# Games Developer Uncovers 1988 Emoji-Like Characters on Retro Japanese Devices



Emoji, often considered a modern-day communication tool, actually have a deeper historical origin than previously thought. Matt Sephton, a games developer and blogger, has uncovered characters dating back to 1988 through his exploration of retro Japanese devices.

Sephton's research led him to the PA-8500, a Japanese device that featured 102 emoji-like characters, including animals and symbols. This discovery challenges the common belief that the first emoji were created by SoftBank in 1997. Before the PA-8500, Sephton also examined the Sharp PI-4000 from 1994 and the NEC PI-ET1 from 1990, both containing early forms of emoji.

While Sephton suggests the PA-8500 and its 1988 release date as the starting point for emoji, he acknowledges that the history of these characters is complex and varies depending on one's definition.