

THE COMPUTER HISTORY OF EMOJIS

Have you ever sent a 😊 or a 👍 to a friend? Emojis might seem like just fun pictures, but they actually have a fascinating history that connects directly to how computers communicate.

Long before tiny digital faces, hearts, and tacos existed, people had to get creative using only plain text. They could show a smile using letters and symbols: :-) or :). These simple symbols, called emoticons, were invented back in 1982 by a computer scientist named Scott Fahlman. While they look basic compared to the emojis we use today, they were a huge breakthrough in digital communication at the time.

In the late 1990s, a Japanese designer, Shigetaka Kurita, created the first set of emojis for mobile phones. These tiny 12x12 pixel images weren't always easy to recognize, but they added a new way to communicate emotions digitally.

At first, emojis were just images, not part of text like letters and numbers. Different devices couldn't understand them in the same ways. Sending a smiley face from one device might show up as a frown or even a blank box on another.

Computers needed a universal way to understand emojis, so a system called unicode was created. It gave every symbol, letter, or emoji an unique code. This system ensures that all devices display the same emoji correctly. (Compare to binary) For example, the grinning face emoji 😊 has a Unicode of U+1F600. This code tells your computer exactly what image to display, not matter the device or operating system.

Every year, Apple, Google, and other tech companies release new emojis. All emojis are standardized by the Unicode Consortium, a group that decides which symbols get added and ensures they work across all devices.

