji will always be limited to 3. However, as a consequence of this the UTC is going to have to add two separate emoji sequences for every human-like character they may add in a future update, with the only exception being infants as explained in my very first comment (L2/16-169).

H. Already representable

In some cases, the explicit gendering of every single human emoji as is currently practised by Unicode makes it completely impossible to convey certain concepts in pictographic, plain-text form without also needlessly specifying gender. In other cases, it makes it impossible to specify the correct gender, which is probably even worse.

Ever since the UTC started documenting ZWJ sequences – especially those that weren't actually employed by anyone at all at the time of documentation – vendors have been cautious to implement special rendering for sequences that aren't also acknowledged by Unicode, mostly adding ligatures as hidden easter eggs that aren't actually obtainable through standard input methods. Many vendors likely won't support the missing sequences if they are not part of Unicode.

I. Logos, brands etc.

Not applicable.

J. Transient

Gender has been a part of human culture for several millenia and – despite widespread belief otherwise – so have non-binary genders. All emoji proposed here are variations of existing ones which already must have been proven not to be of faddish, short-lived popularity – otherwise they wouldn't have been added.

K. Like compatibility emoji

The whole point of this proposal is to add slightly different variations of existing emoji to fill certain gaps. However, the Unicode Consortium evidently approves of this as long as it involves gender, see the many ZWJ additions in Emoji 4.0.

4. Data

The properties of PERSON DANCING, PERSON WITH CHRISTMAS HAT and PERSON WITH CROWN shall be identical to those of the original characters they derive from. In collation order they should appear before their two gendered counterparts since they represent exactly the same concept, just more generic.

Data for ZWJ sequences is contained in the separate text file that has been submitted together with this document for convenience. Sequence names have been chosen as to avoid collisions with the characters' formal identifiers.

Don't forget to change the CLDR short names of the eight characters that this proposal adds ZWJ sequences for from "man/woman doing X" to "person doing X".

5. Sample Images

No coloured sample images of the proposed ZWJ sequences exist at the moment because I am not an artist.

Glyphs for the three newly proposed characters have been based on existing code chart images.

