

SafeCurves:

choosing safe curves for
elliptic-curve cryptography

Daniel J. Bernstein

University of Illinois at Chicago &
Technische Universiteit Eindhoven

Tanja Lange

Technische Universiteit Eindhoven

<http://safecurves.cr.yp.to>

Cryptography

Public-key signatures:

e.g., RSA, DSA, ECDSA.

Some uses: signed OS updates,
SSL certificates, e-passports.

Public-key encryption:

e.g., RSA, DH, ECDH.

Some uses: SSL key exchange,
locked iPhone mail download.

Secret-key encryption:

e.g., AES, Salsa20.

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Key signatures:

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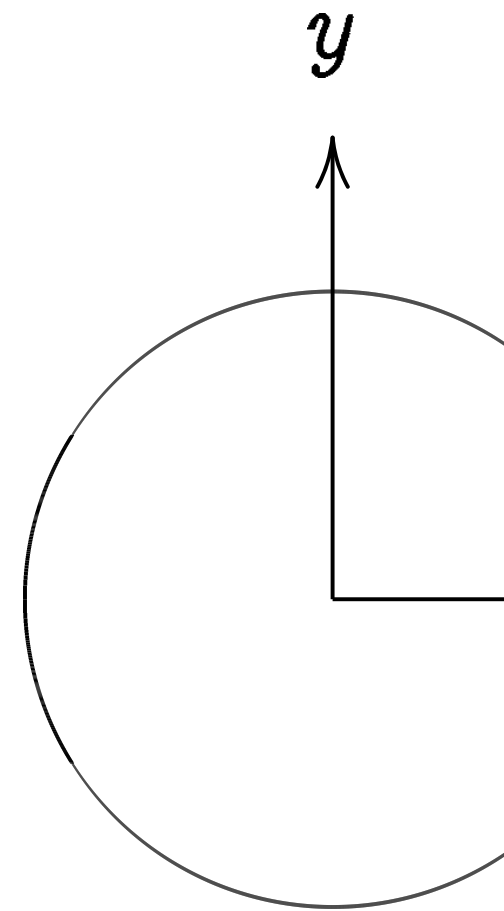
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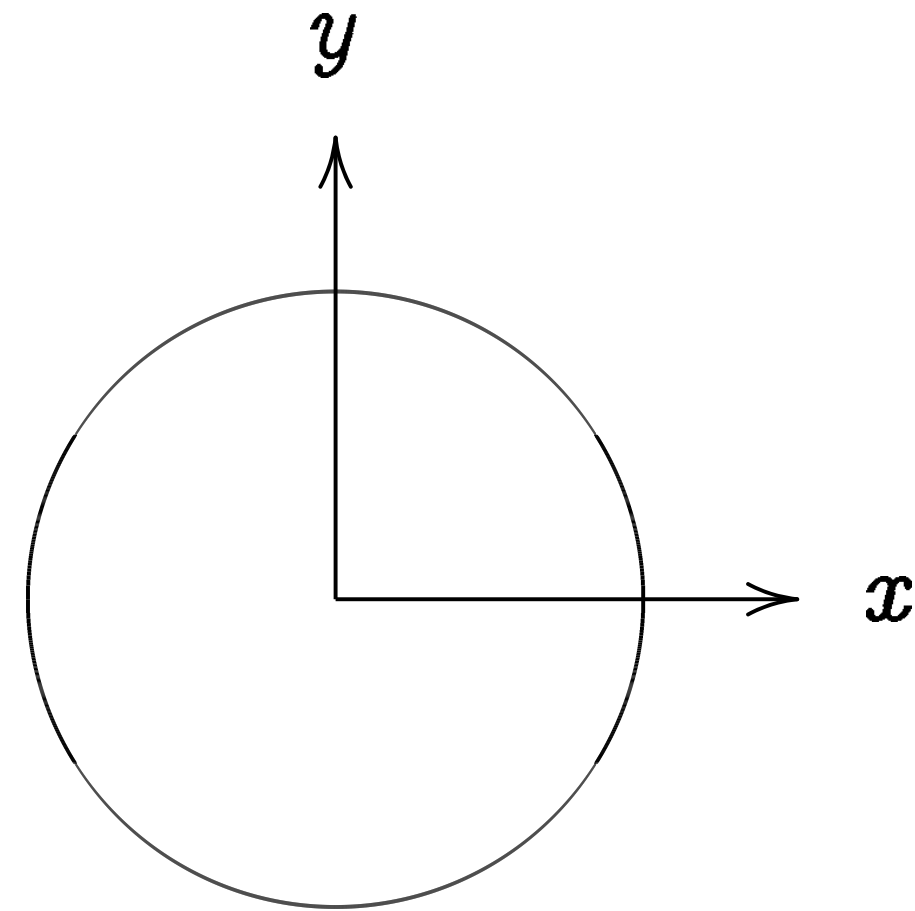
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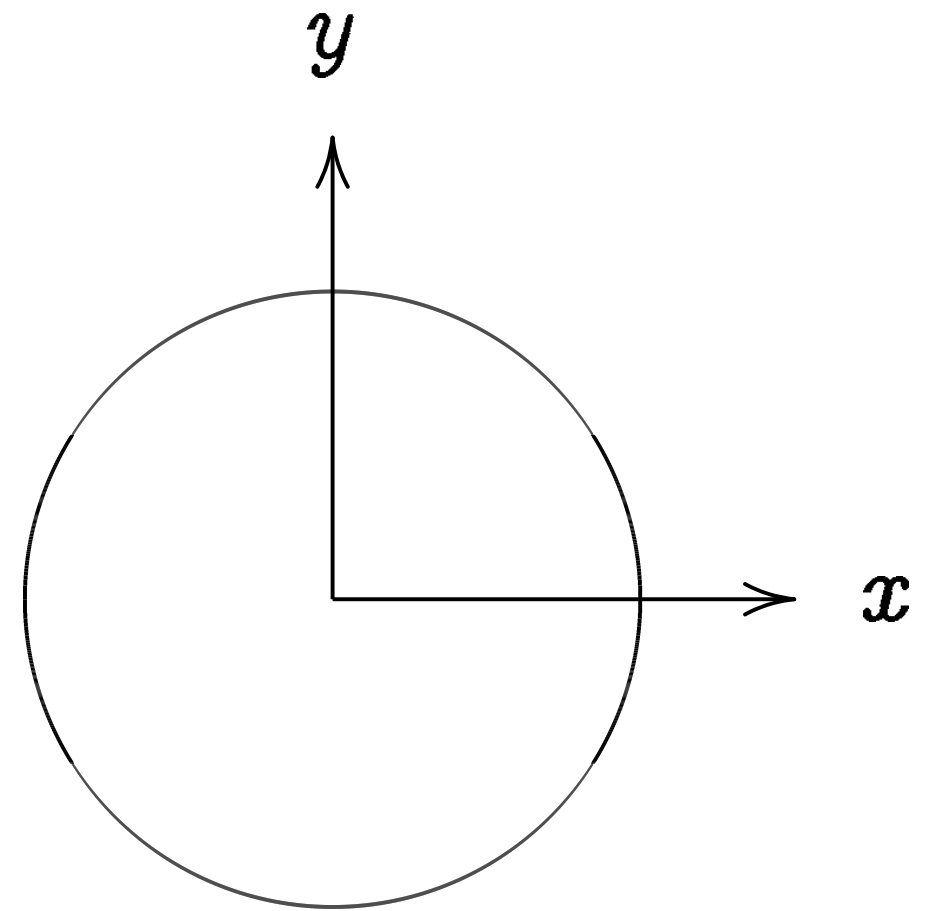
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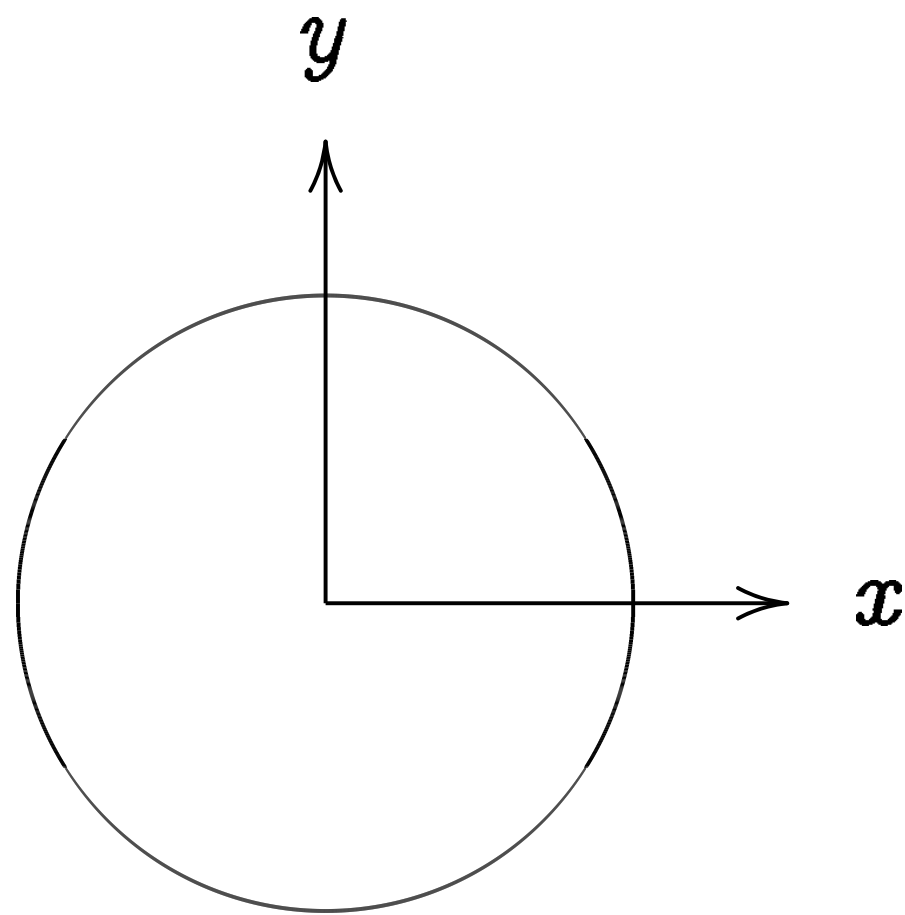
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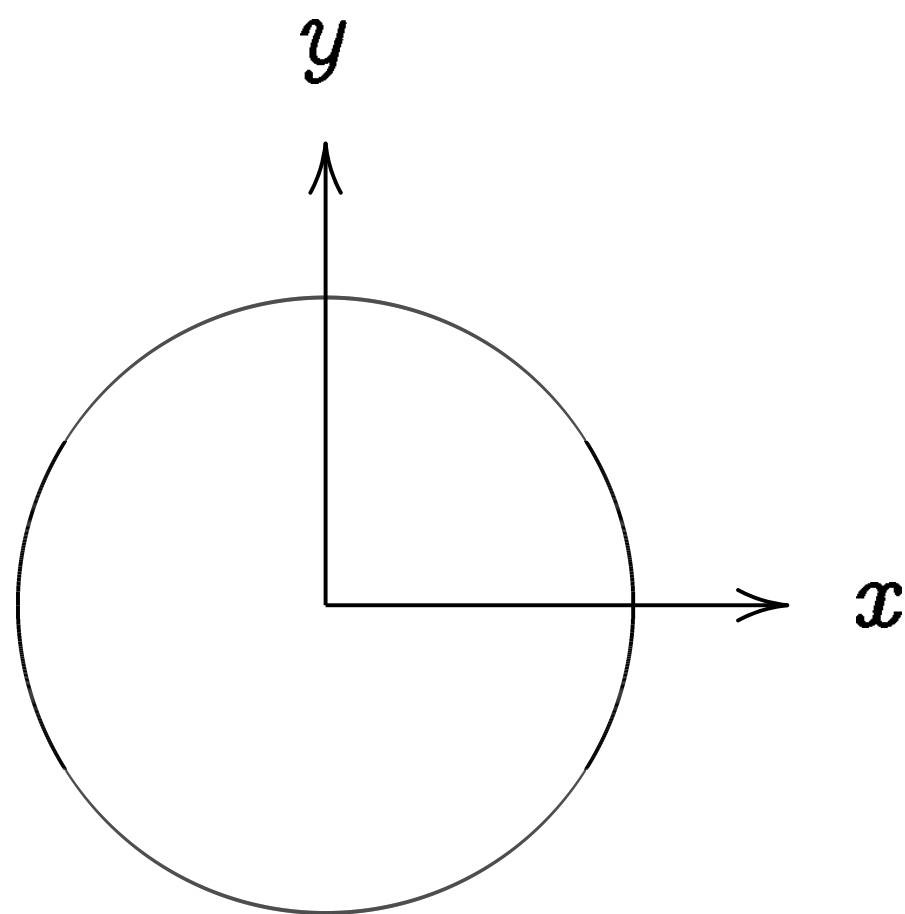
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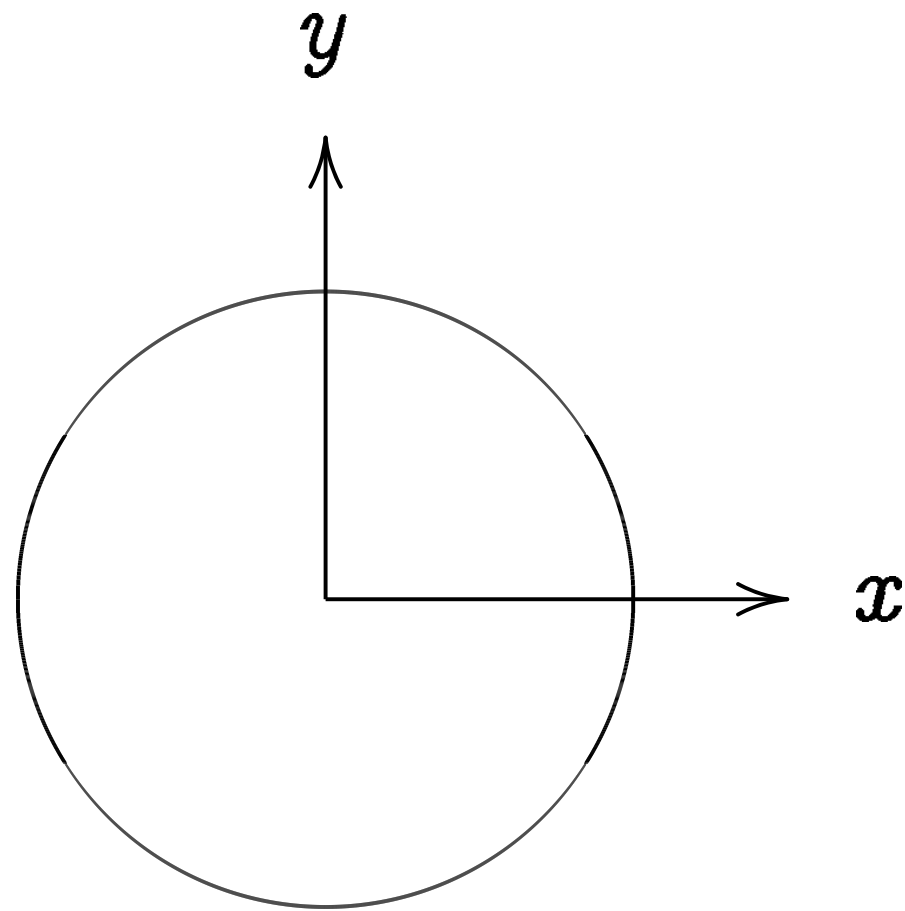
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Examples of point

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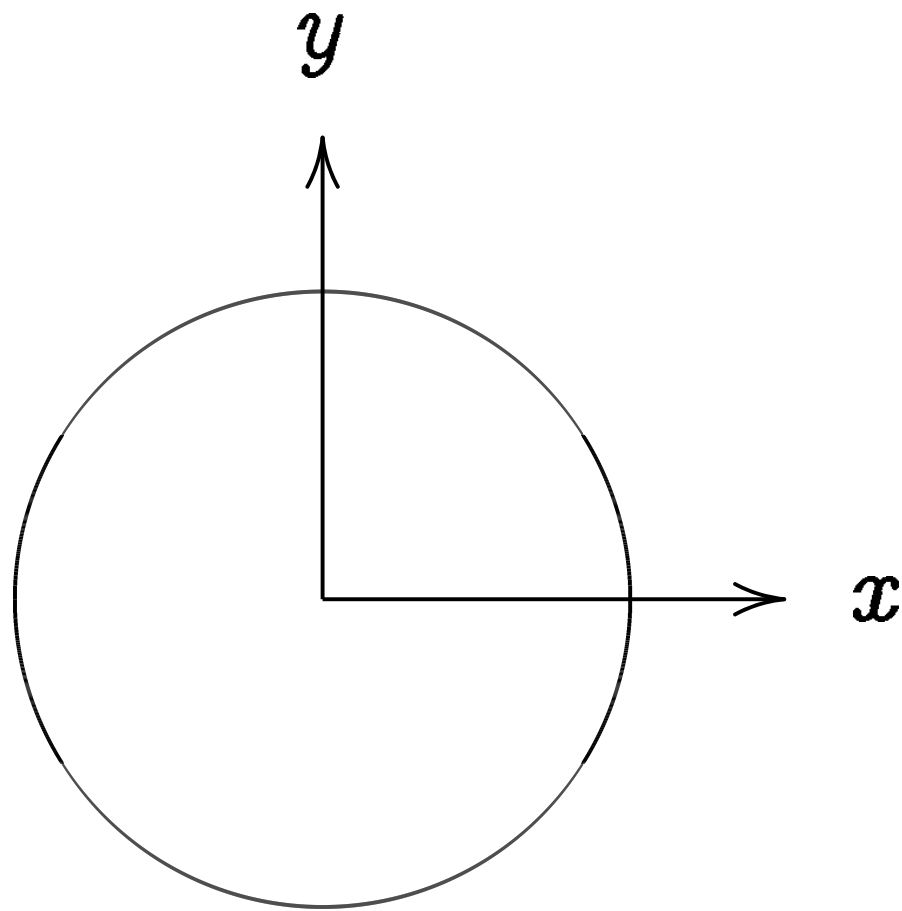
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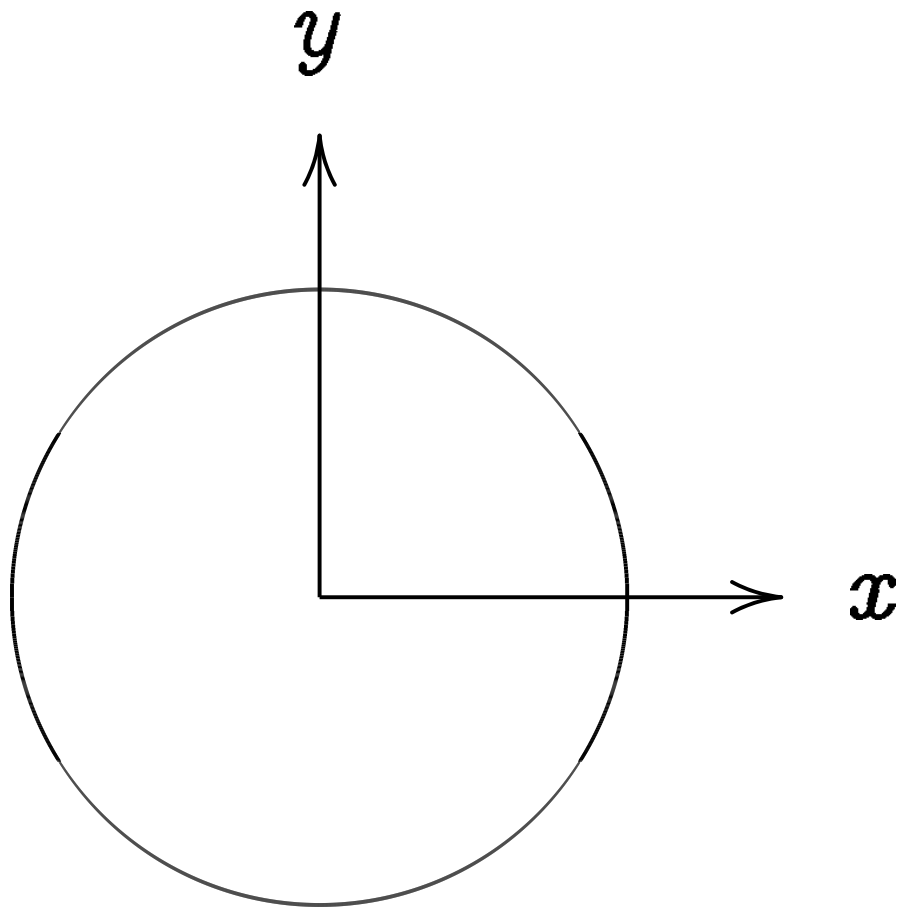
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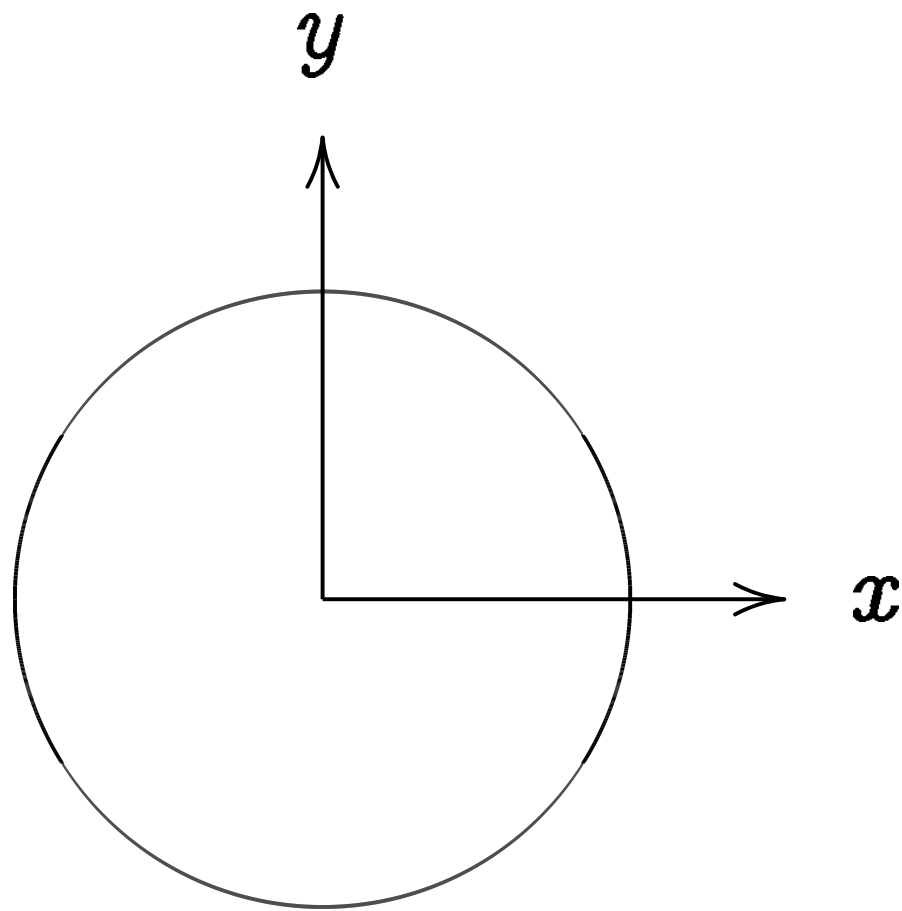
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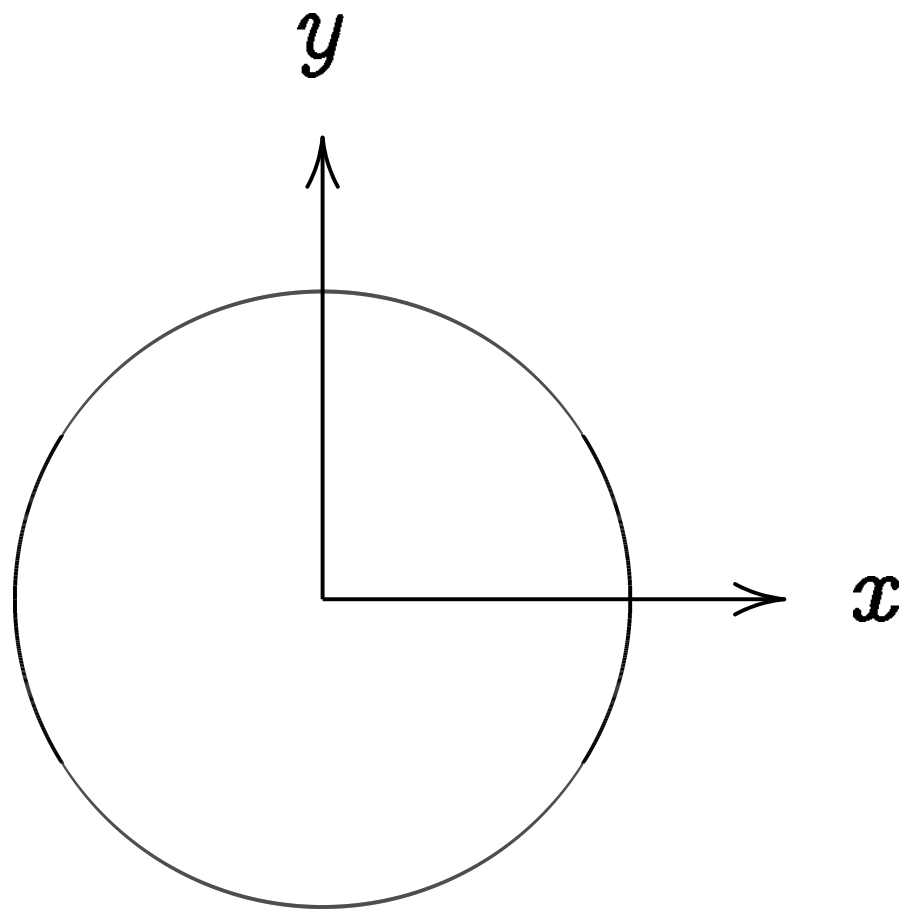
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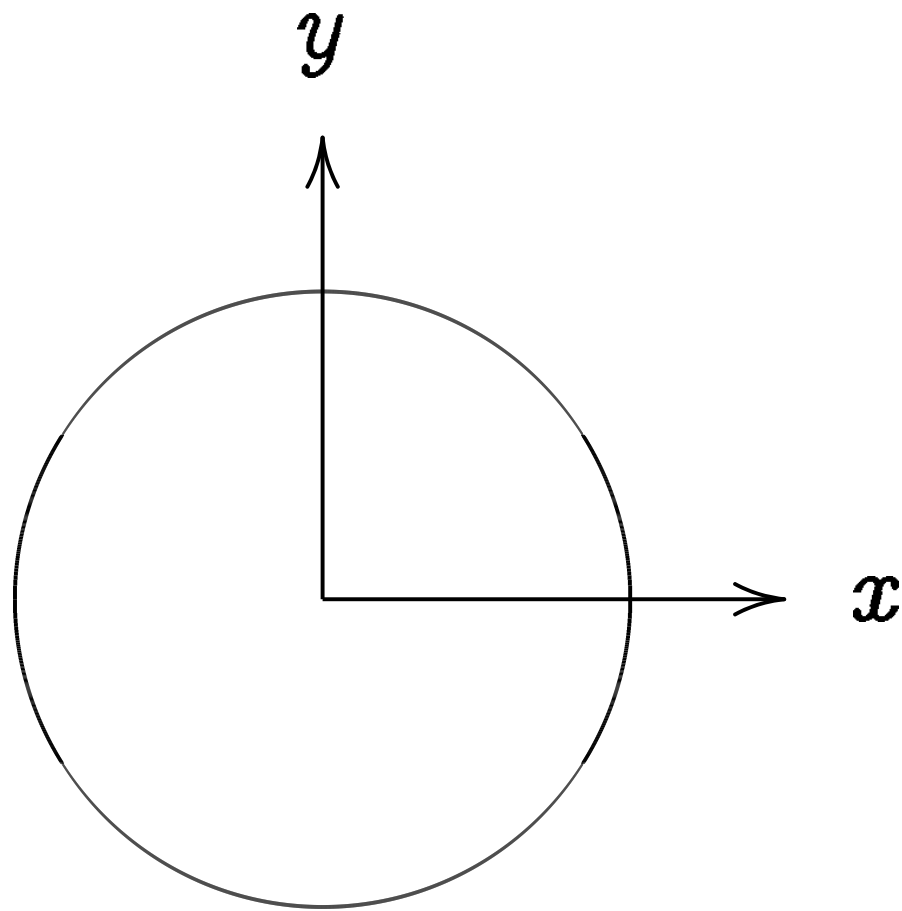
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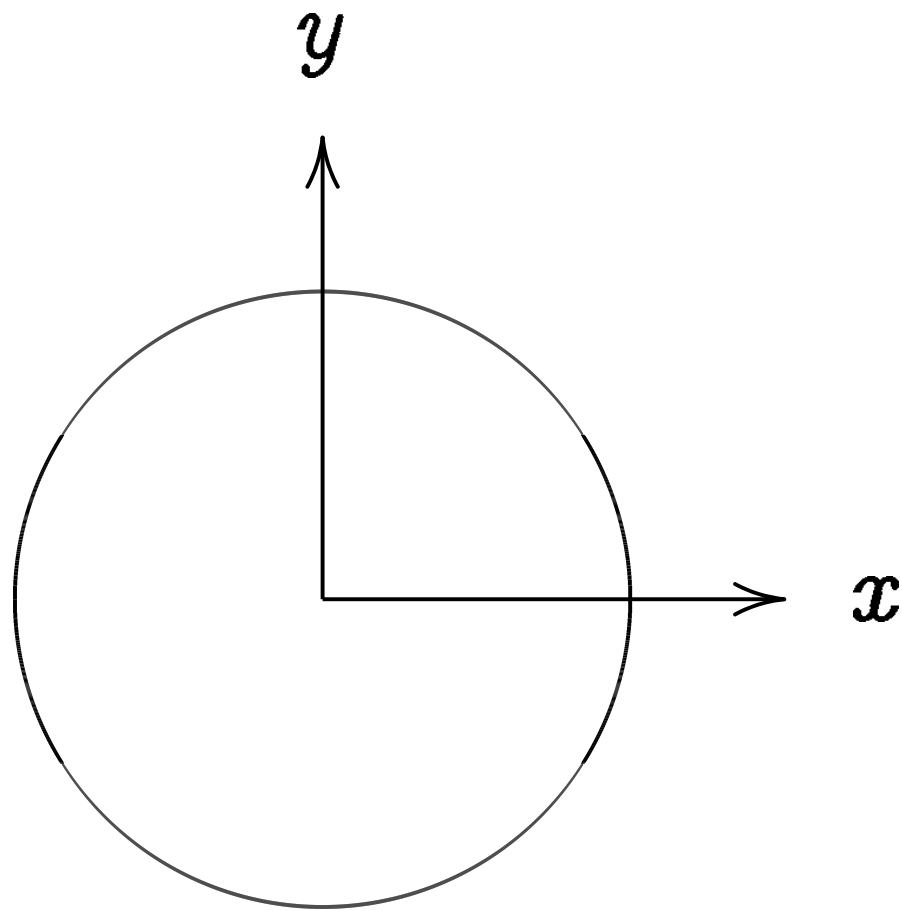
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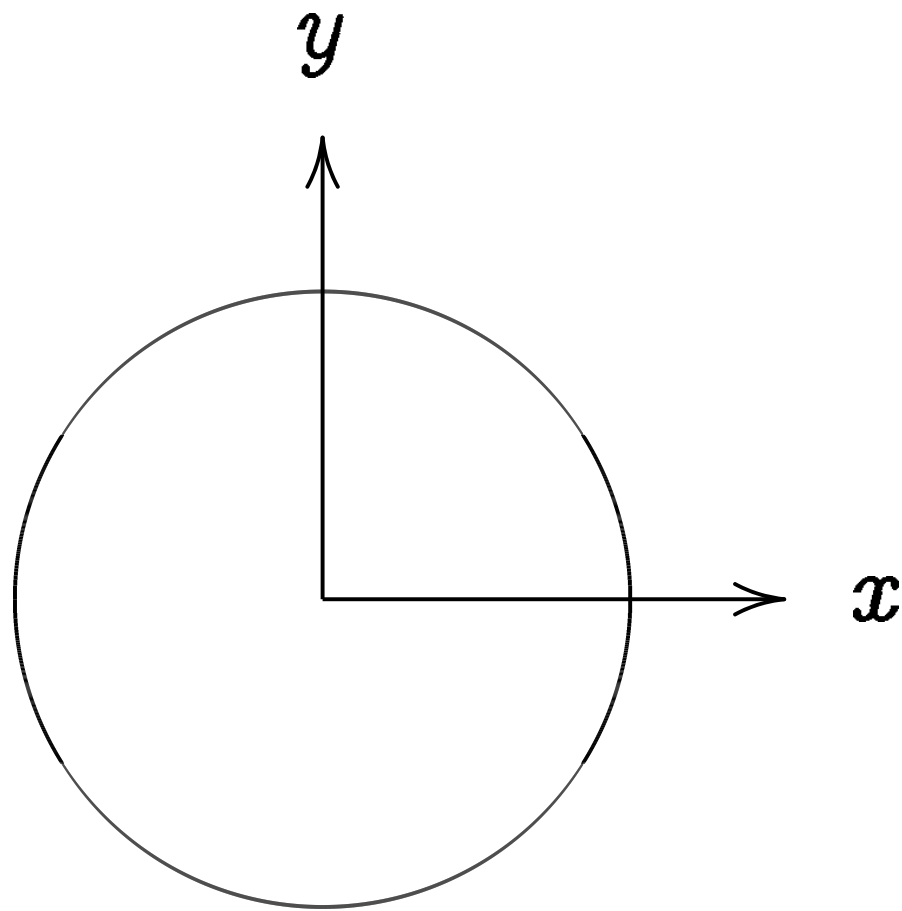
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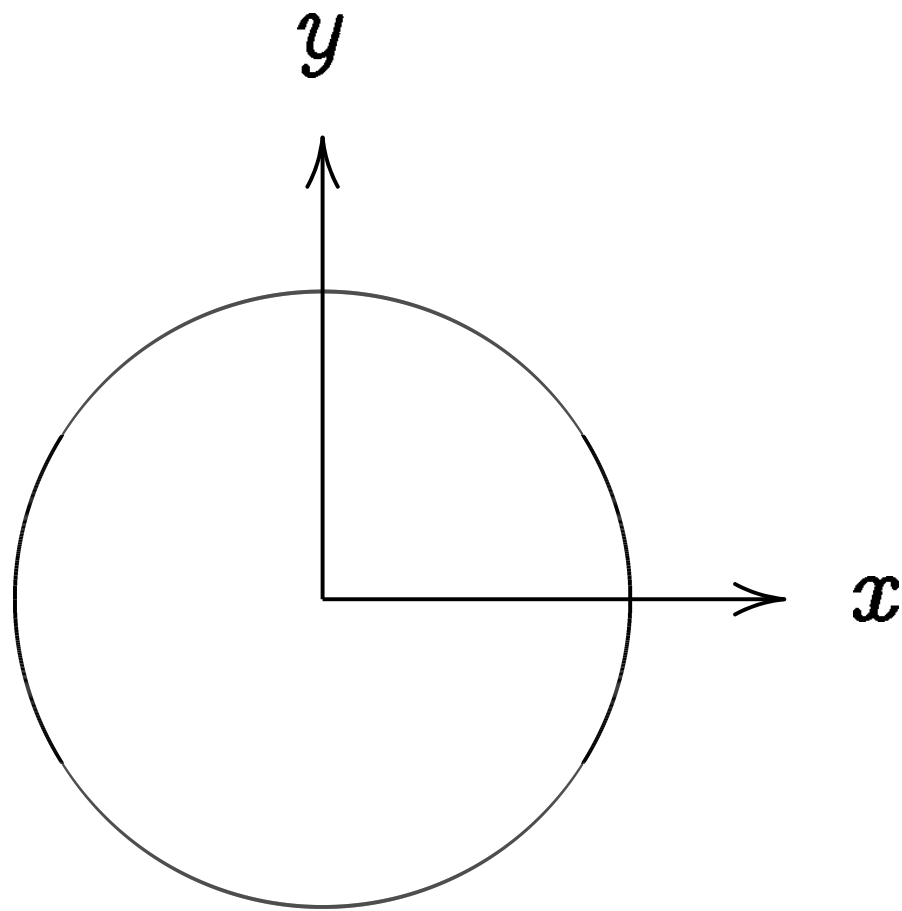
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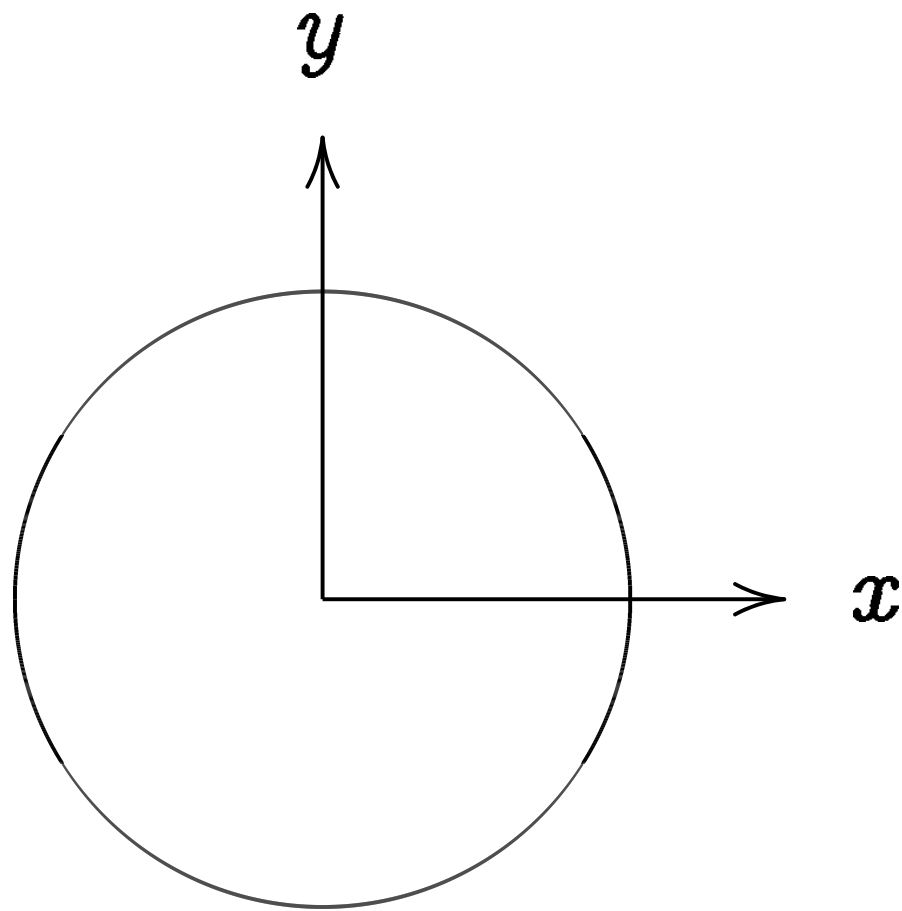
$$(1, 0) = \text{“3:00”}.$$

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$$(1/2, -\sqrt{3/4}) =$$

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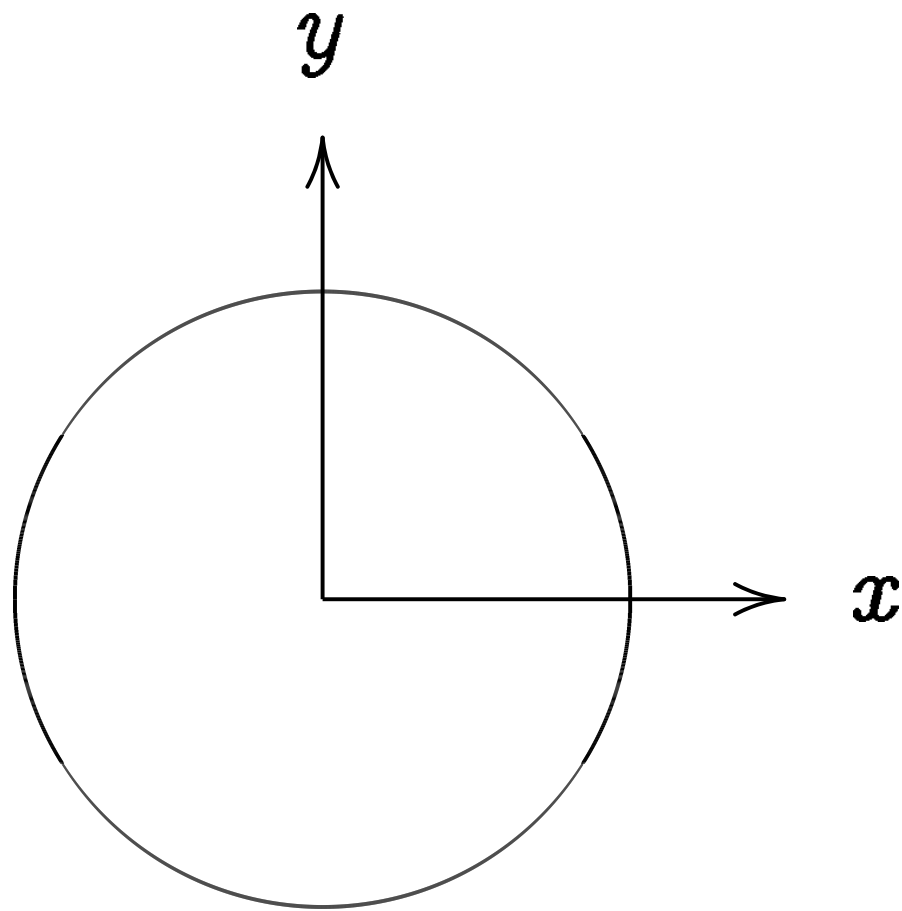
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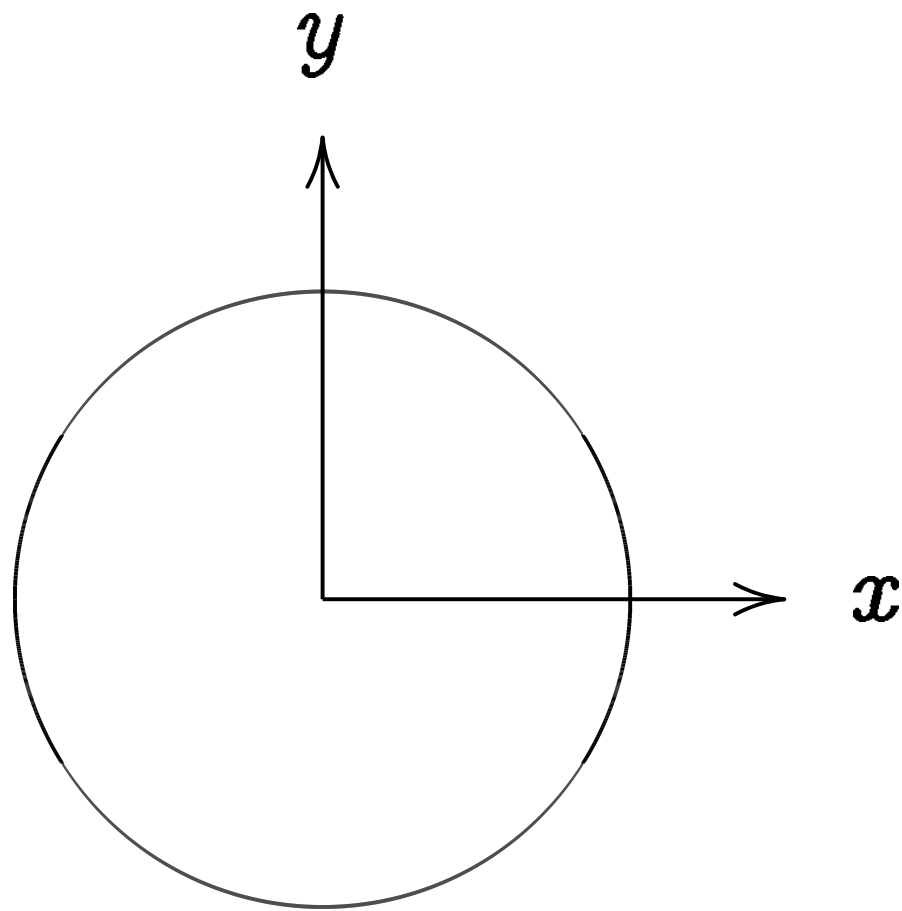
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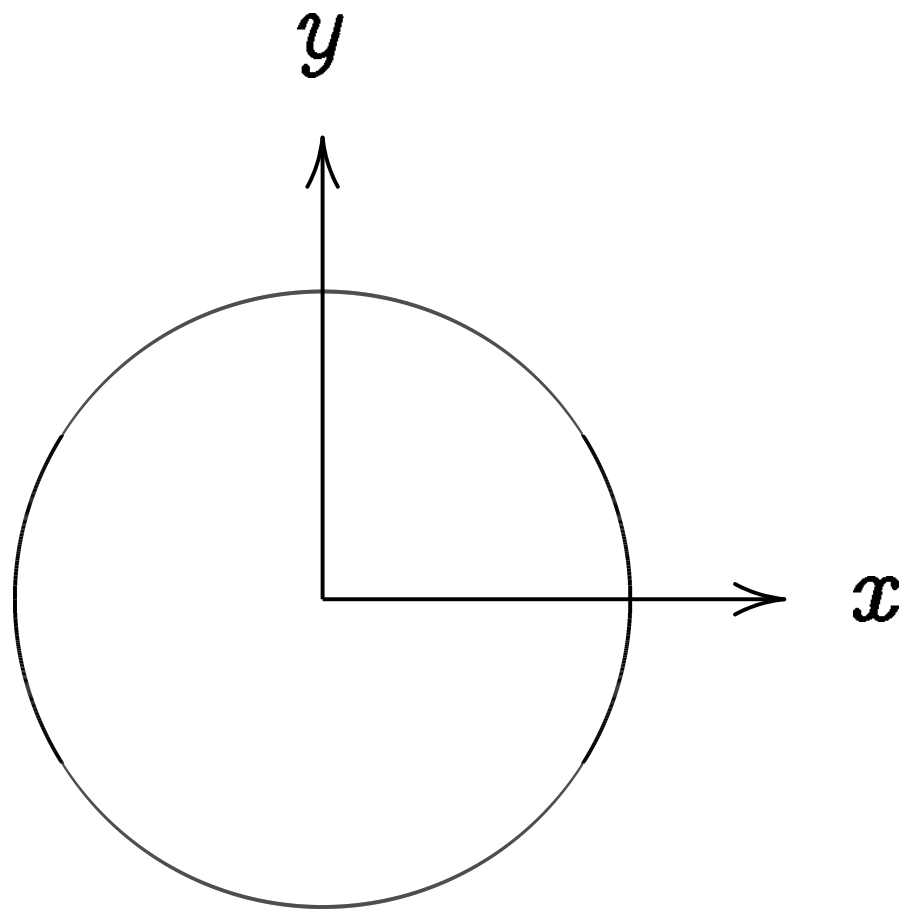
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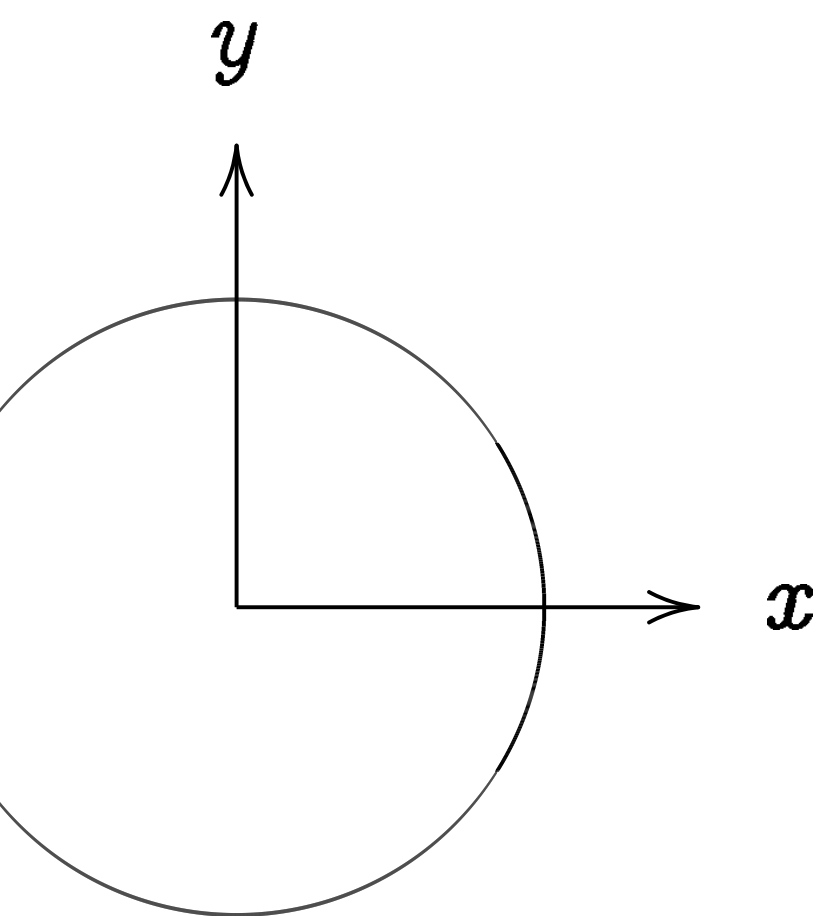
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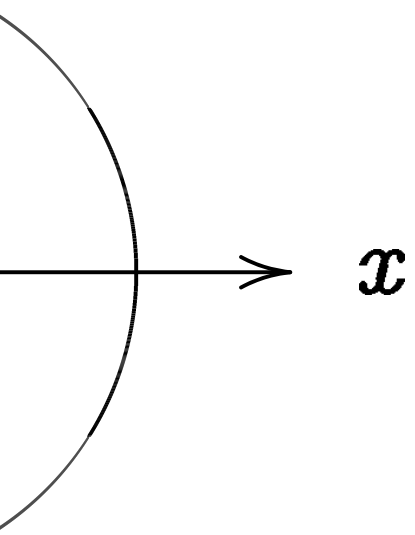
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Addition

$$x^2 + y^2$$

$$x = \sin \theta$$



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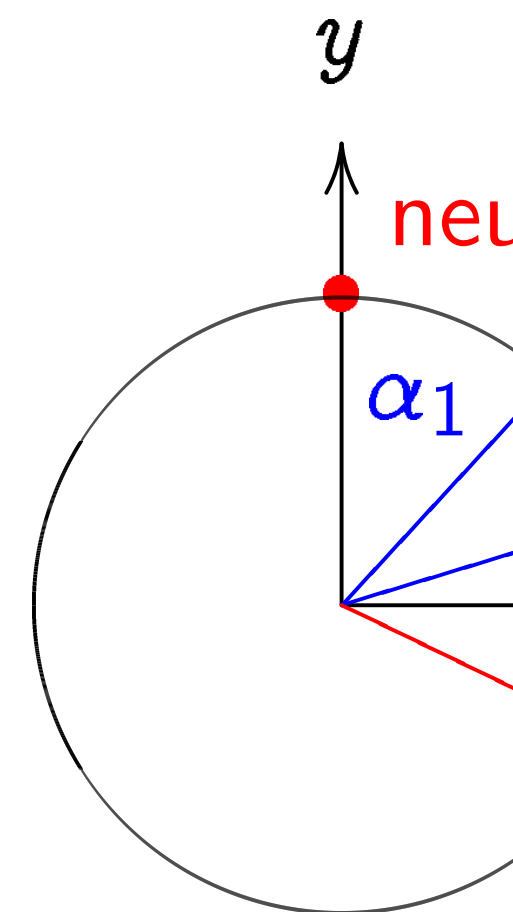
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$$x^2 + y^2 = 1, \text{ para}$$

$$x = \sin \alpha, \quad y = \cos$$

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$$(\sqrt{1/2}, \sqrt{1/2}) = \text{"1:30"}.$$

$$(3/5, 4/5). \quad (-3/5, 4/5).$$

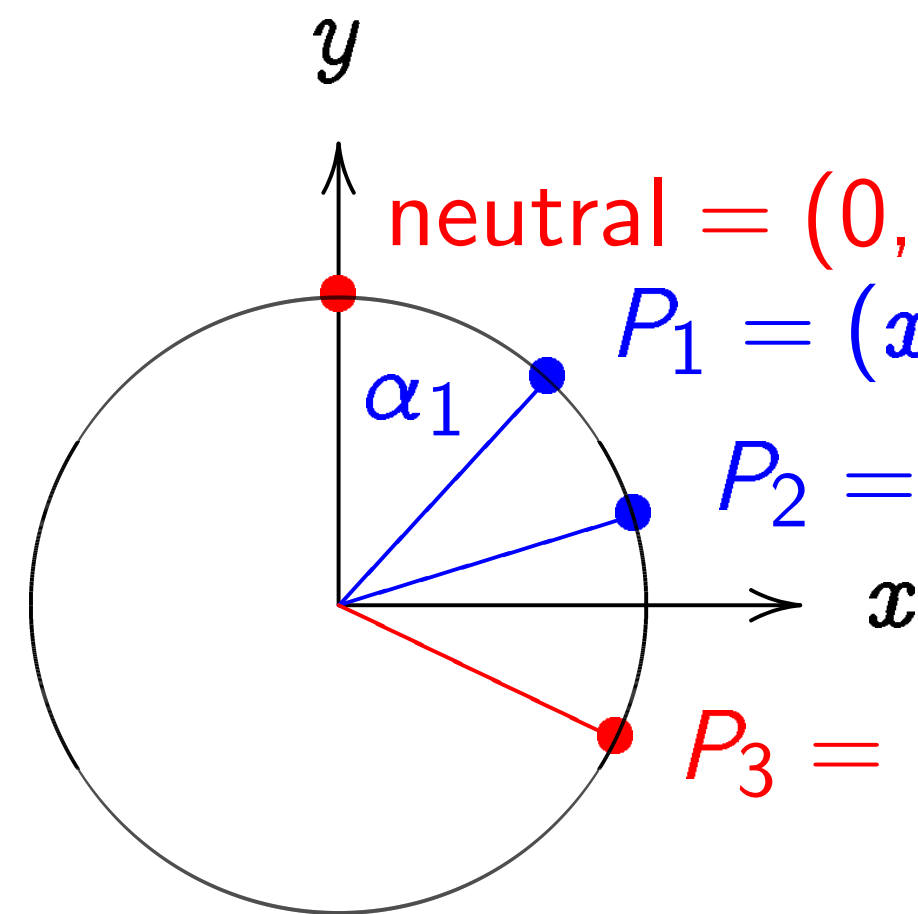
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Many more.

Addition on the clock:



$$x^2 + y^2 = 1, \text{ parametrized by } x = \sin \alpha, \quad y = \cos \alpha.$$

1.

Examples of points on this curve:

$$(0, 1) = \text{"12:00"}$$

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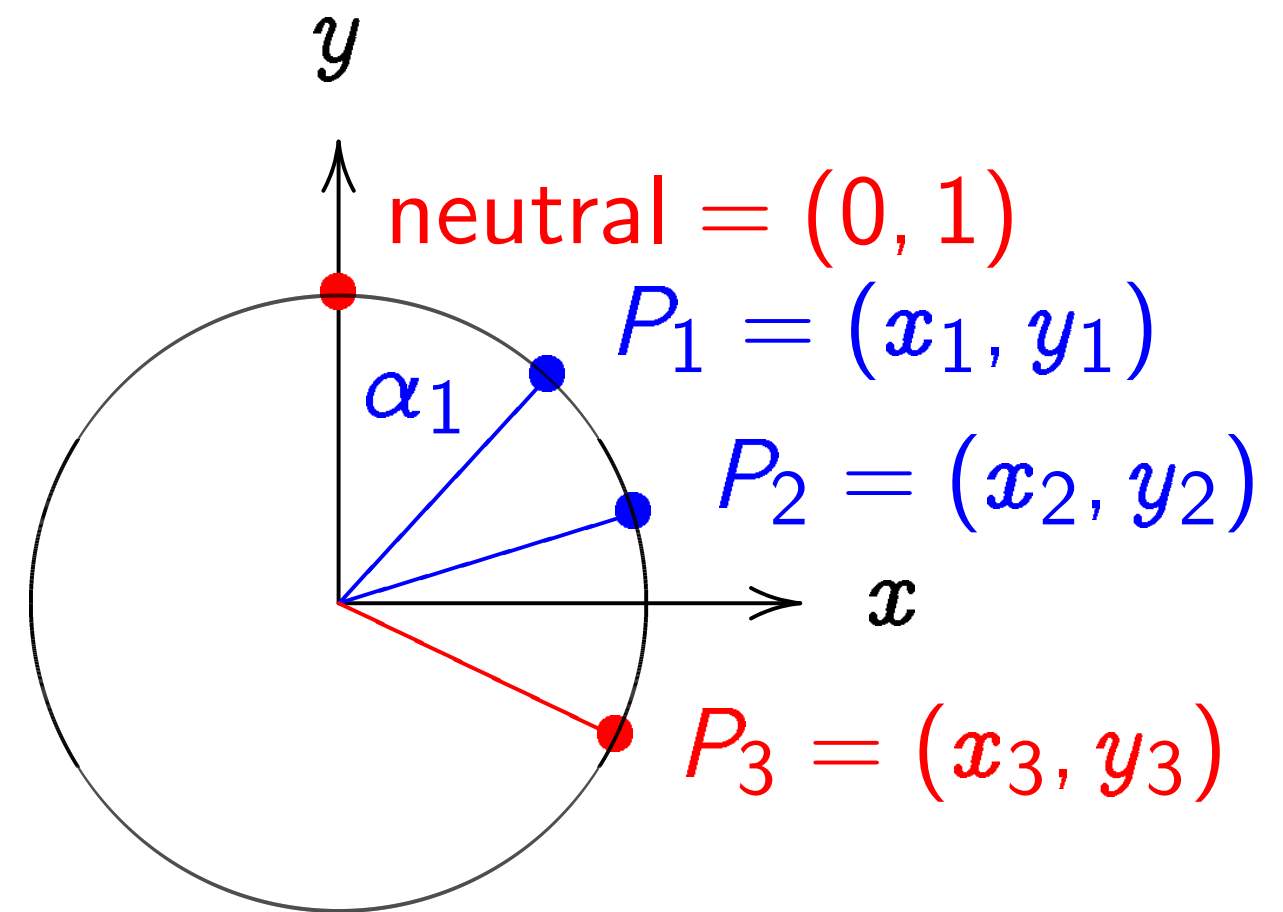
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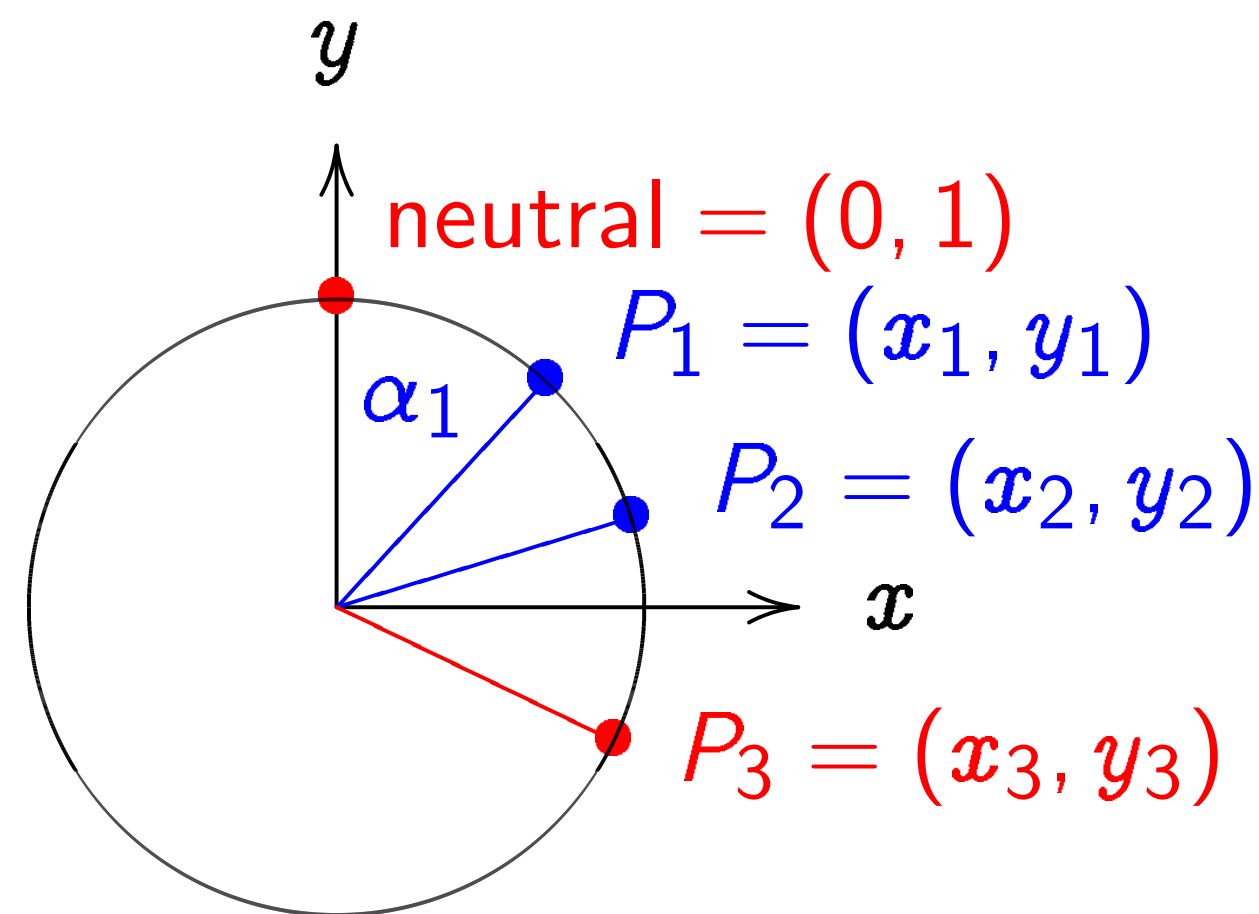
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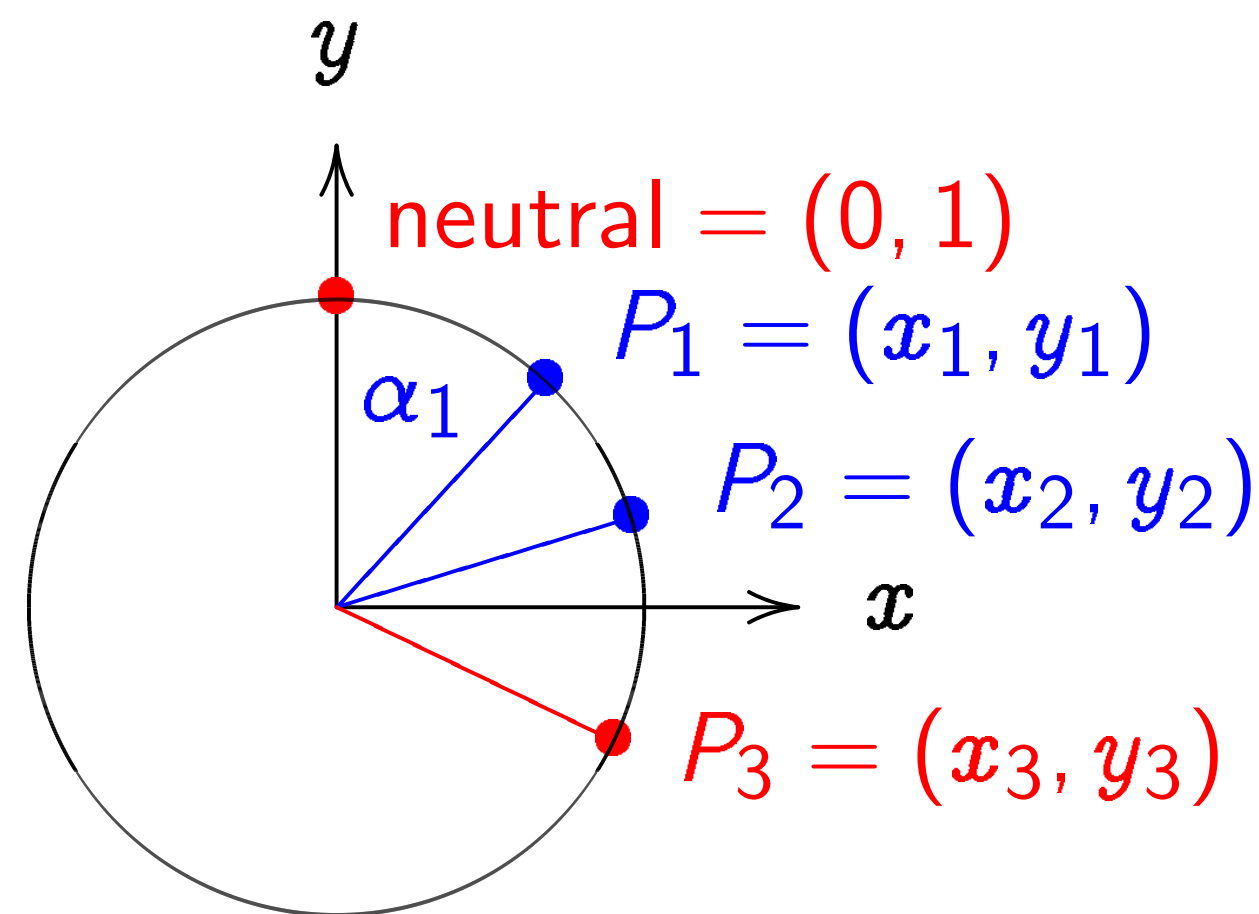
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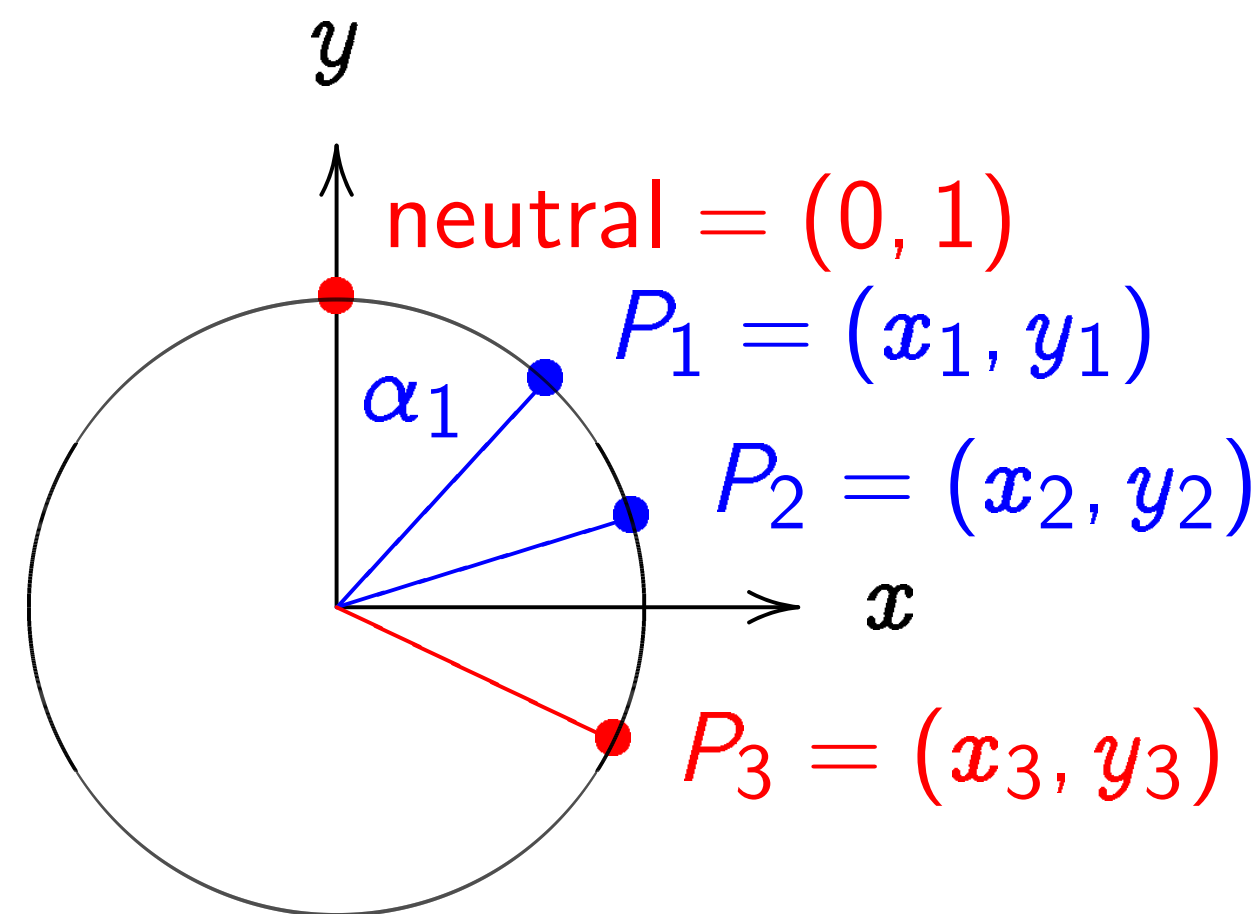
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5). $(-3/5, 4/5)$.

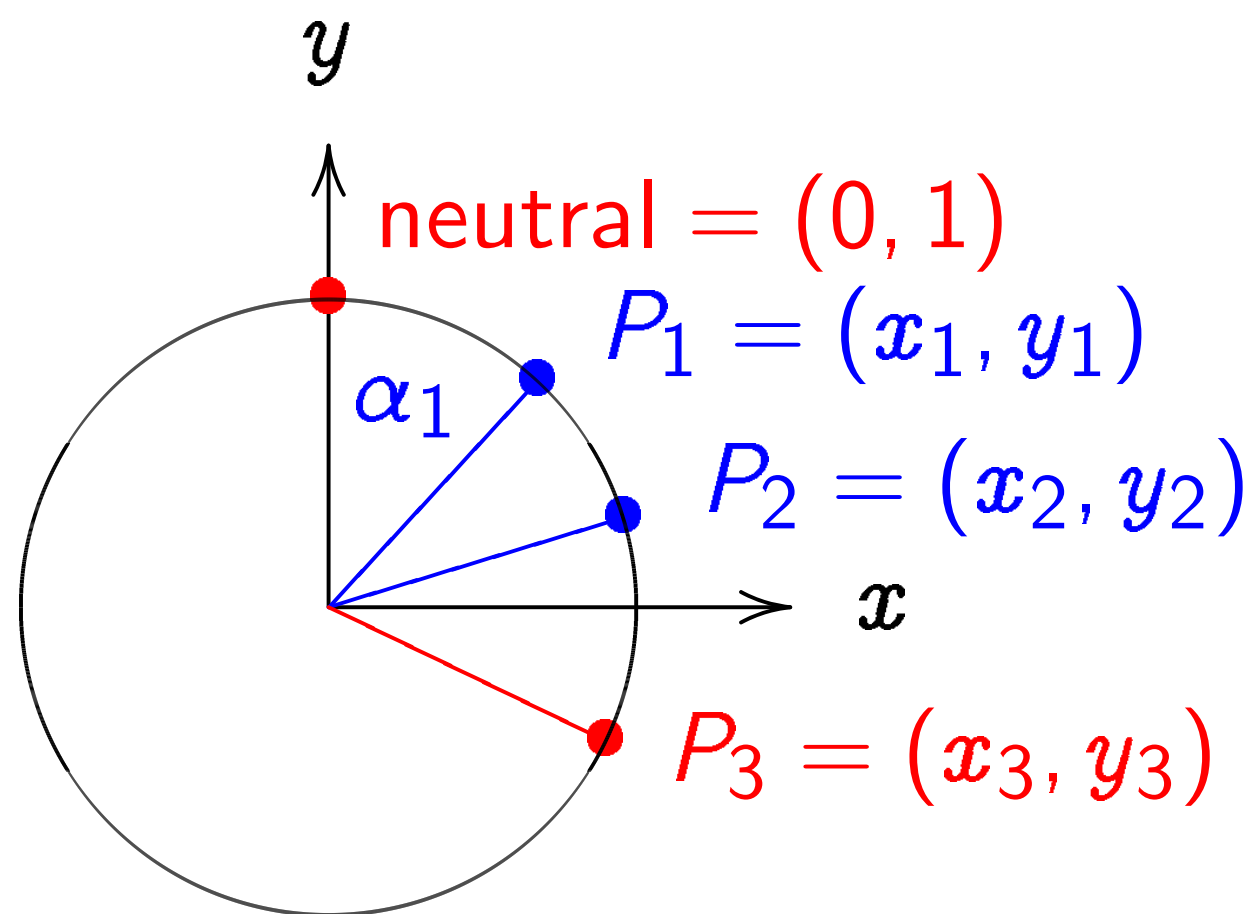
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Clock ad

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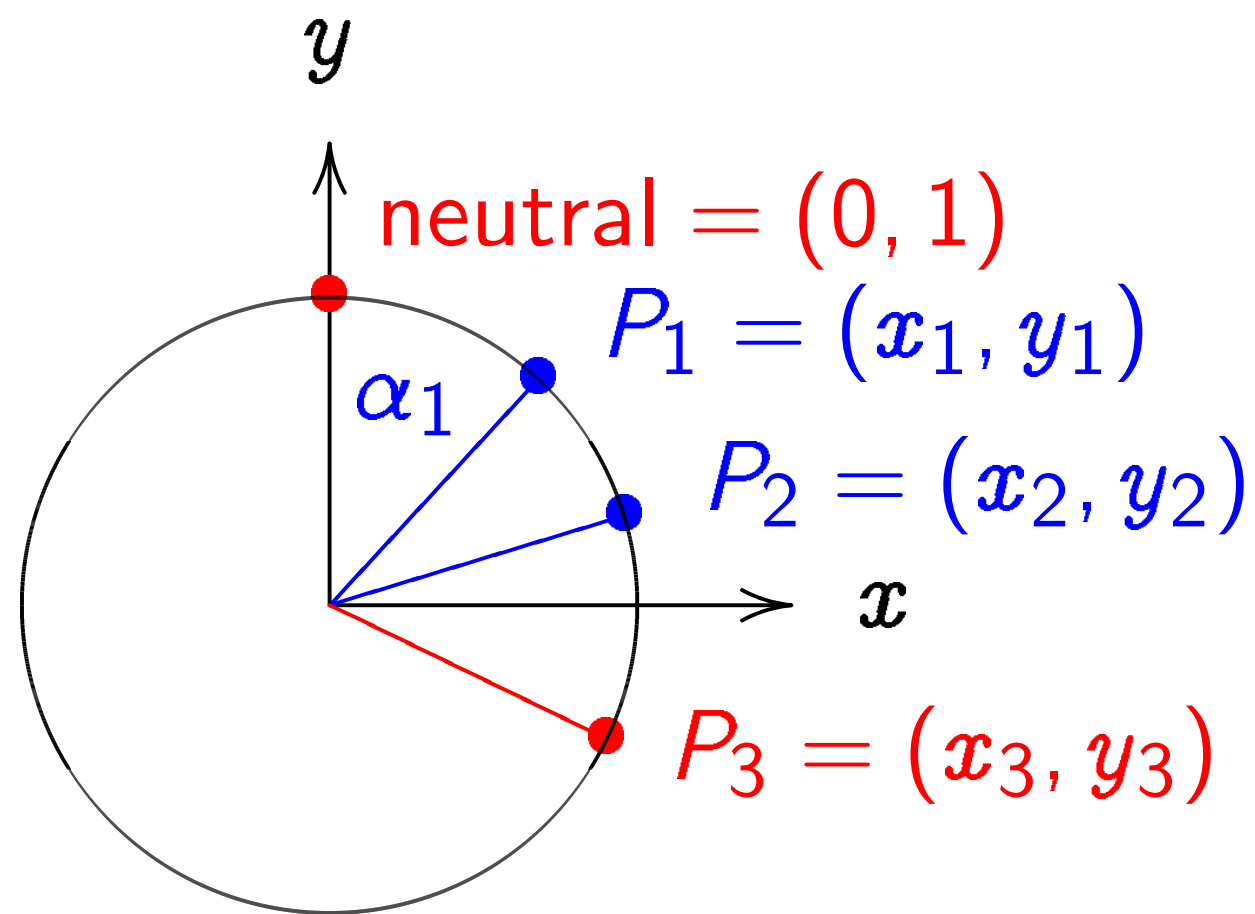
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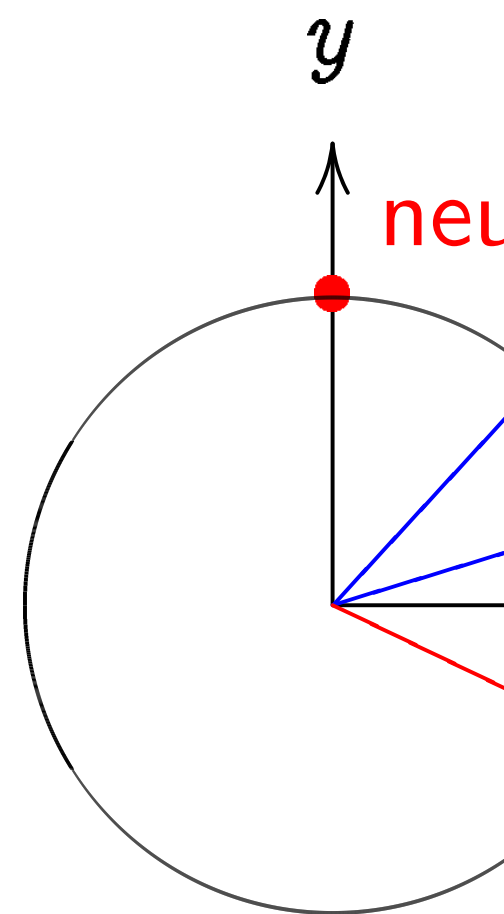
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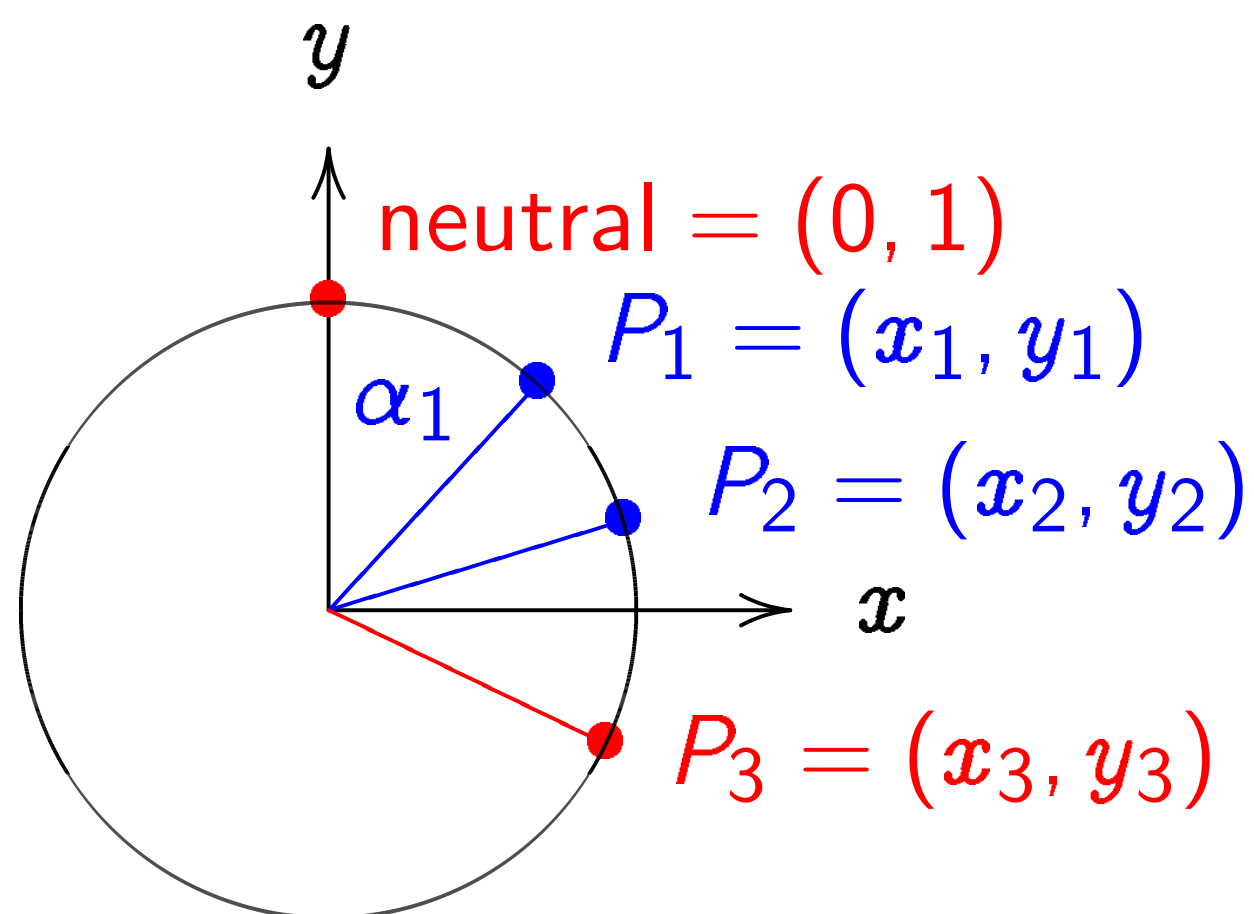
Clock addition with



Use Cartesian coord
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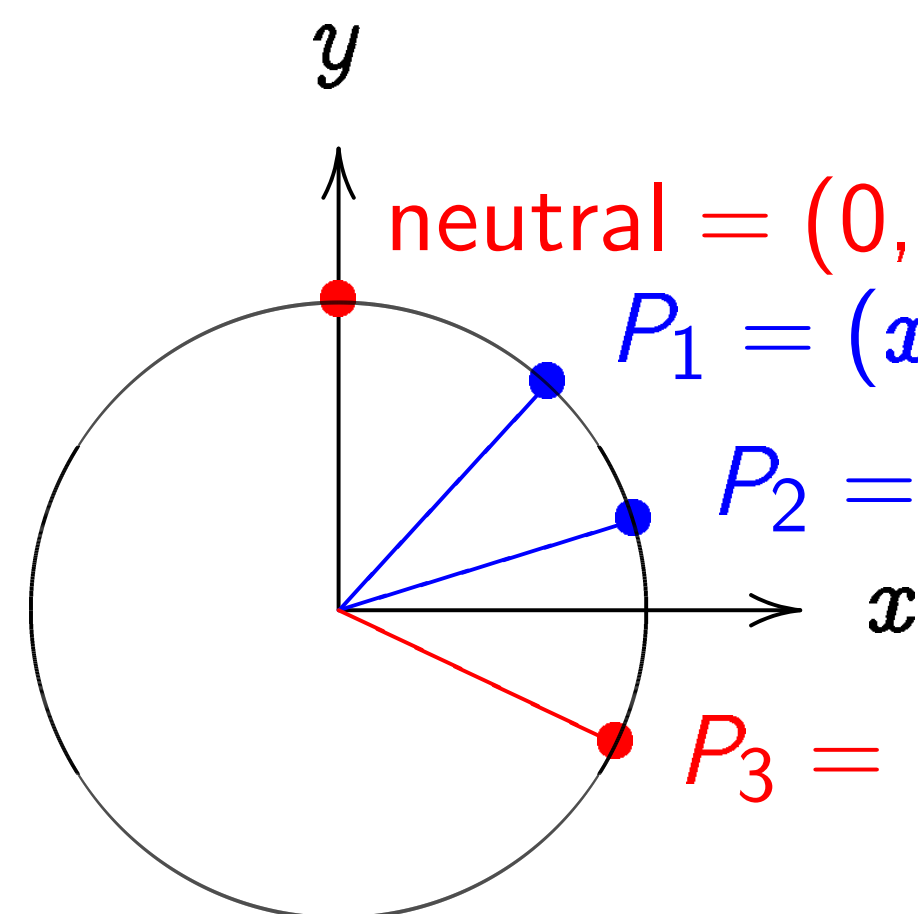
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Addition on the clock:



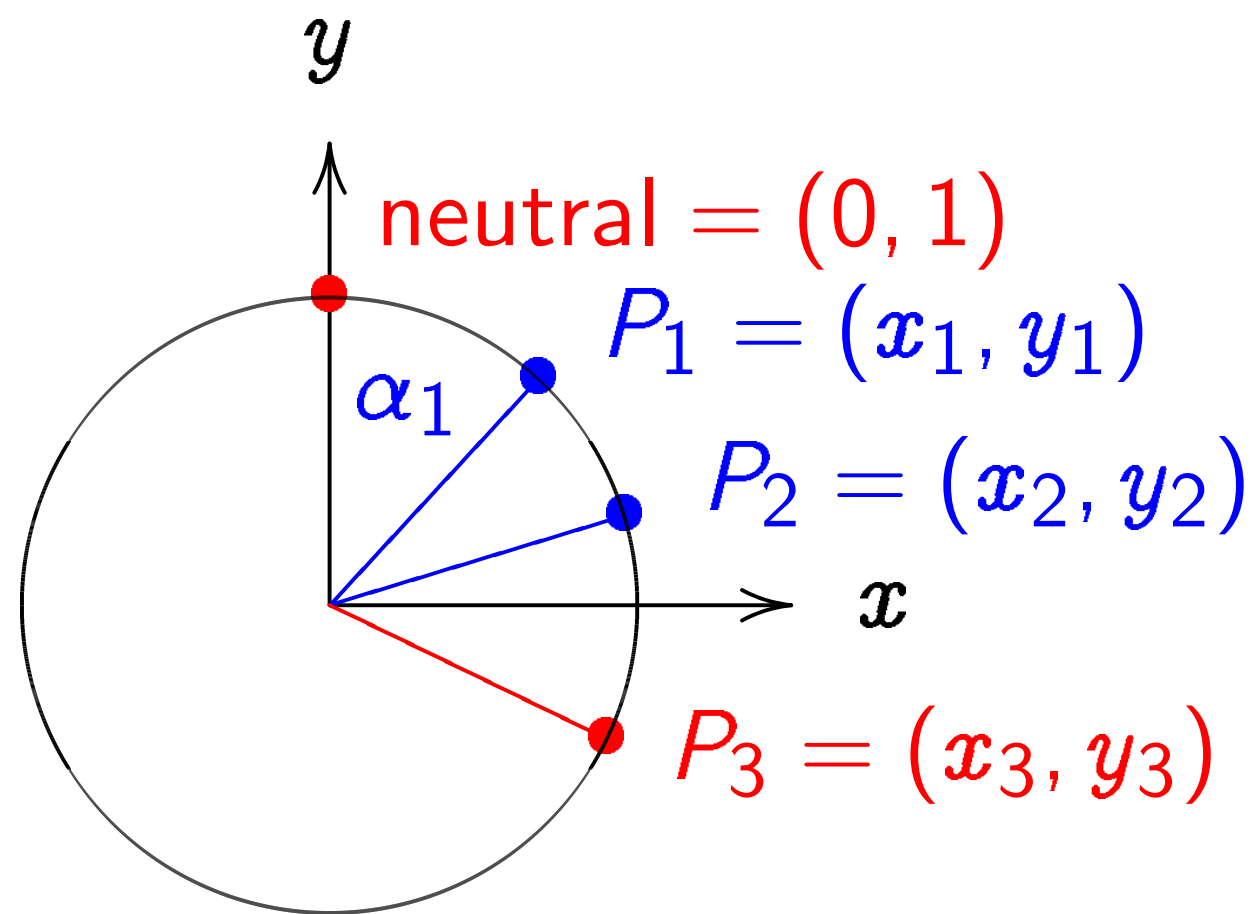
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Clock addition without sin, c



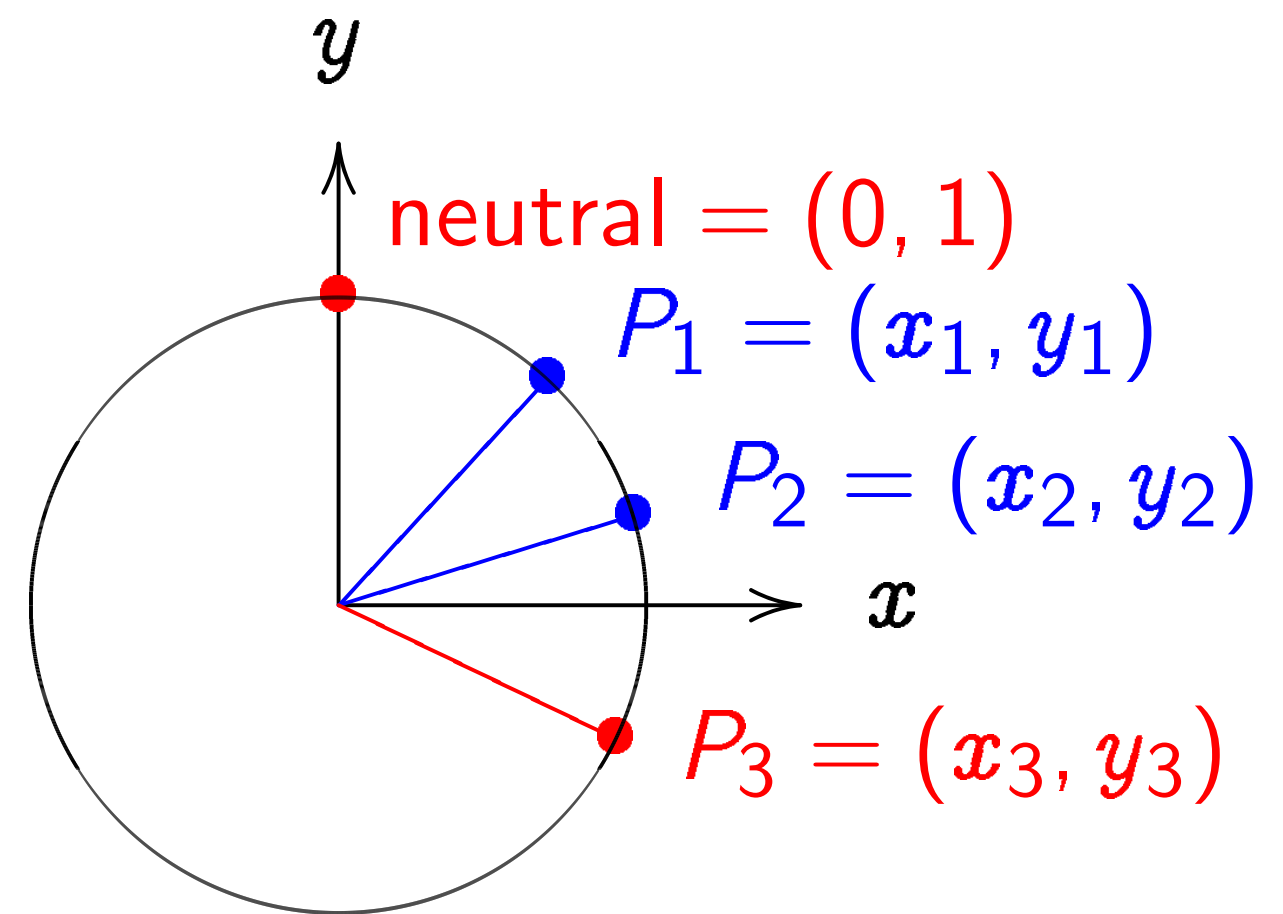
Use Cartesian coordinates for
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for the clock $x^2 + y^2 = 1$:
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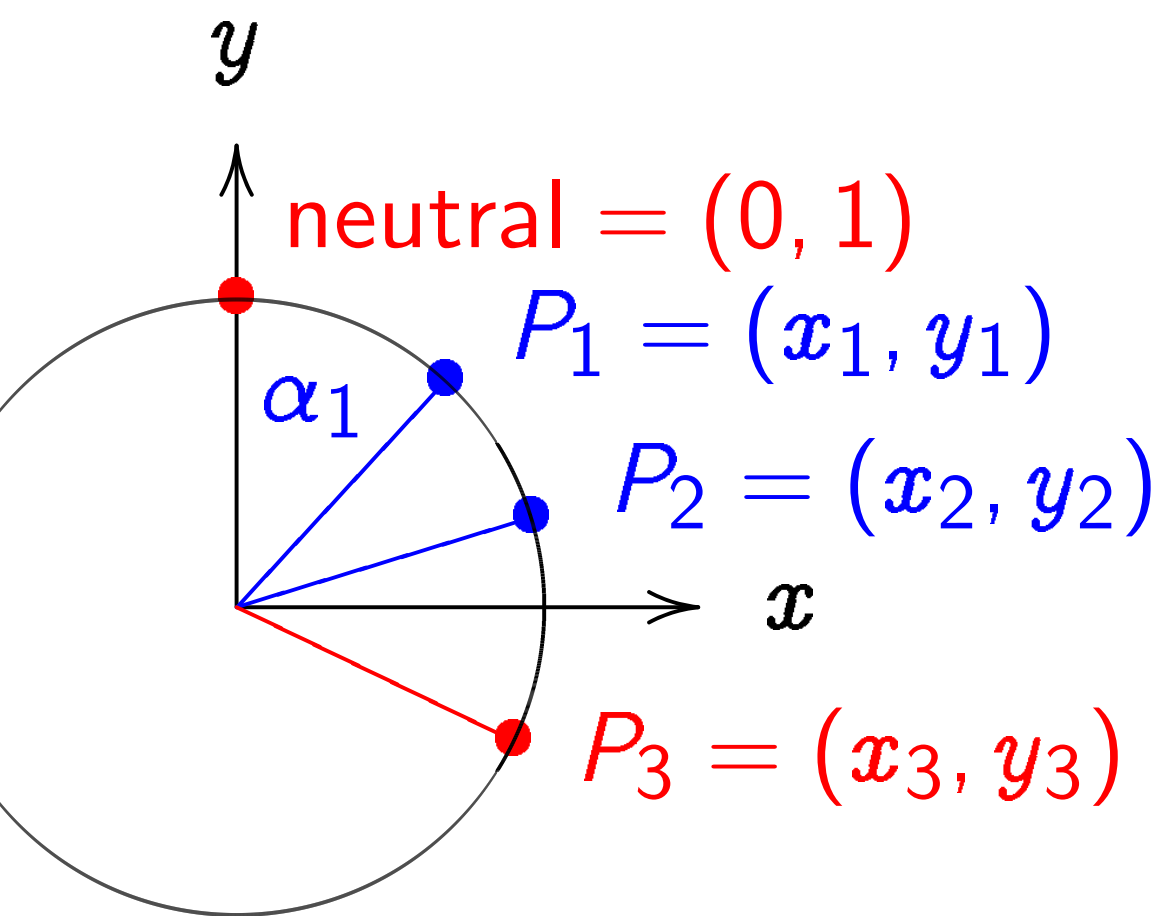
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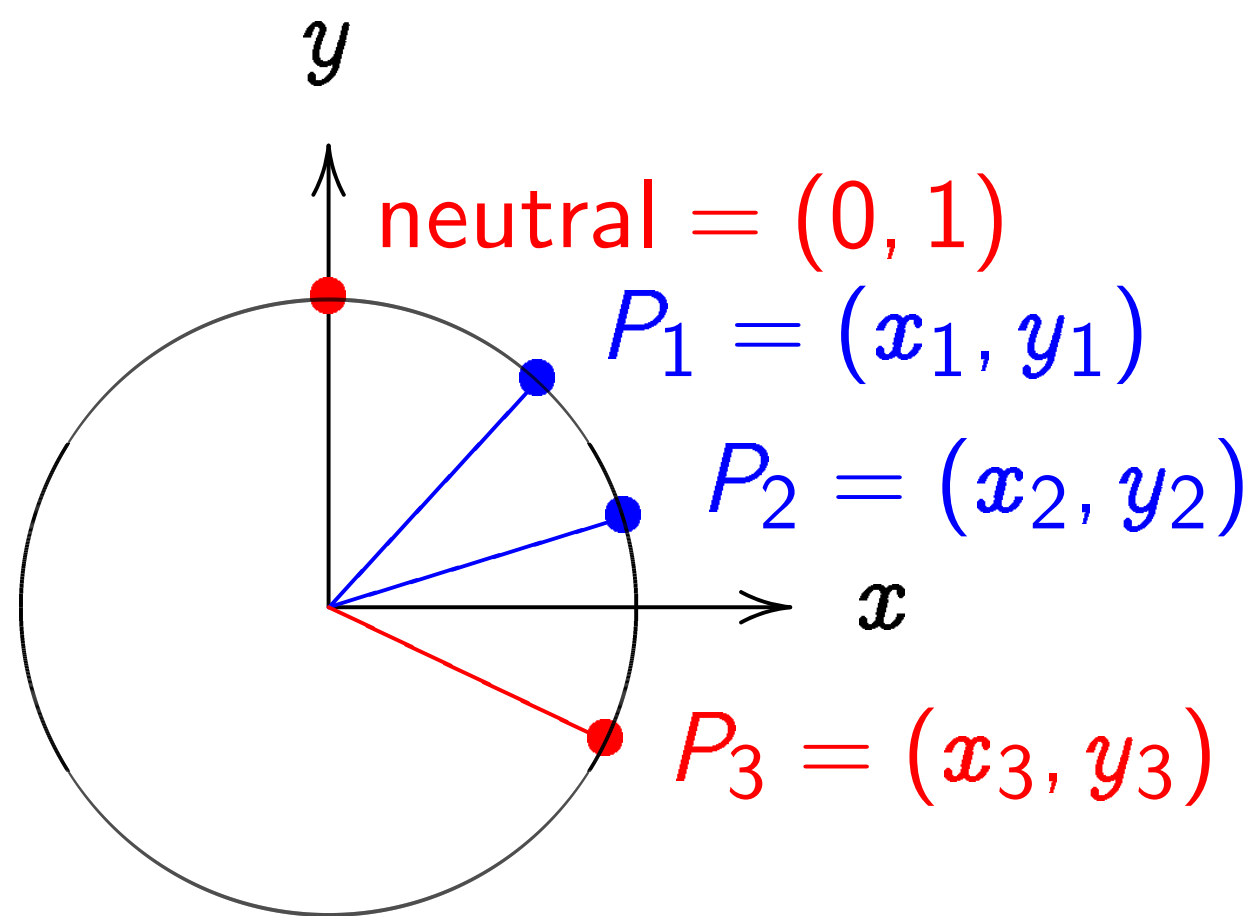
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Clock addition without sin, cos:

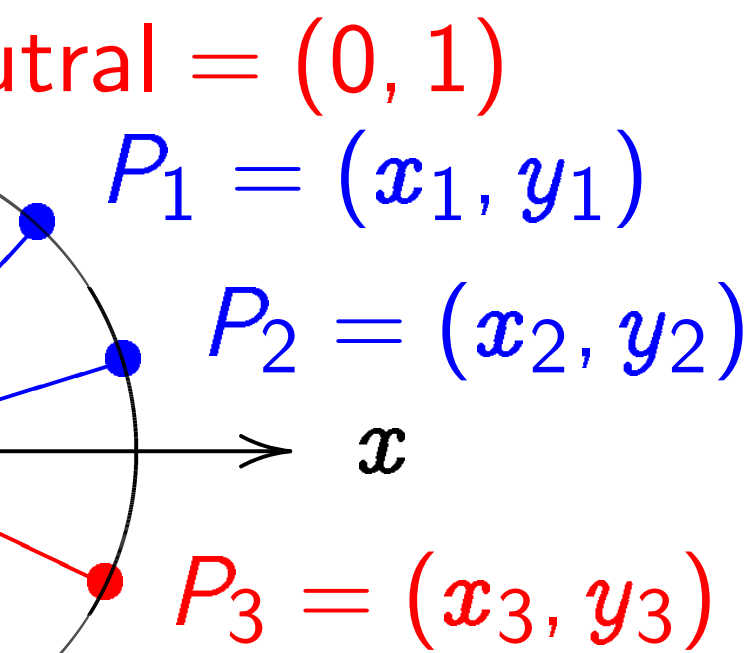


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Example

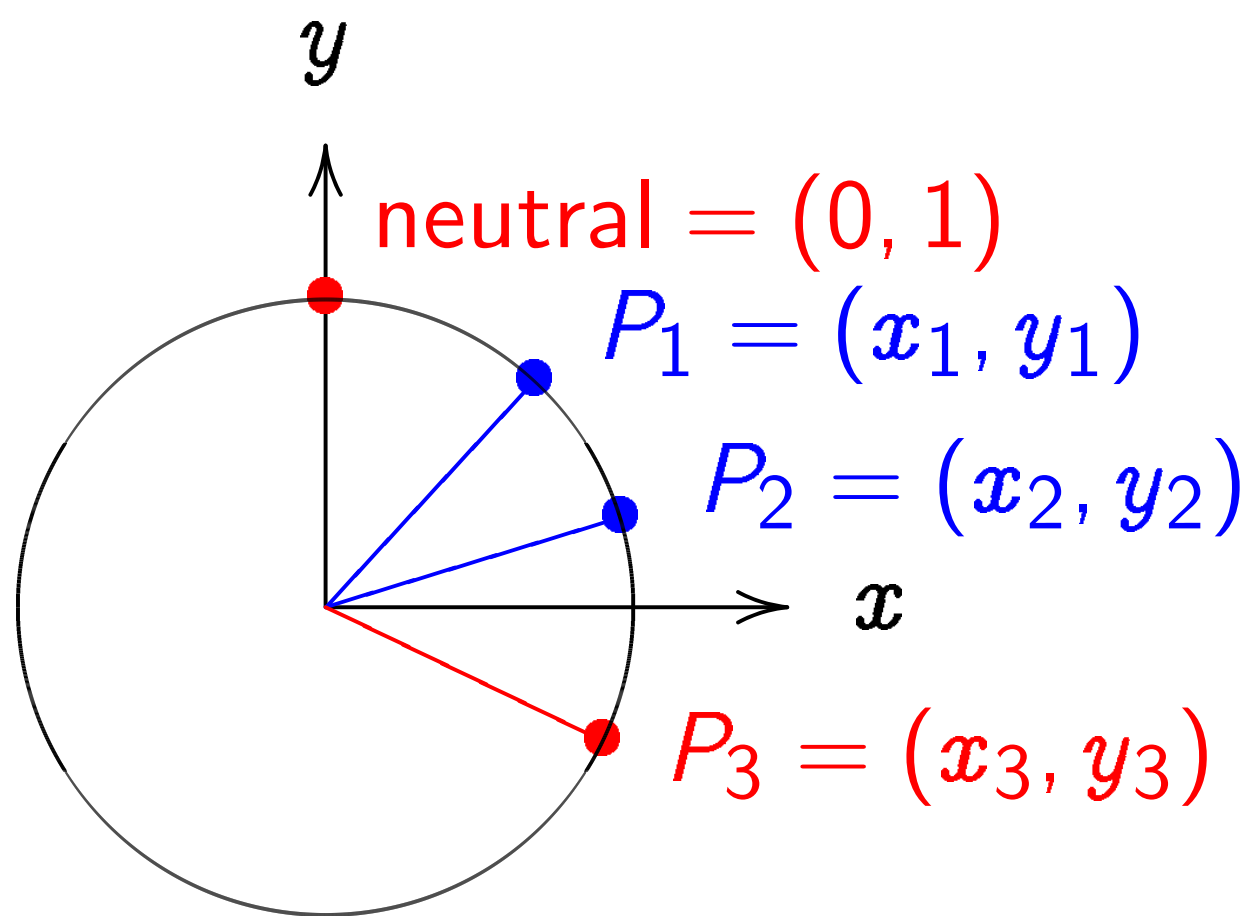
$$\begin{aligned}
 & \text{"2:00"} + \text{"5:00"} \\
 &= (\sqrt{3}/2, 1/2) + (1/2, \sqrt{3}/2) \\
 &= (-1/2, \sqrt{3}/2) \\
 &= (\sqrt{3}/2, 1/2) \\
 &= 2 \left(\frac{3}{5}, \frac{4}{5} \right)
 \end{aligned}$$

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Clock addition without sin, cos:

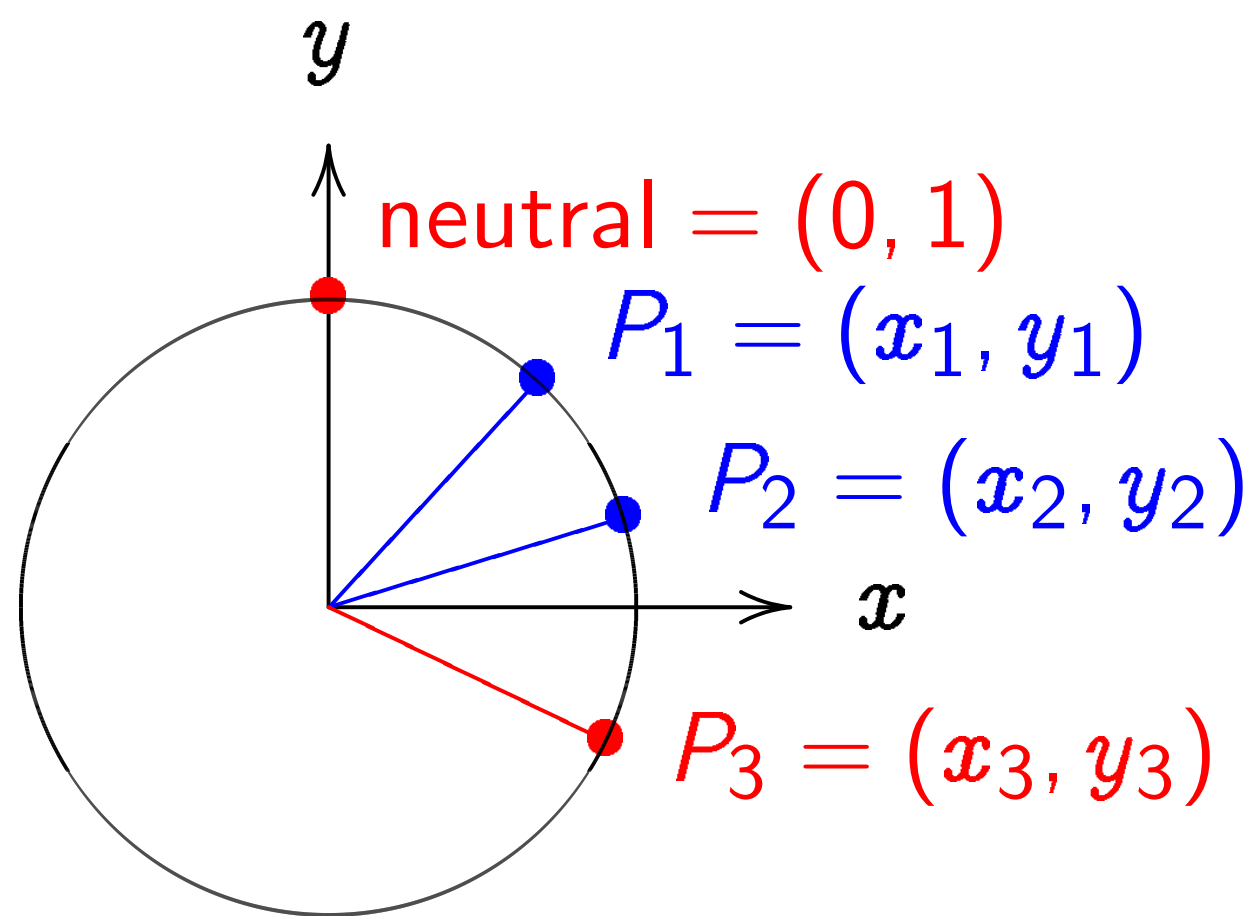


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Examples of clock

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \text{"2:00"} + \text{"5:00"} \\
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 &= (-1/2, -\sqrt{3}/4) \\
 & \text{"5:00"} + \text{"9:00"} \\
 &= (1/2, -\sqrt{3}/4) - \\
 &= (\sqrt{3}/4, 1/2) = \\
 & 2 \left(\frac{3}{5}, \frac{4}{5} \right) = \left(\frac{24}{25}, \right)
 \end{aligned}$$

Clock addition without sin, cos:



Use Cartesian coordinates for addition. Addition formula for the clock $x^2 + y^2 = 1$: sum of (x_1, y_1) and (x_2, y_2) is $(x_1y_2 + y_1x_2, y_1y_2 - x_1x_2)$.

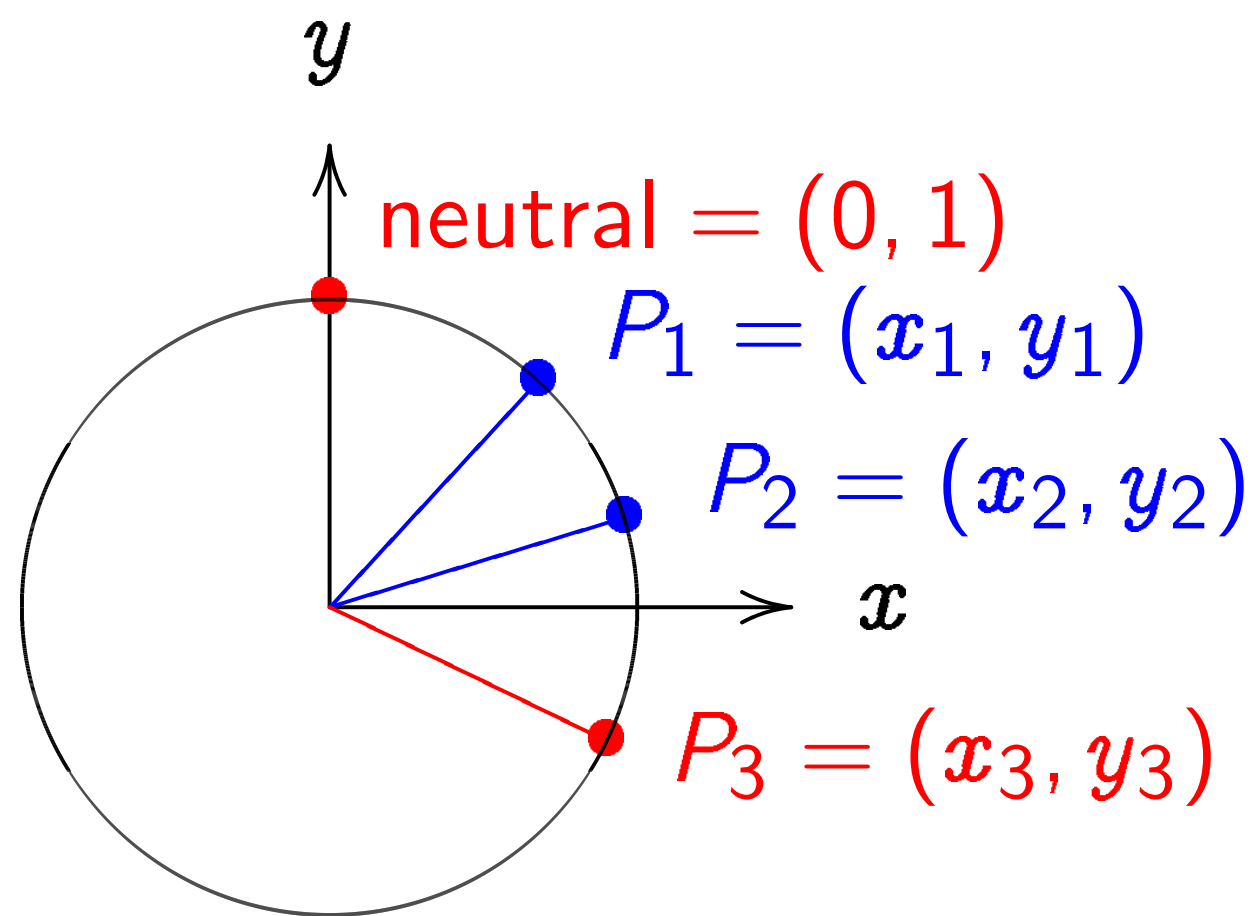
Examples of clock addition:

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{"2:00"} + \text{"5:00"} \\ &= (\sqrt{3/4}, 1/2) + (1/2, -\sqrt{3/4}) \\ &= (-1/2, -\sqrt{3/4}) = \text{"7:00"} \end{aligned}$$

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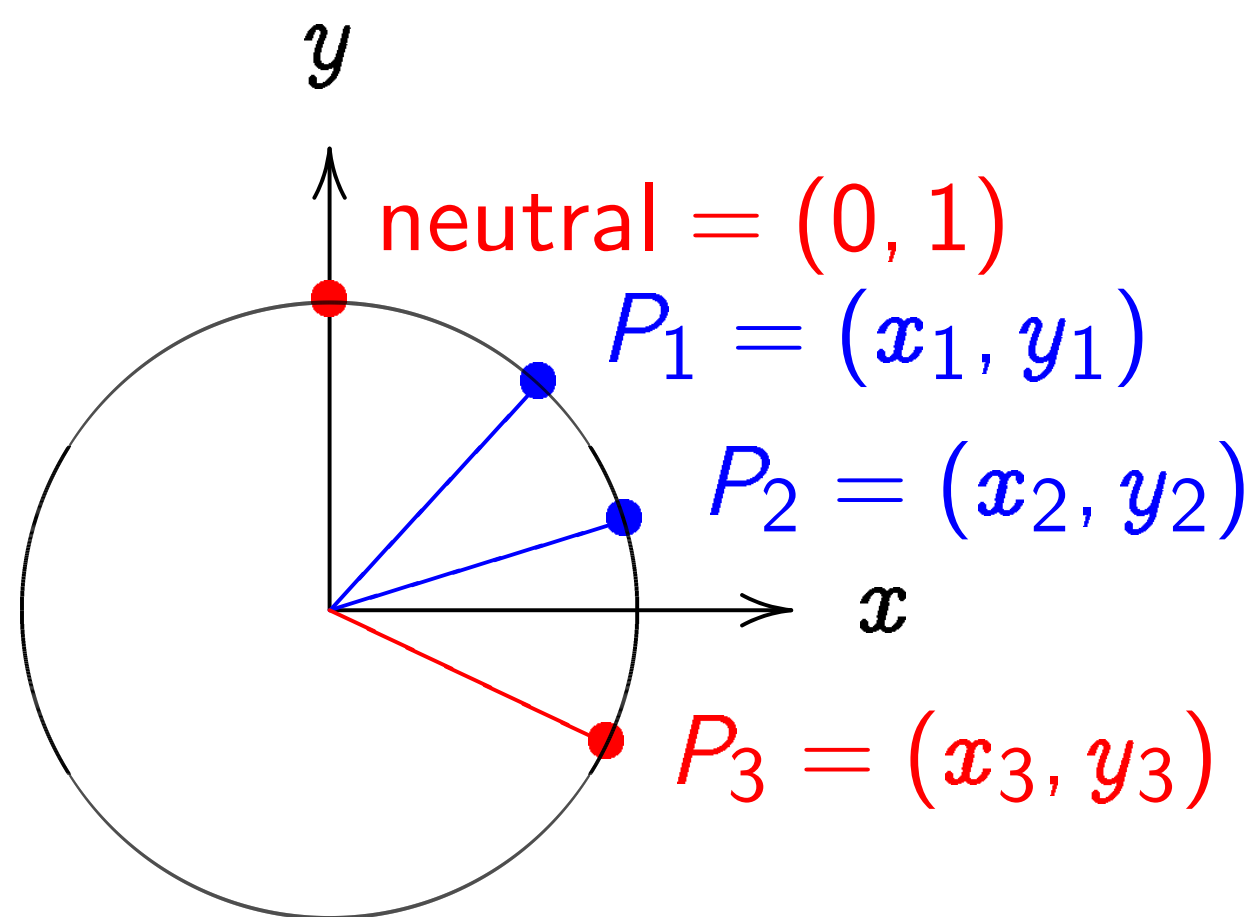
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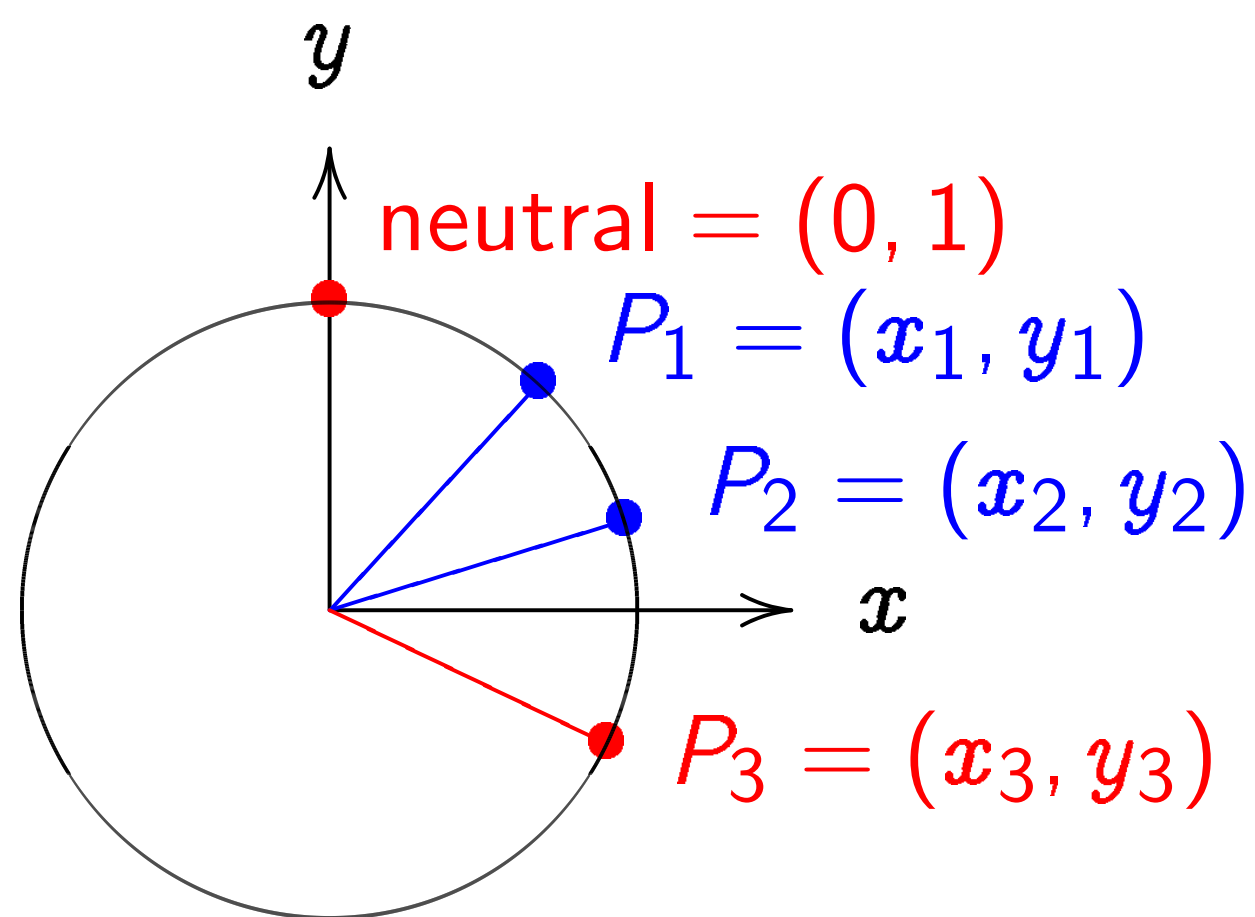
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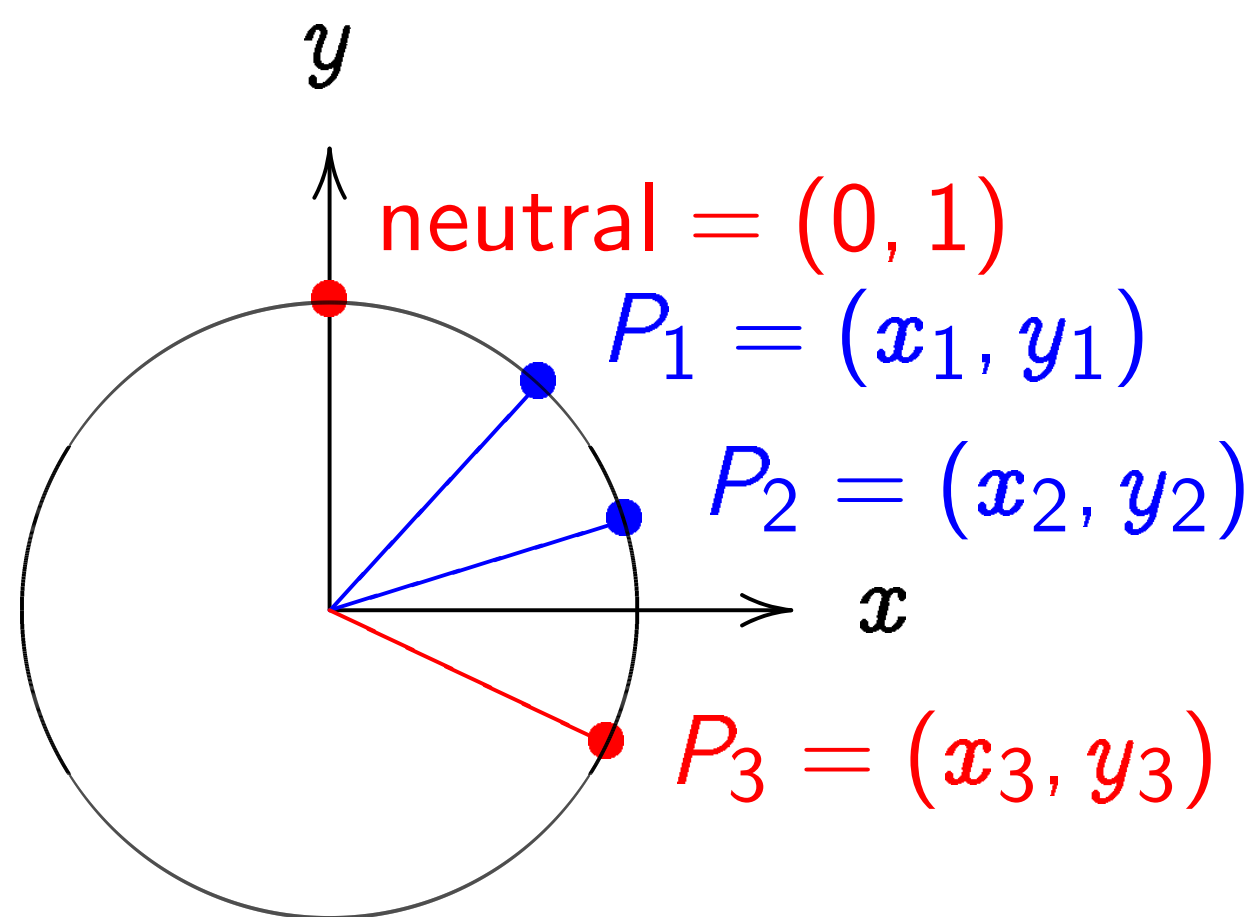
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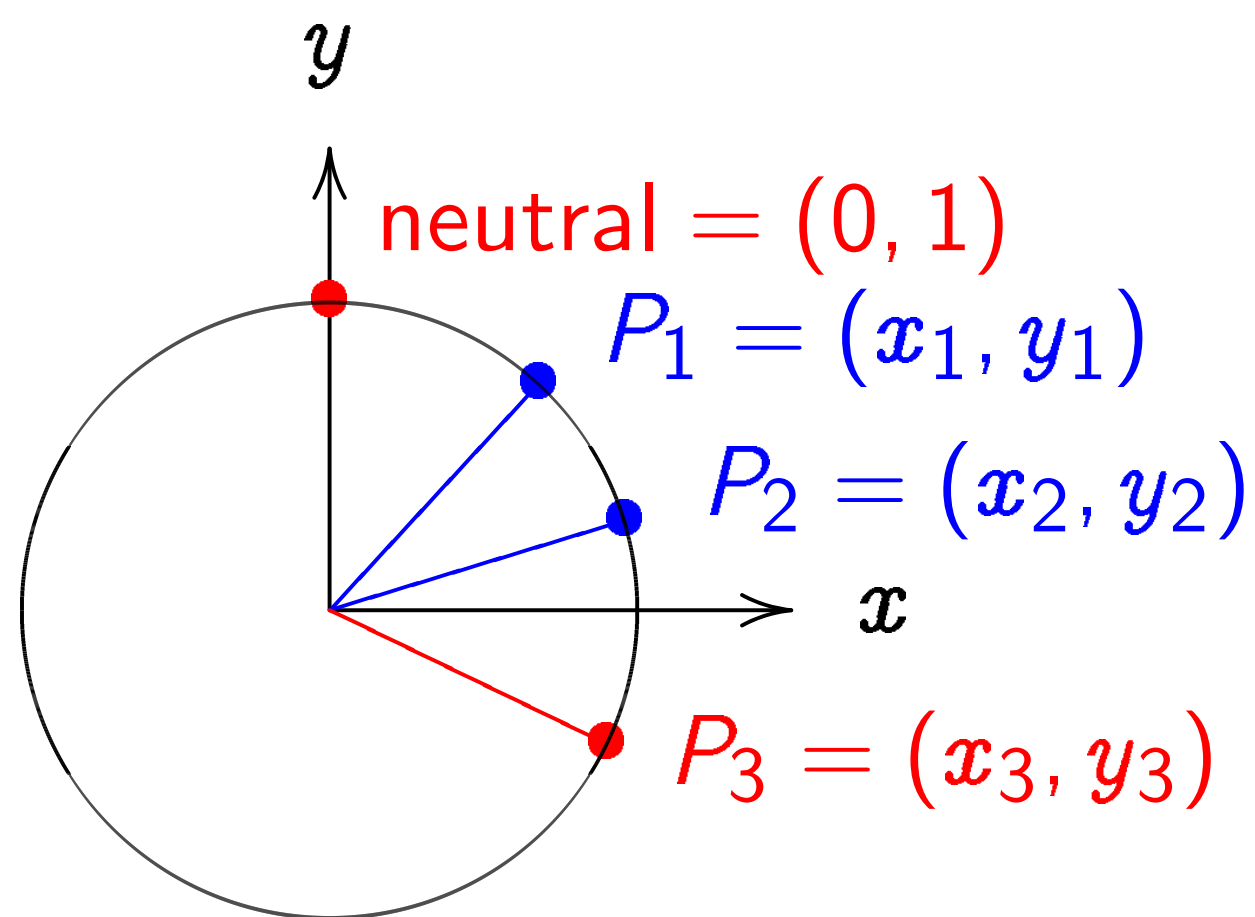
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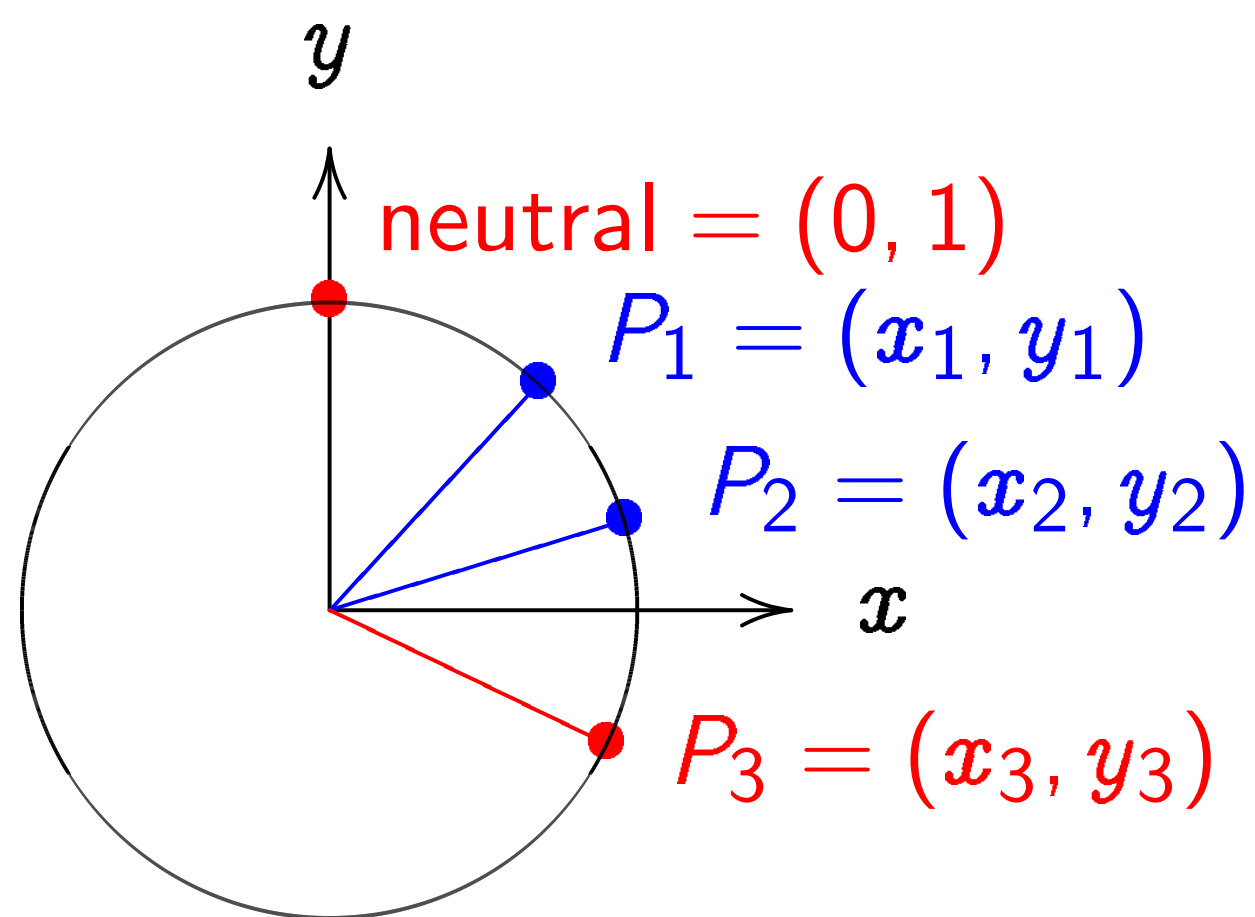
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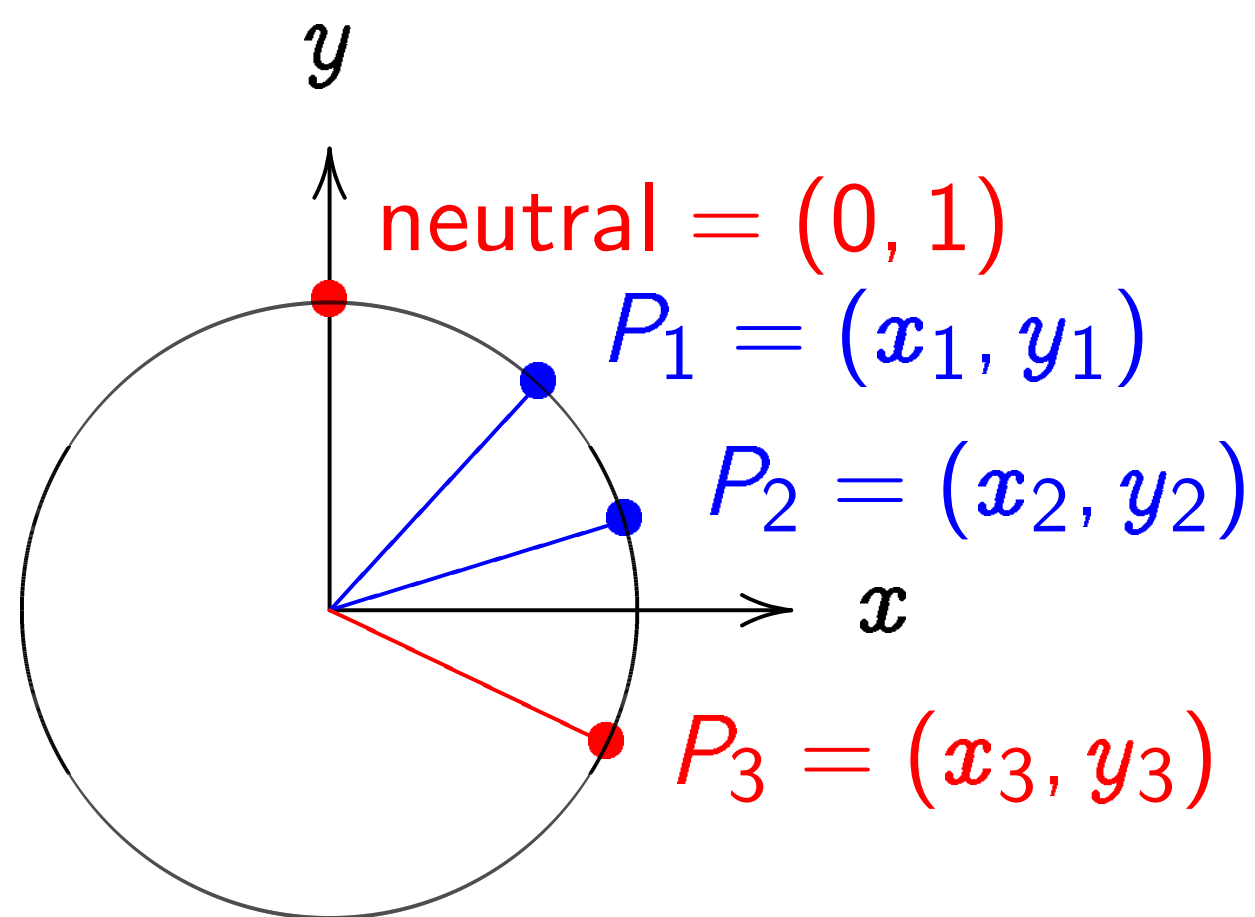
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Clock addition without sin, cos:



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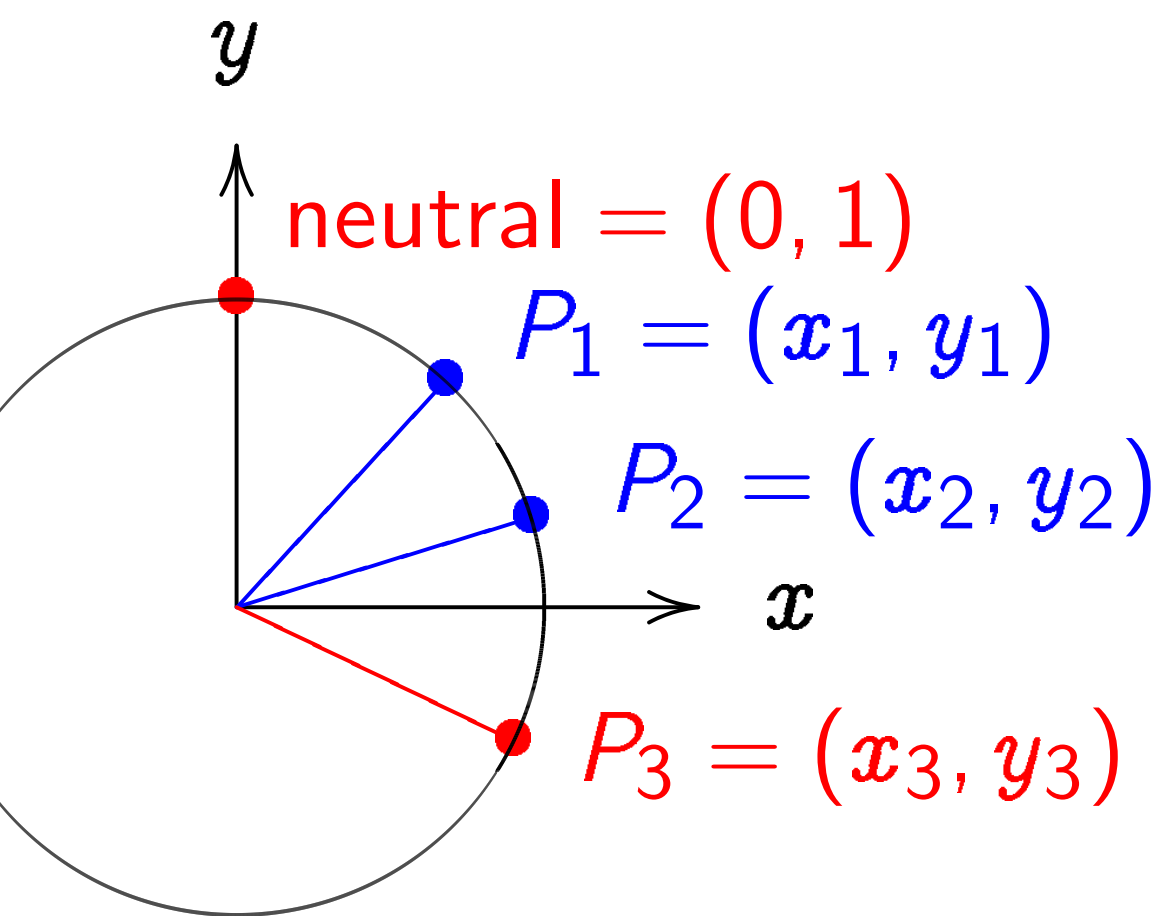
$$3 \left(\frac{3}{5}, \frac{4}{5} \right) = \left(\frac{117}{125}, \frac{-44}{125} \right) .$$

$$4 \left(\frac{3}{5}, \frac{4}{5} \right) = \left(\frac{336}{625}, \frac{-527}{625} \right) .$$

$$(x_1, y_1) + (0, 1) = (x_1, y_1) .$$

$$(x_1, y_1) + (-x_1, y_1) = (0, 1) .$$

Addition without sin, cos:



Cartesian coordinates for

clock addition formula

clock $x^2 + y^2 = 1$:

(x_1, y_1) and (x_2, y_2) is

$(y_1x_2, y_1y_2 - x_1x_2)$.

Examples of clock addition:

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{"2:00"} + \text{"5:00"} \\ &= (\sqrt{3/4}, 1/2) + (1/2, -\sqrt{3/4}) \\ &= (-1/2, -\sqrt{3/4}) = \text{"7:00"}. \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{"5:00"} + \text{"9:00"} \\ &= (1/2, -\sqrt{3/4}) + (-1, 0) \\ &= (\sqrt{3/4}, 1/2) = \text{"2:00"}. \end{aligned}$$

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Clocks o

Clock(\mathbf{F})

$\{(x, y) \in$

Here \mathbf{F}_7

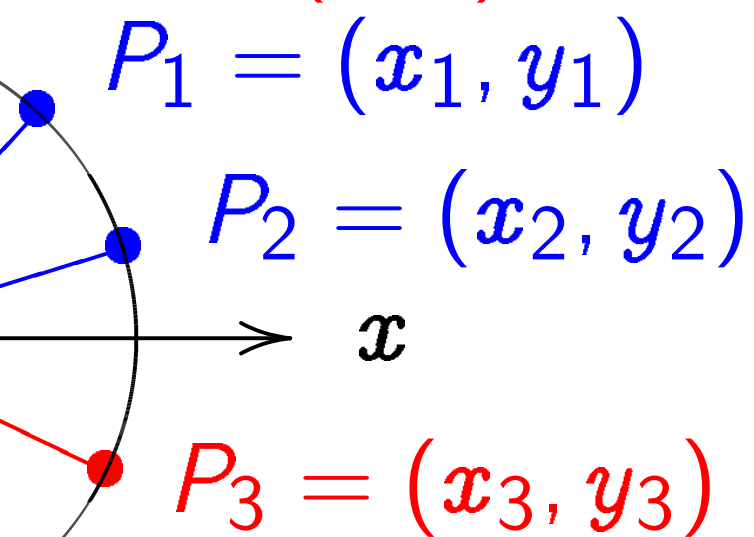
$= \{0, 1,$

with arit

e.g. $2 \cdot 5$

without sin, cos:

neutral = (0, 1)



coordinates for

formula

$y^2 = 1$:

and (x_2, y_2) is

$x_2 - x_1 x_2$.

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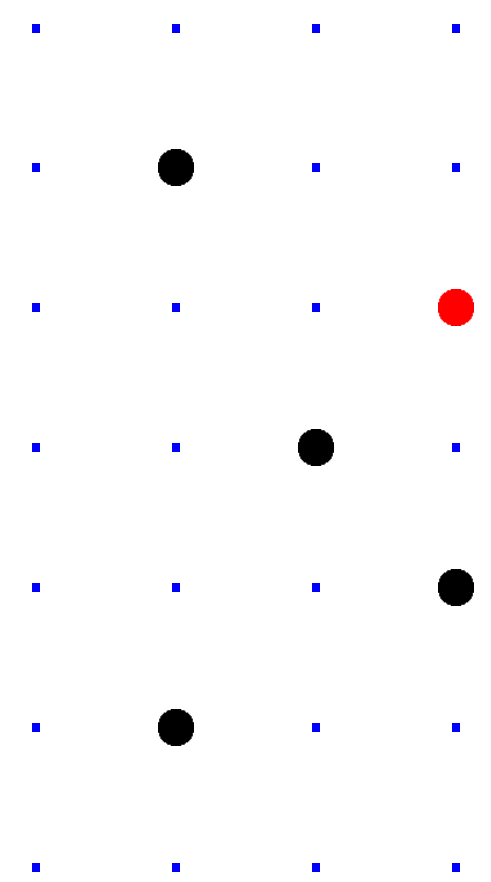
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Clocks over finite



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 $\{(x, y) \in \mathbf{F}_7 \times \mathbf{F}_7$
 Here $\mathbf{F}_7 = \{0, 1, 2, 3, -3, -$
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 with arithmetic mo
 e.g. $2 \cdot 5 = 3$ and

cos:

Examples of clock addition:

$$\begin{aligned}
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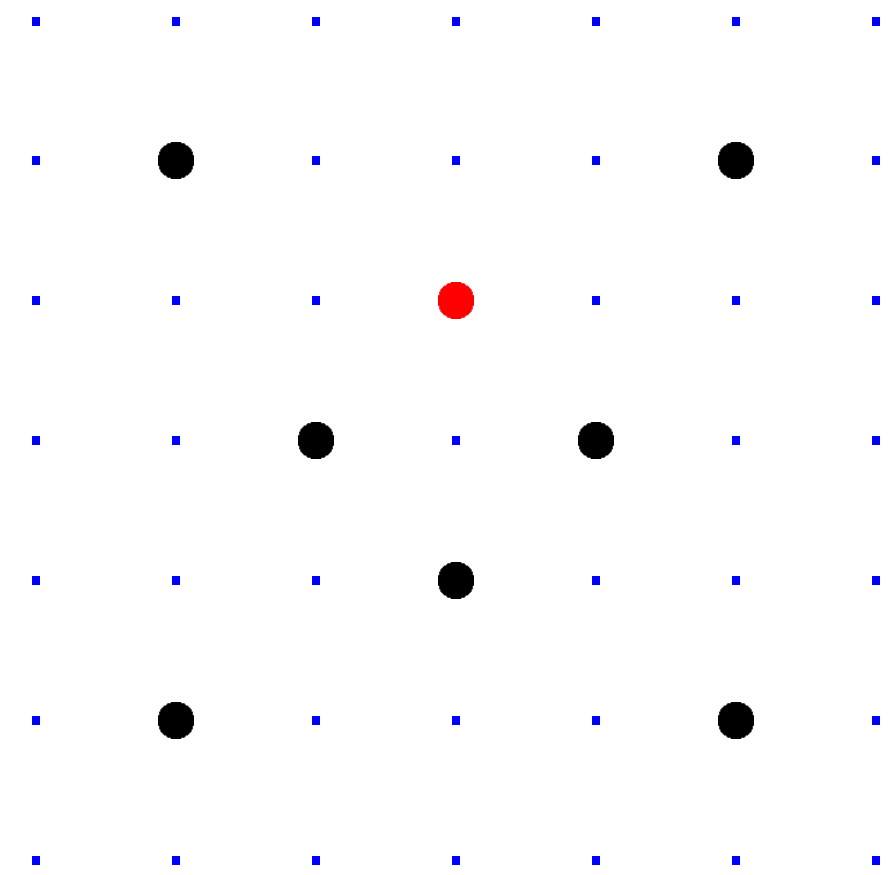
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Clocks over finite fields



Clock(\mathbf{F}_7) =

$$\{(x, y) \in \mathbf{F}_7 \times \mathbf{F}_7 : x^2 + y^2 = 1\}$$

Here $\mathbf{F}_7 = \{0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6\}$

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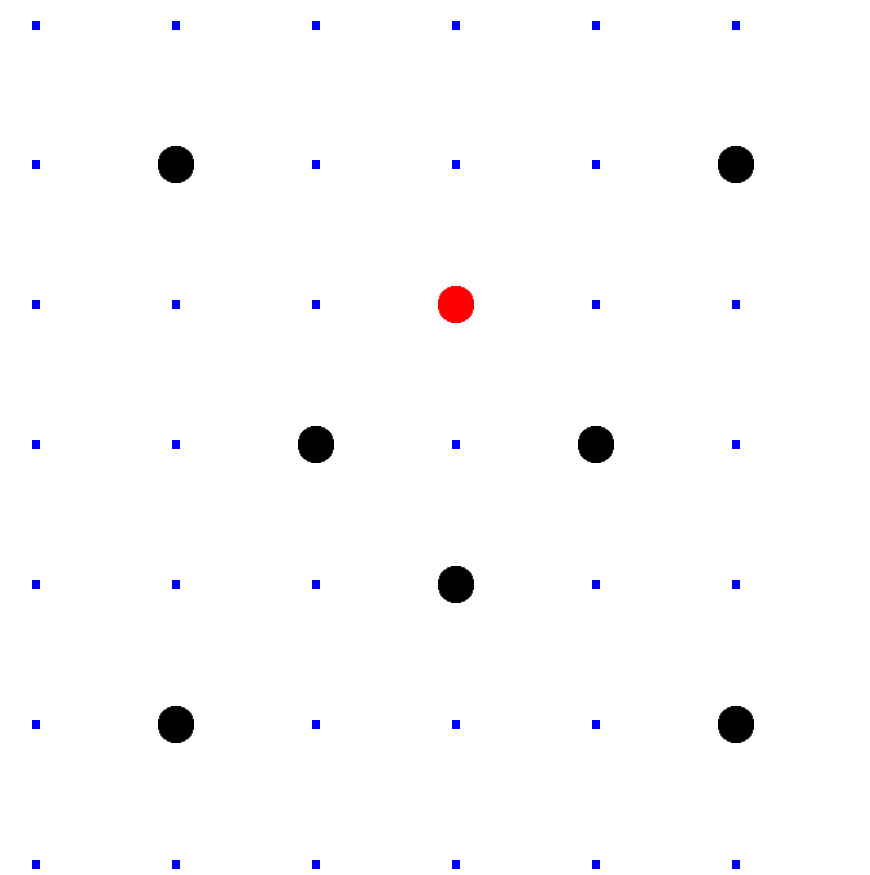
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– “5:00”

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$$2, -\sqrt{3/4}) = \text{“7:00”}.$$

– “9:00”

$$-\sqrt{3/4}) + (-1, 0)$$

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$$) = \left(\frac{24}{25}, \frac{7}{25} \right).$$

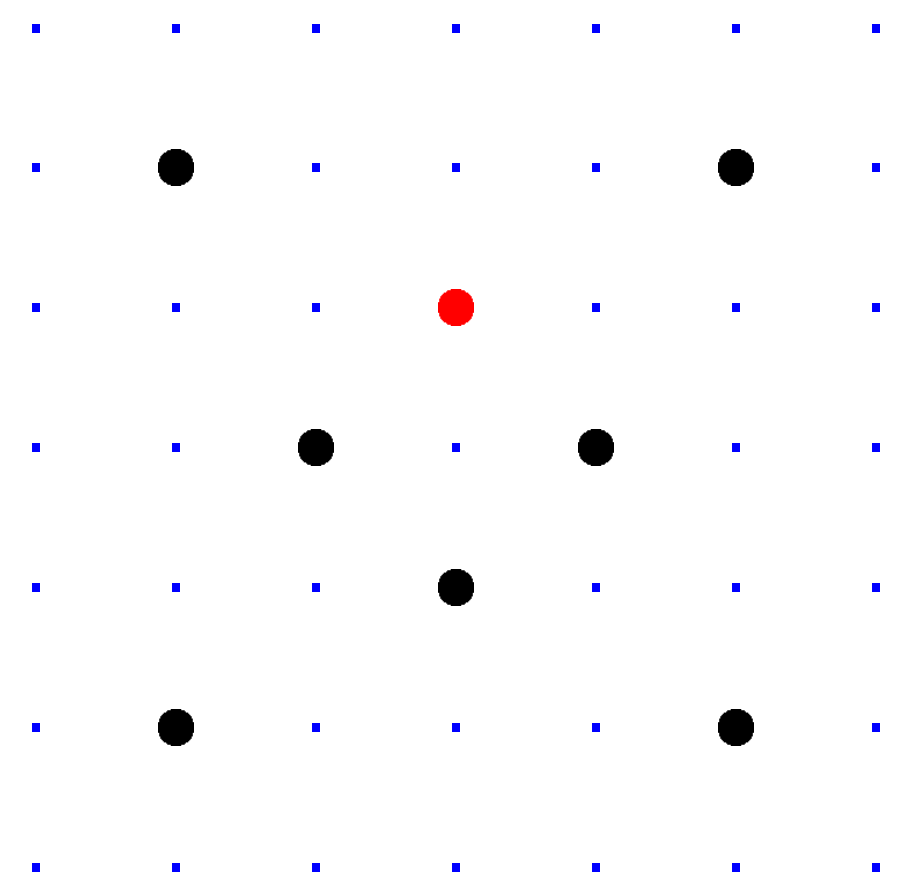
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Clocks over finite fields



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Larger e

Example

on Clock

2(1000, :

addition:

$$\left(\frac{1}{2}, -\sqrt{\frac{3}{4}}\right) = \text{"7:00"}.$$

$$+ (-1, 0) = \text{"2:00"}.$$

$$\left(\frac{7}{25}\right)$$

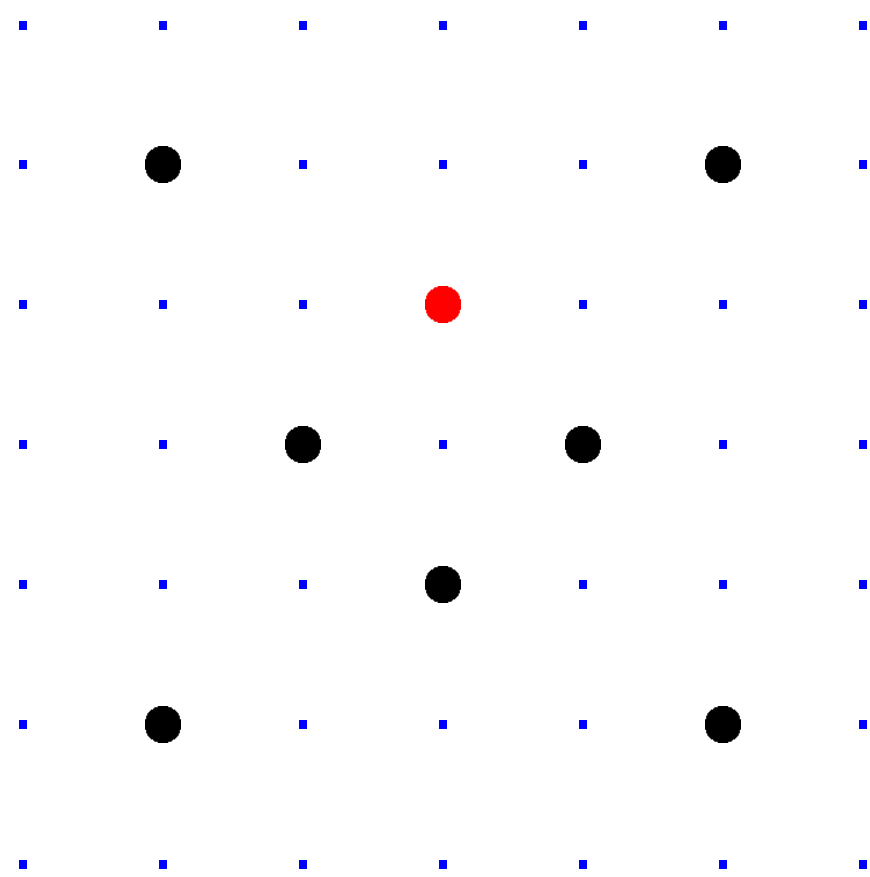
$$\left(\frac{-44}{125}\right)$$

$$\left(\frac{-527}{625}\right)$$

$$= (x_1, y_1).$$

$$(1) = (0, 1).$$

Clocks over finite fields



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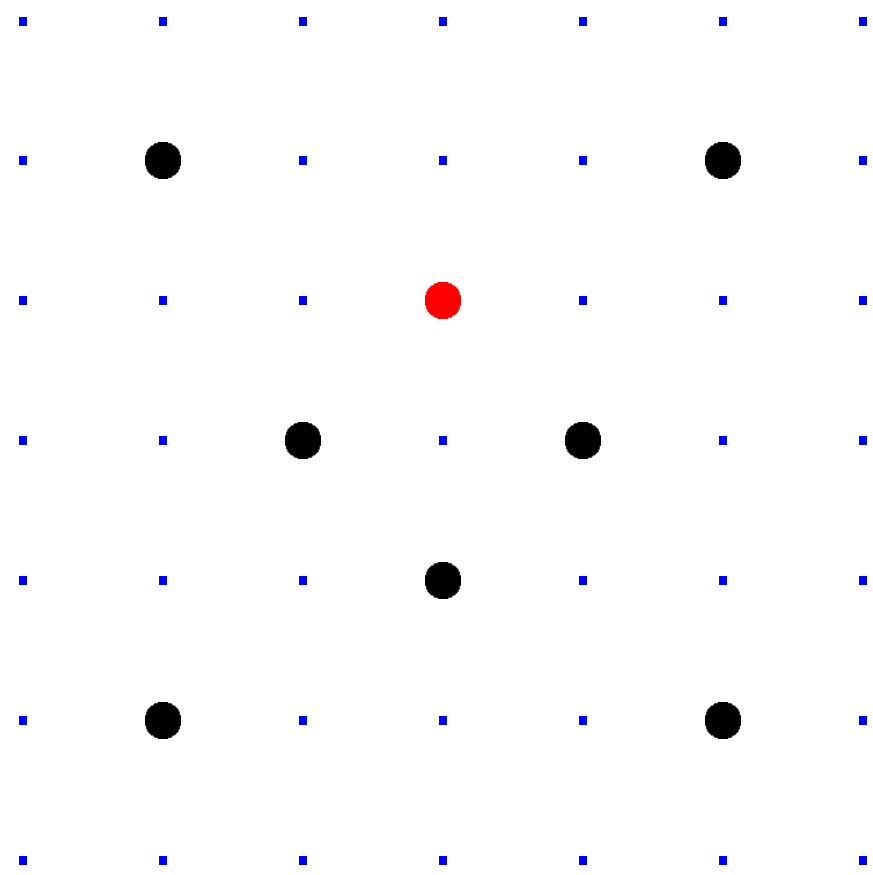
Larger example: C

Examples of addit

on $\text{Clock}(\mathbf{F}_{1000003})$

$$2(1000, 2) = (4000, 4)$$

Clocks over finite fields



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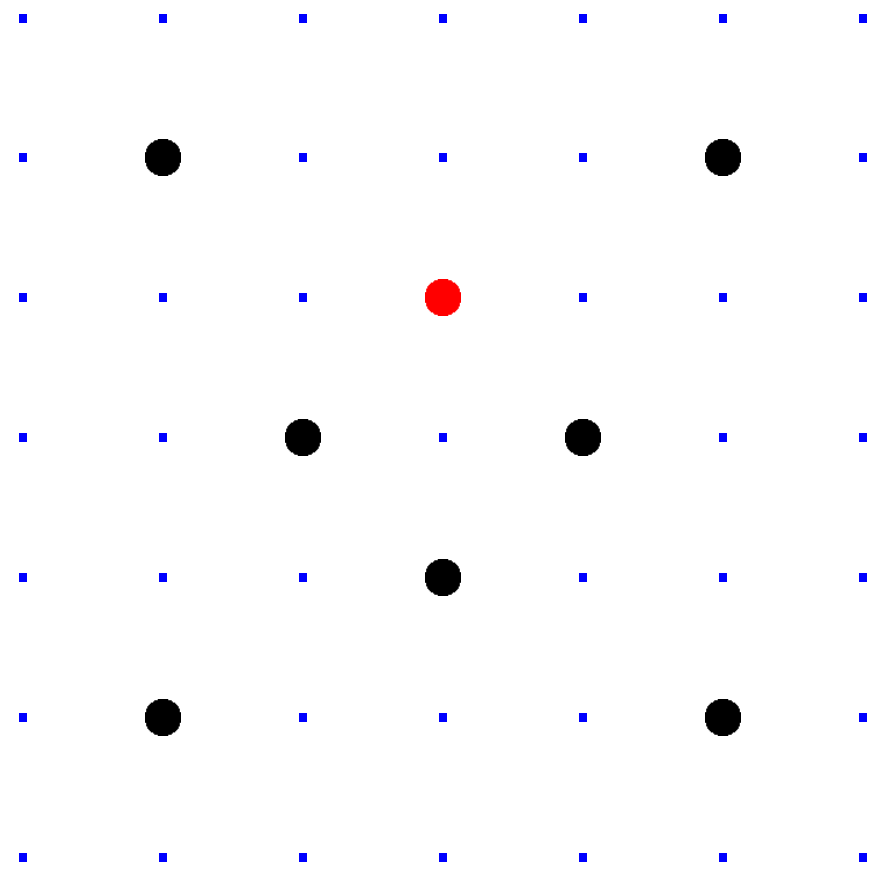
Larger example: $\text{Clock}(\mathbf{F}_{1000003})$

Examples of addition

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Clocks over finite fields



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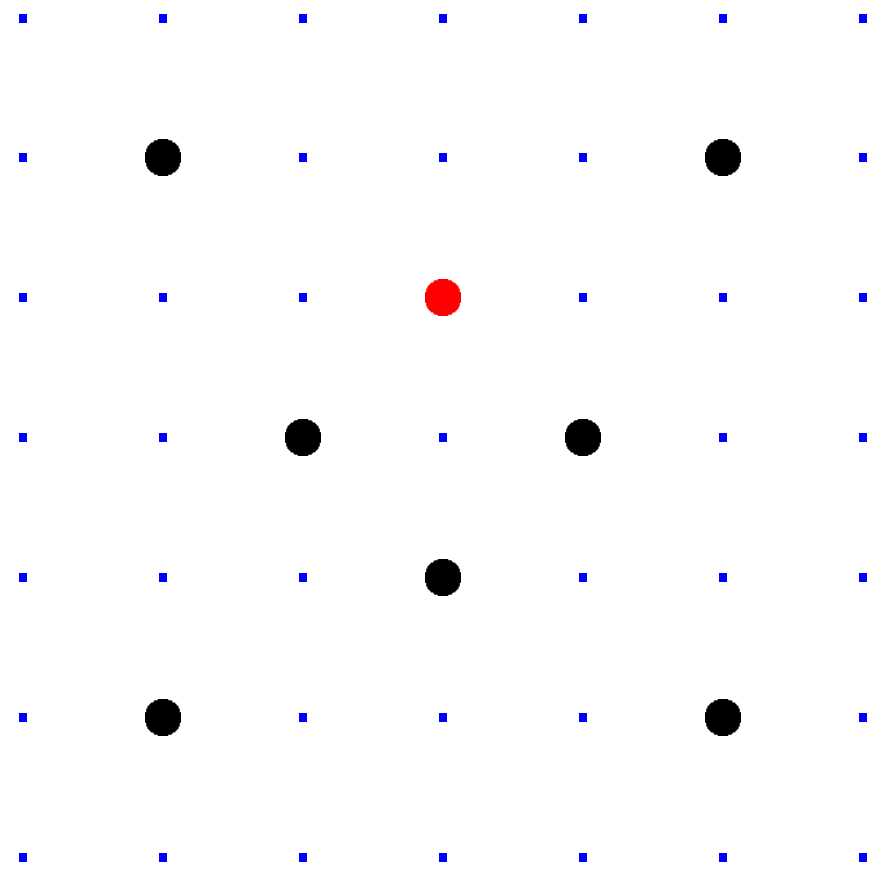
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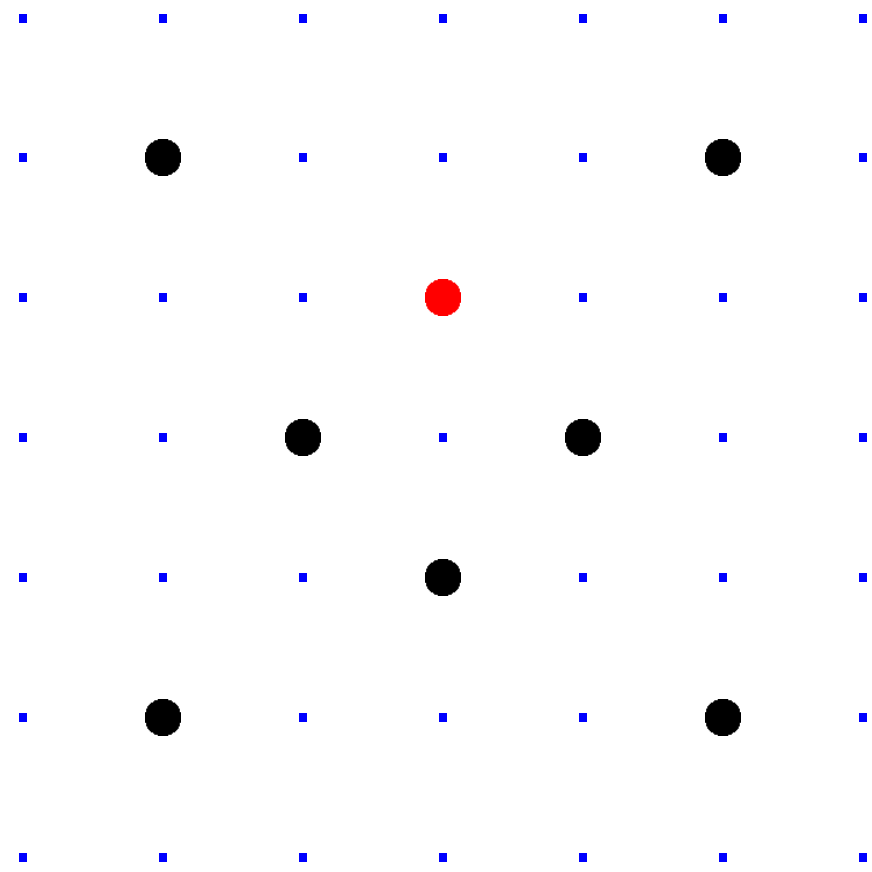
Examples of addition

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Clocks over finite fields



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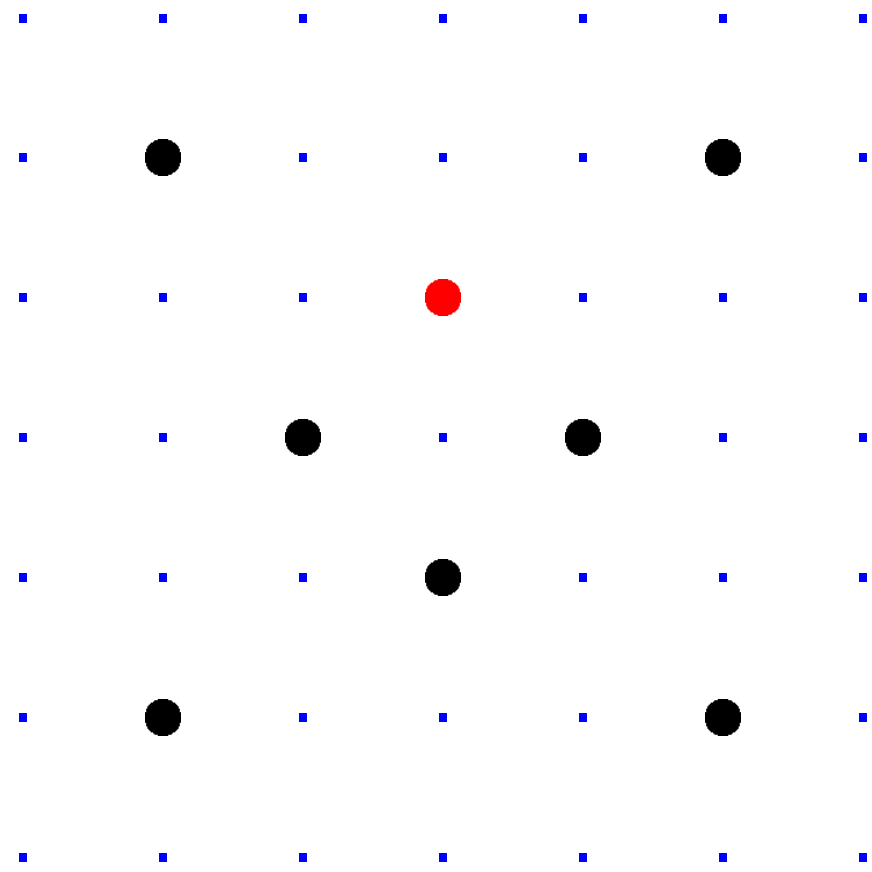
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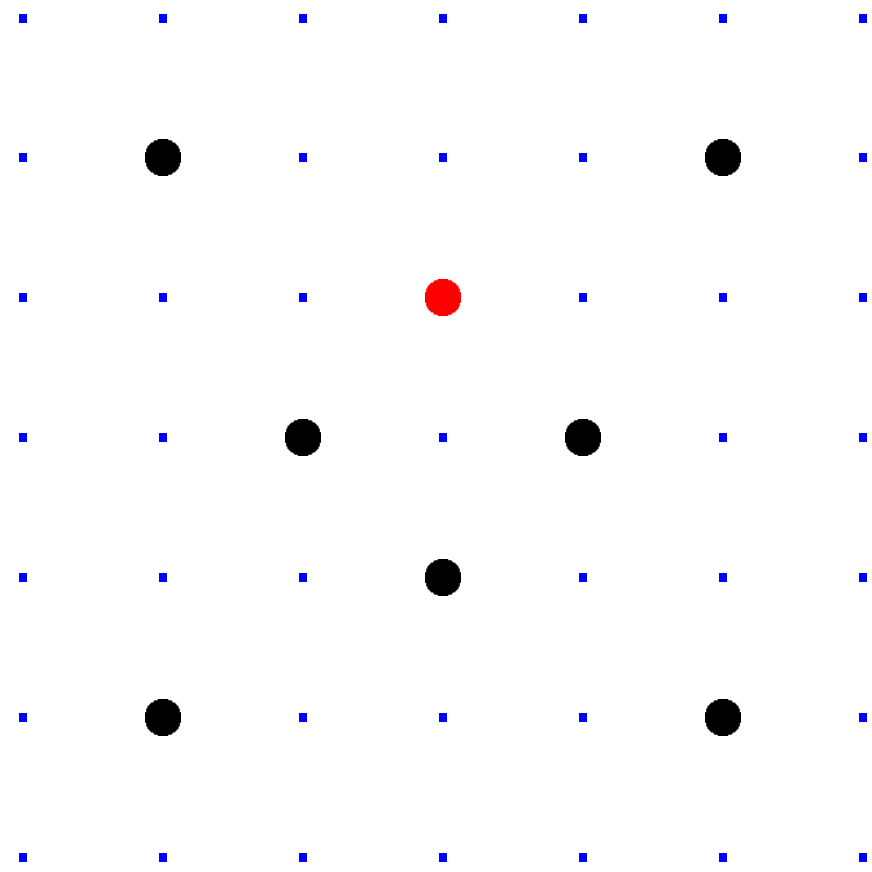
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Clocks over finite fields



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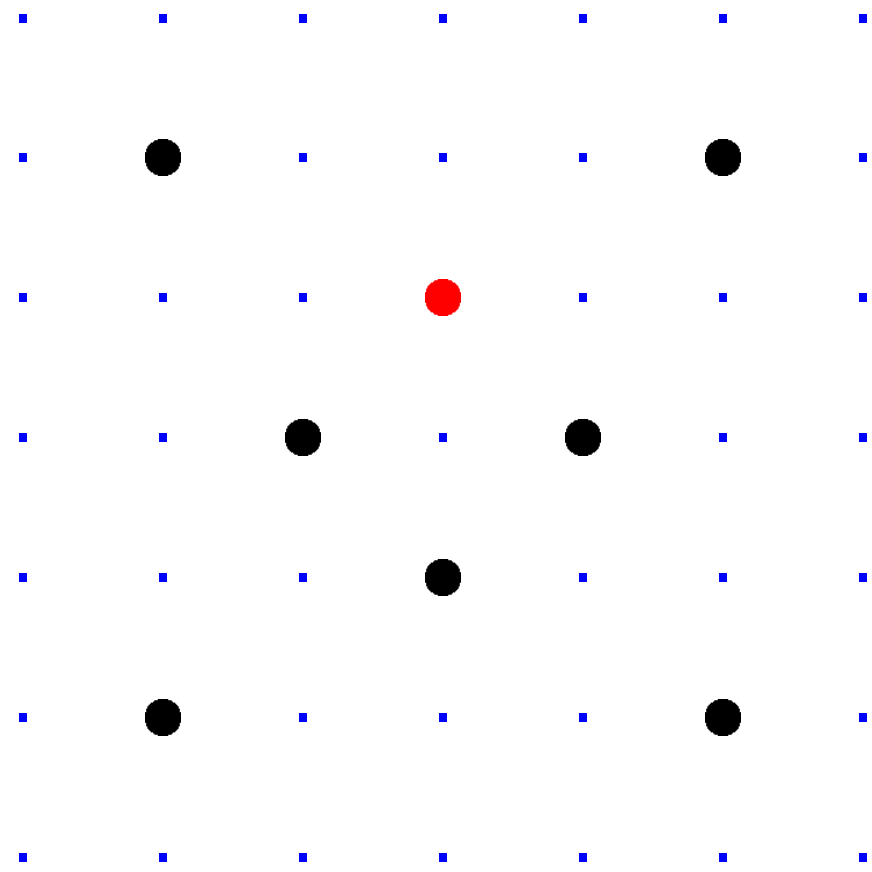
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“Scalar multiplication”

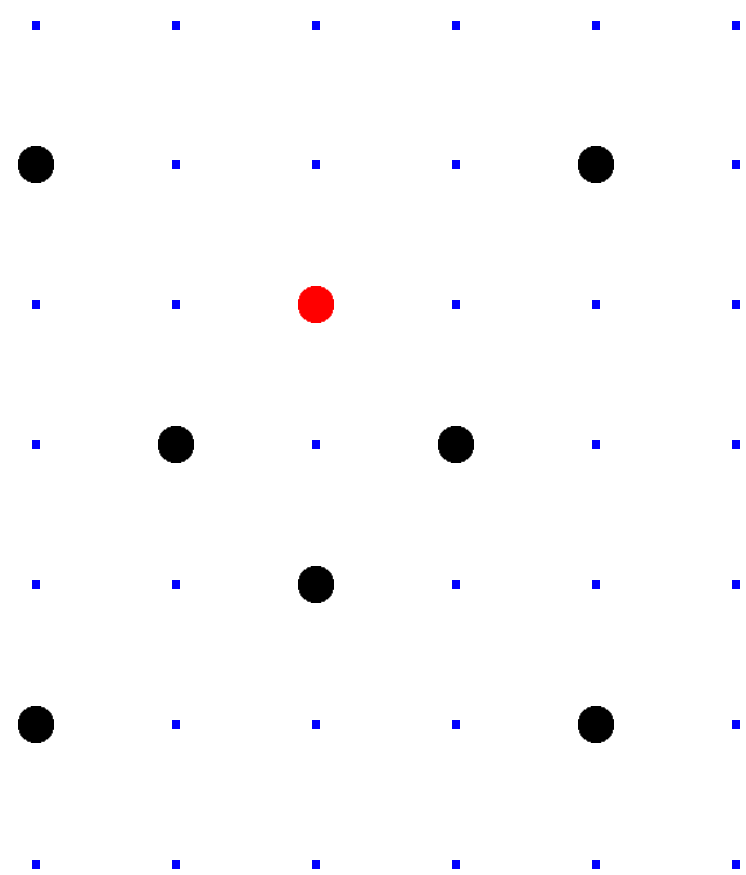
on a clock:

Given integer $n \geq 0$

and clock point (x, y) ,

compute $n(x, y)$.

over finite fields



$(7) =$
 $\{ (x, y) \in \mathbf{F}_7 \times \mathbf{F}_7 : x^2 + y^2 = 1 \}$.
 $= \{0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6\}$
 $\{2, 3, -3, -2, -1\}$
 arithmetic modulo 7.
 $5 = 3$ and $3/2 = 5$ in \mathbf{F}_7 .

Larger example: Clock($\mathbf{F}_{1000003}$).

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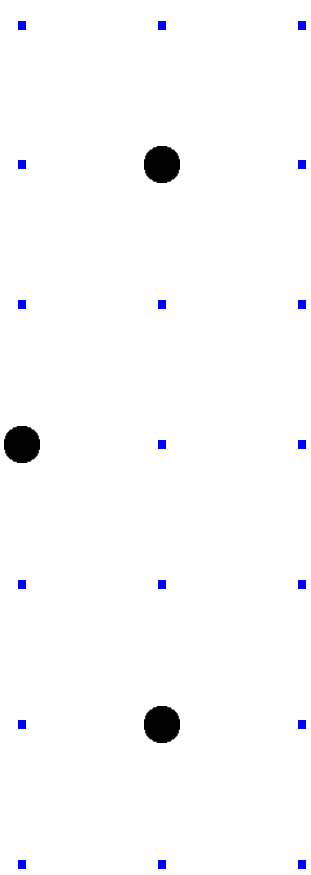
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$$\{x^2 + y^2 = 1\}.$$

{3, 4, 5, 6}

{-2, -1}

modulo 7.

$$3/2 = 5 \text{ in } \mathbf{F}_7.$$

Larger example: Clock($\mathbf{F}_{1000003}$).

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“Binary method”:

If n is even, compute

by doubling $(n/2)$

Otherwise compute

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This is very fast.

Larger example: $\text{Clock}(\mathbf{F}_{1000003})$.

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compute $n(x, y)$.

“Binary method”:

If n is even, compute $n(x, y)$
by doubling $(n/2)(x, y)$.

Otherwise compute $n(x, y)$
by adding (x, y) to $(n - 1)(x, y)$.

This is very fast.

$= 1\}$.

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Larger example: $\text{Clock}(\mathbf{F}_{1000003})$.

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This is very fast.

But figuring out n

given (x, y) and $n(x, y)$

is much more difficult.

With 30 clock additions

we computed

$$n(1000, 2) = (947472, 736284)$$

for some 6-digit n .

Can you figure out n ?

example: $\text{Clock}(\mathbf{F}_{1000003})$.

es of addition

$\text{Clock}(\mathbf{F}_{1000003})$:

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Clock cryptography

Standardize a large

and some $(x, y) \in$

Alice chooses big s

Computes her pub

Bob chooses big s

Computes his pub

Alice computes $a(x,$

Bob computes $b(a(x,$

They use this shar

to encrypt with A

Warning #1:

Many choices of p

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“Binary method” :

If n is even, compute $n(x, y)$
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for some 6-digit n .

Can you figure out n ?

Clock cryptography

Standardize a large prime p
and some $(x, y) \in \text{Clock}(\mathbf{F}_p)$

Alice chooses big secret a .

Computes her public key $a(x, y)$.

Bob chooses big secret b .

Computes his public key $b(x, y)$.

Alice computes $a(b(x, y))$.

Bob computes $b(a(x, y))$.

They use this shared secret
to encrypt with AES-GCM e

Warning #1:

Many choices of p are bad!

“Binary method” :

If n is even, compute $n(x, y)$
by doubling $(n/2)(x, y)$.
Otherwise compute $n(x, y)$
by adding (x, y) to $(n - 1)(x, y)$.
This is very fast.

But figuring out n
given (x, y) and $n(x, y)$
is much more difficult.

With 30 clock additions
we computed
 $n(1000, 2) = (947472, 736284)$
for some 6-digit n .
Can you figure out n ?

Clock cryptography

Standardize a large prime p
and some $(x, y) \in \text{Clock}(\mathbf{F}_p)$.
Alice chooses big secret a .
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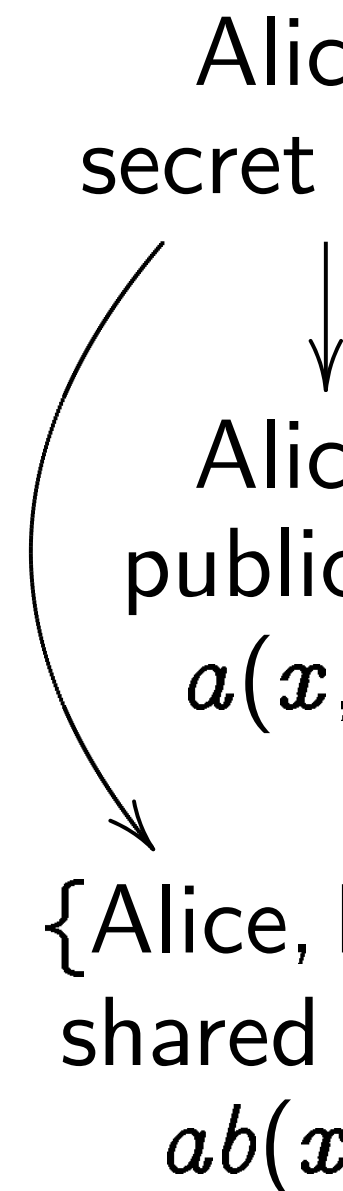
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Clock cryptography

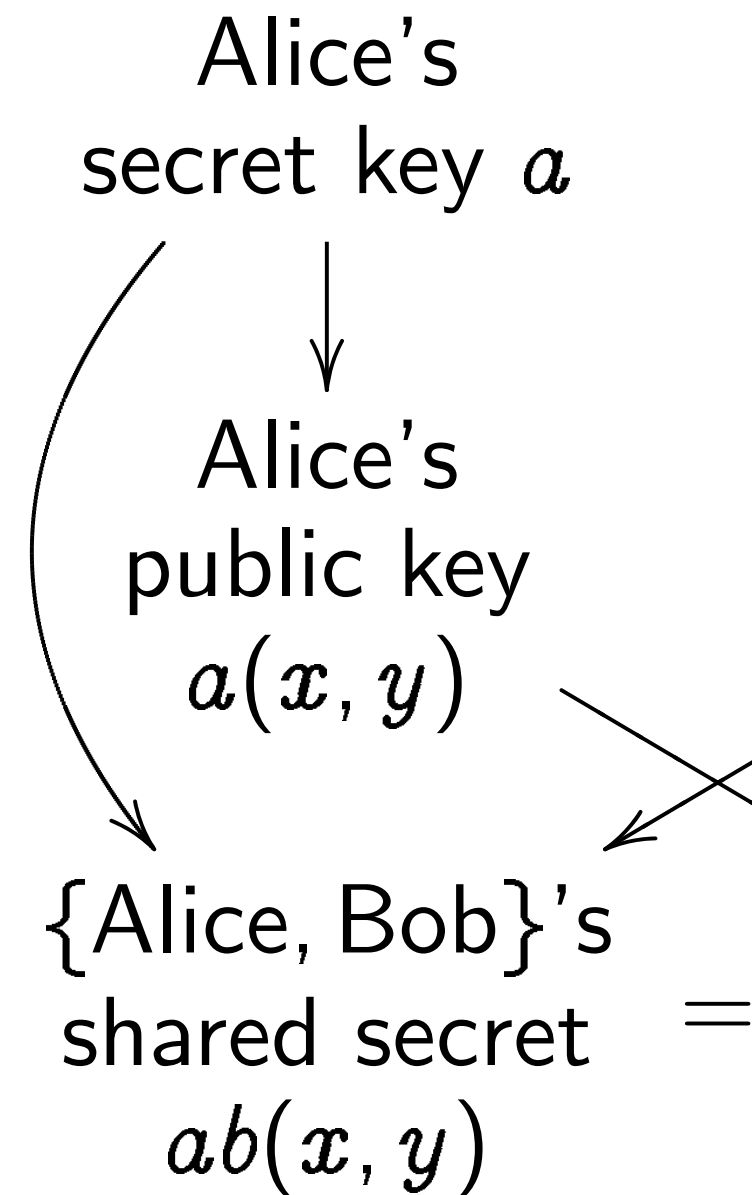
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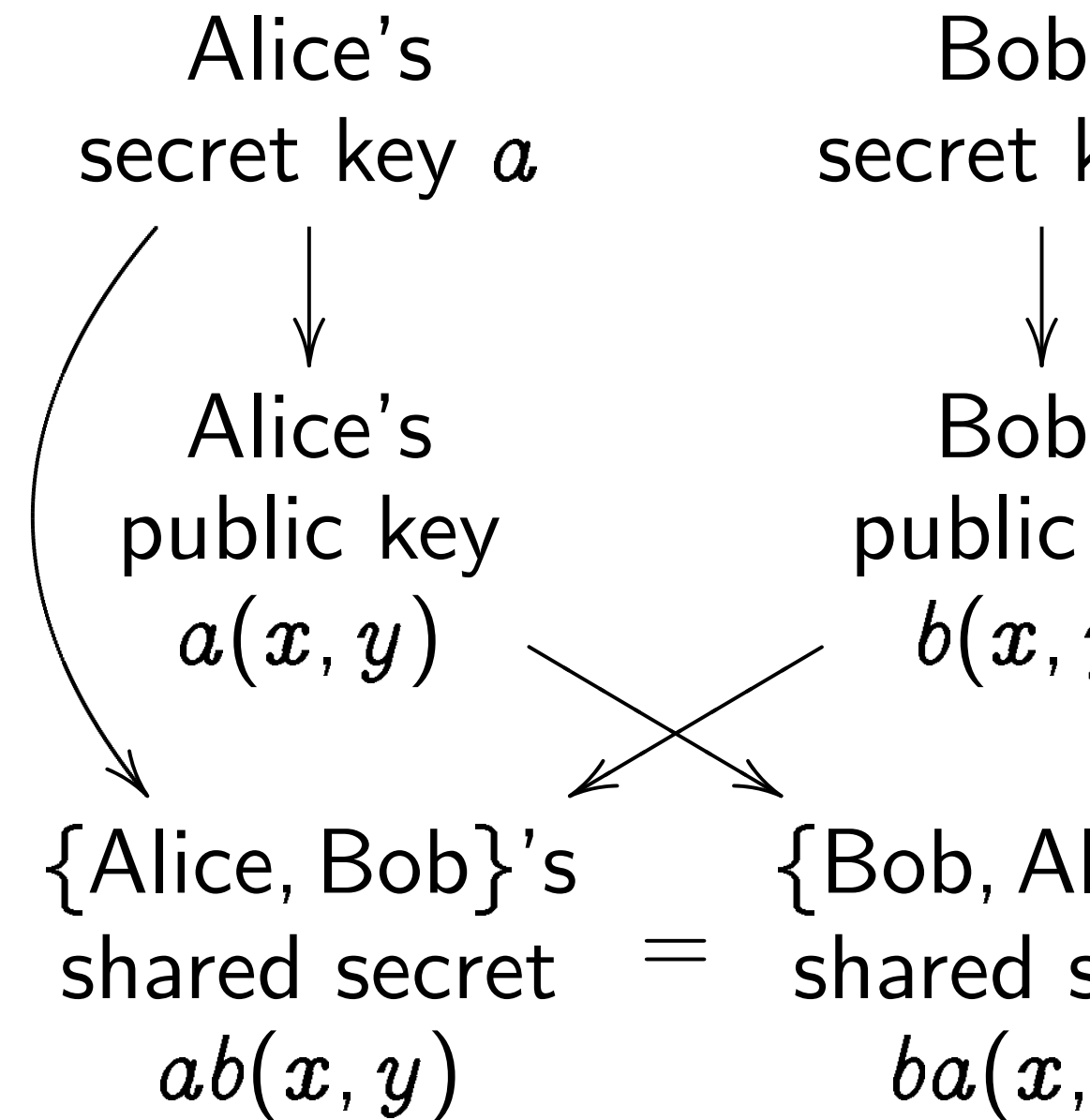
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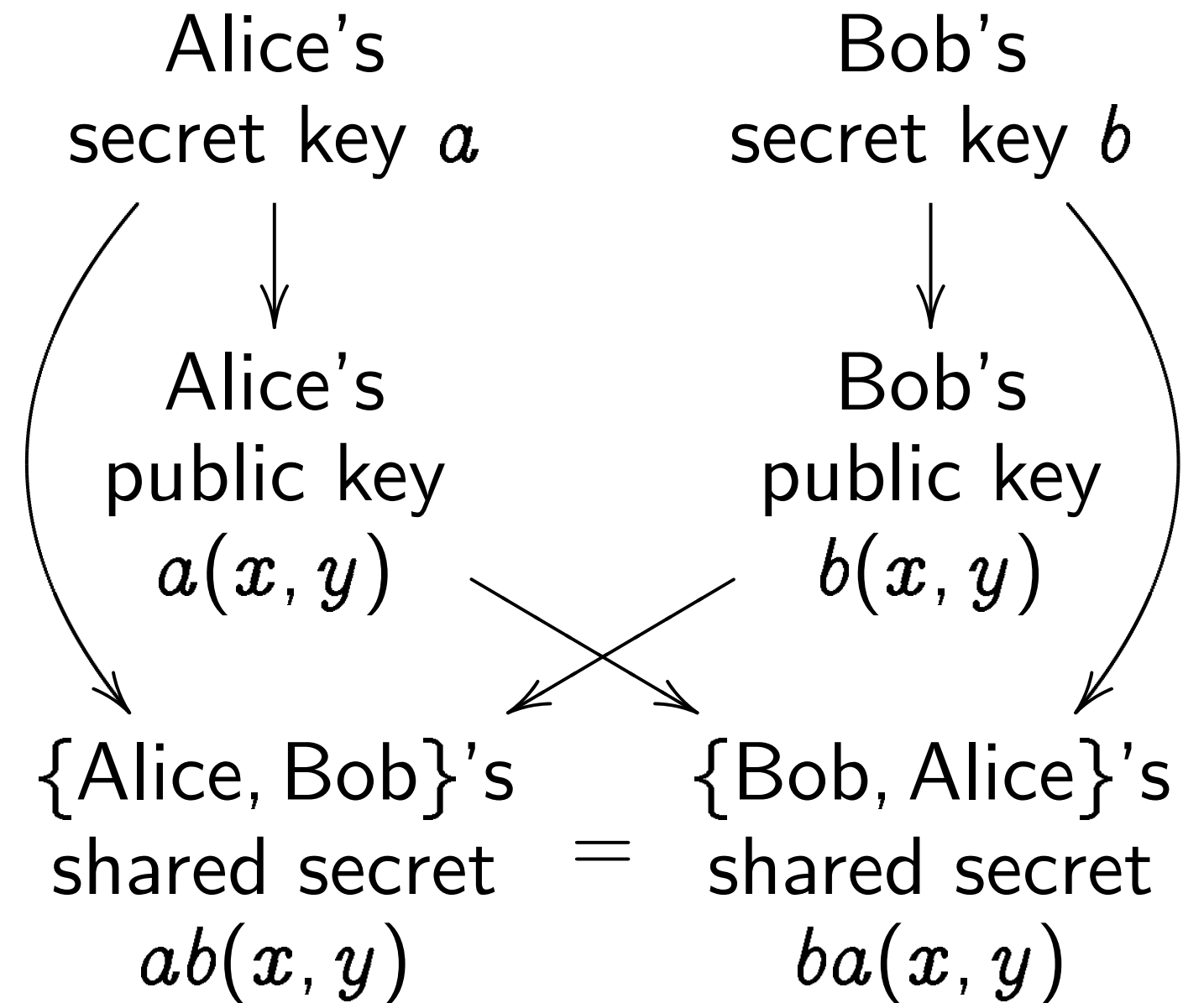
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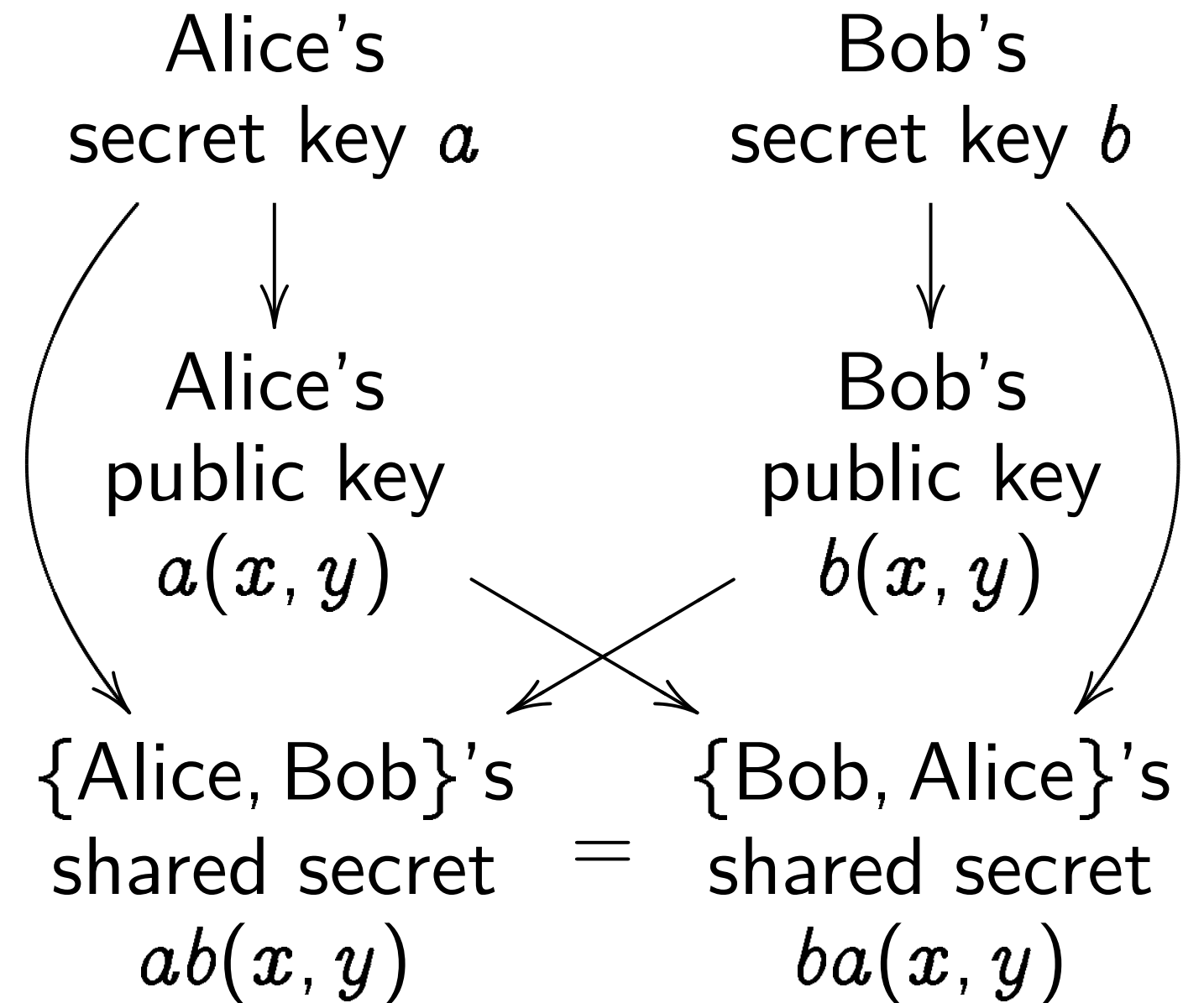
Alice computes $a(b(x, y))$.

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They use this shared secret
to encrypt with AES-GCM etc.

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Warning #2:

Clocks aren't elliptic!

Can use index calculus
to attack clock cryptography.

To match RSA-3072 security
need $p \approx 2^{1536}$.

Cryptography

Choose a large prime p
Choose $(x, y) \in \text{Clock}(\mathbf{F}_p)$.

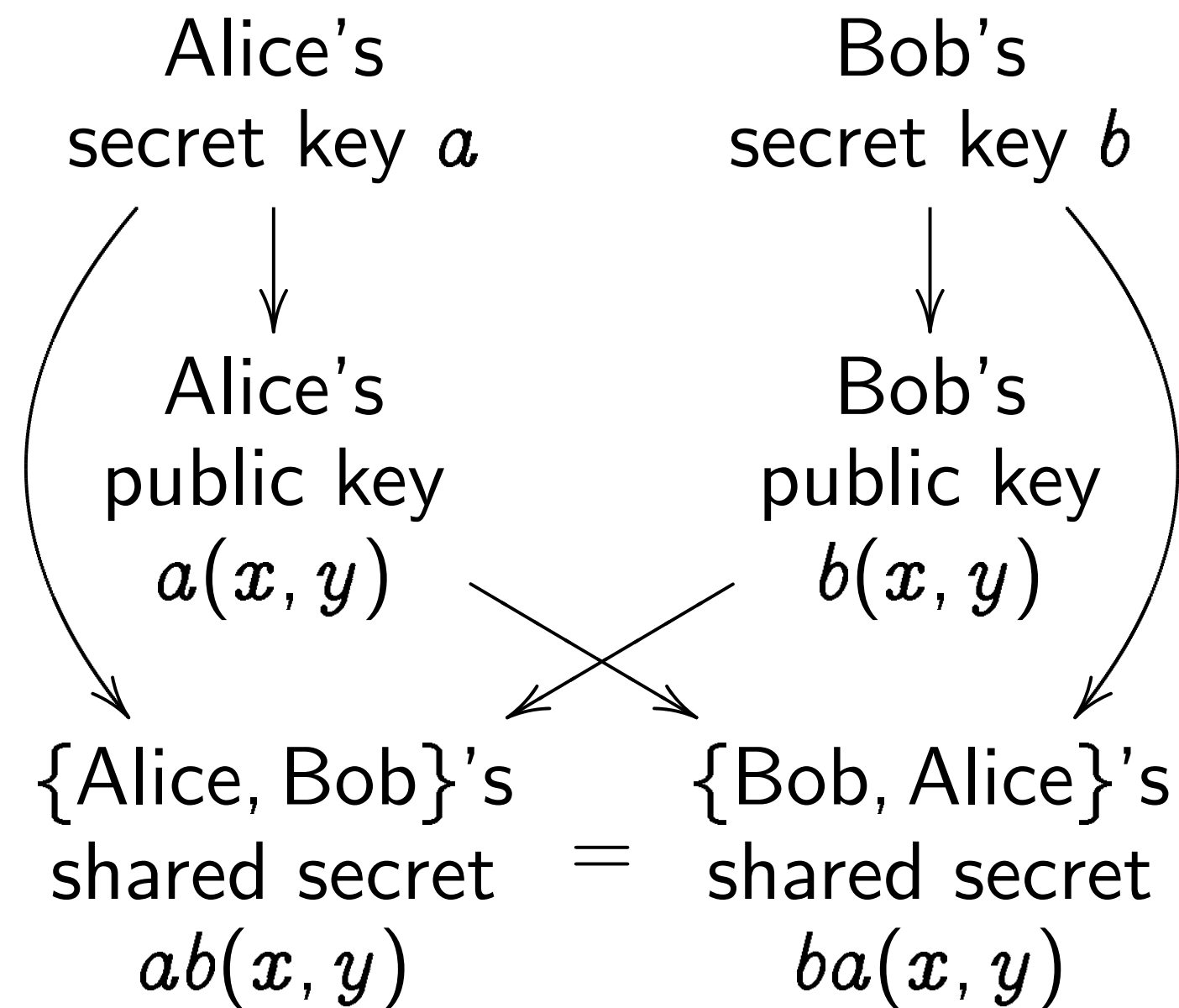
Alice chooses big secret a .
Alice publishes her public key $a(x, y)$.

Bob chooses big secret b .
Bob publishes his public key $b(x, y)$.

Alice computes $a(b(x, y))$.
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Both have this shared secret
Encrypt with AES-GCM etc.

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Timing a

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Attacker
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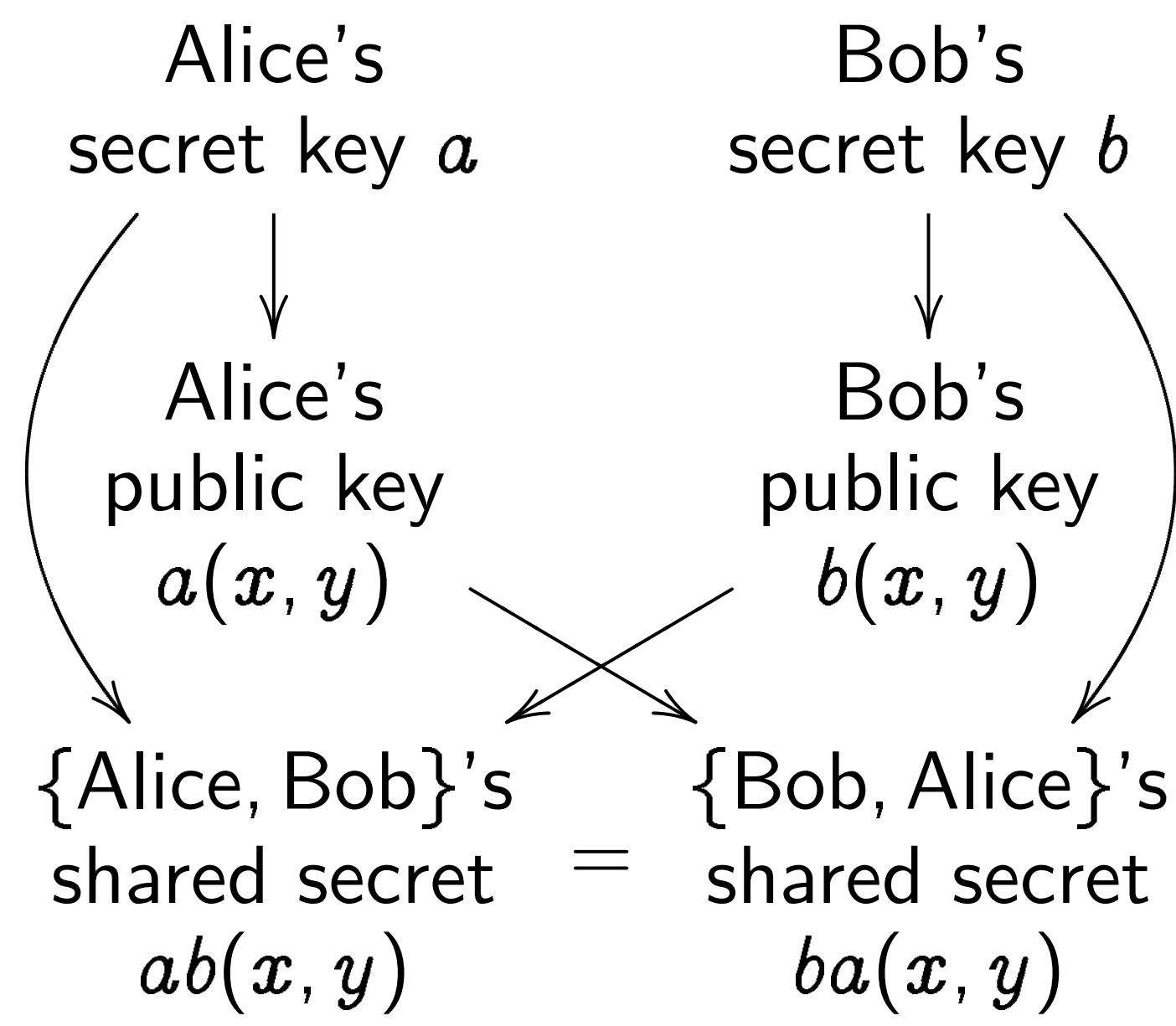
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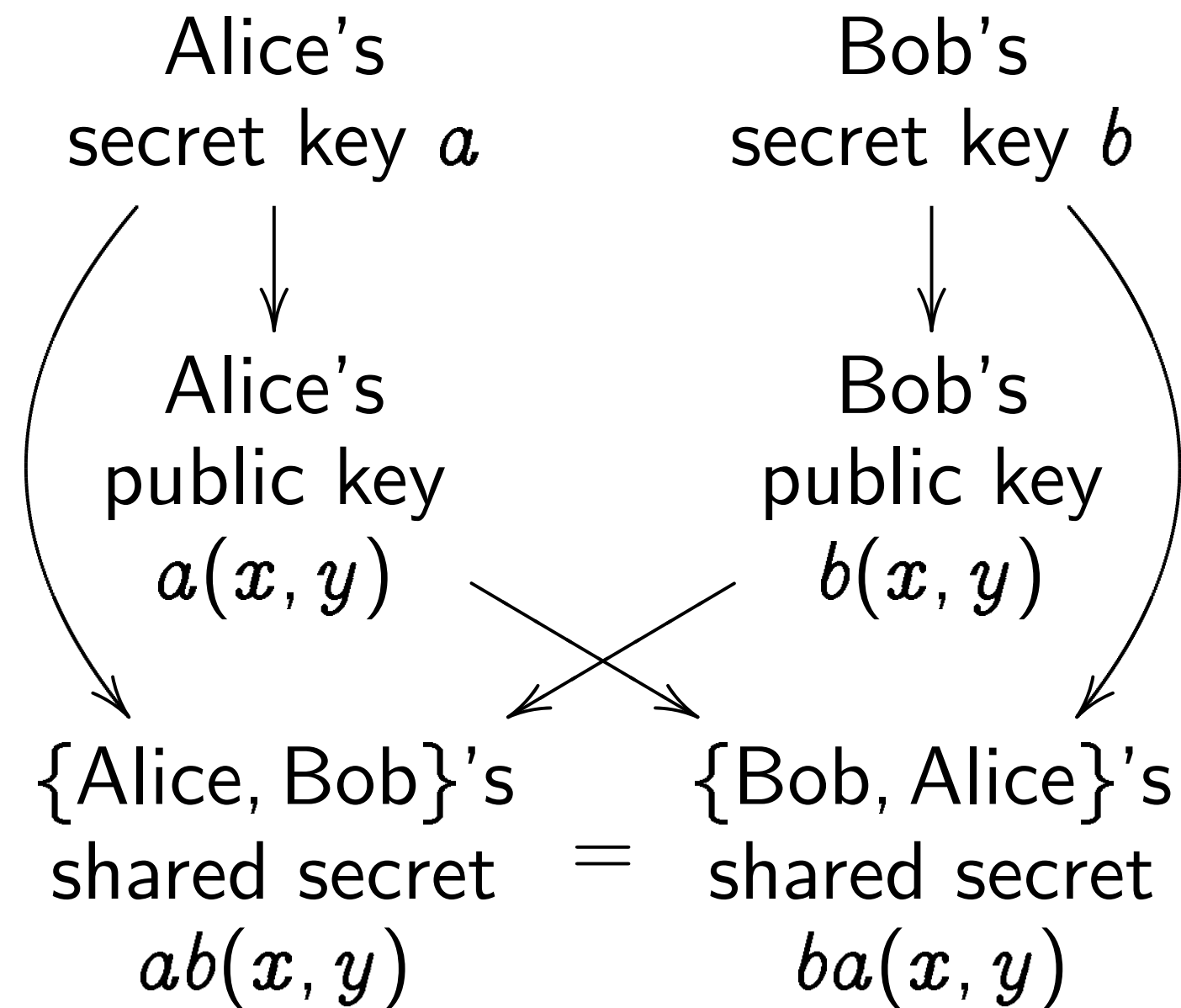
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Timing attacks

Attacker sees more
 $a(x, y)$ and $b(x, y)$
 Attacker sees *time*
 Alice to compute
 Often attacker can
 time for *each operation*
 performed by Alice
 not just total time
 This reveals secret
 Fix: **constant-time**
 performing same
 no matter what so



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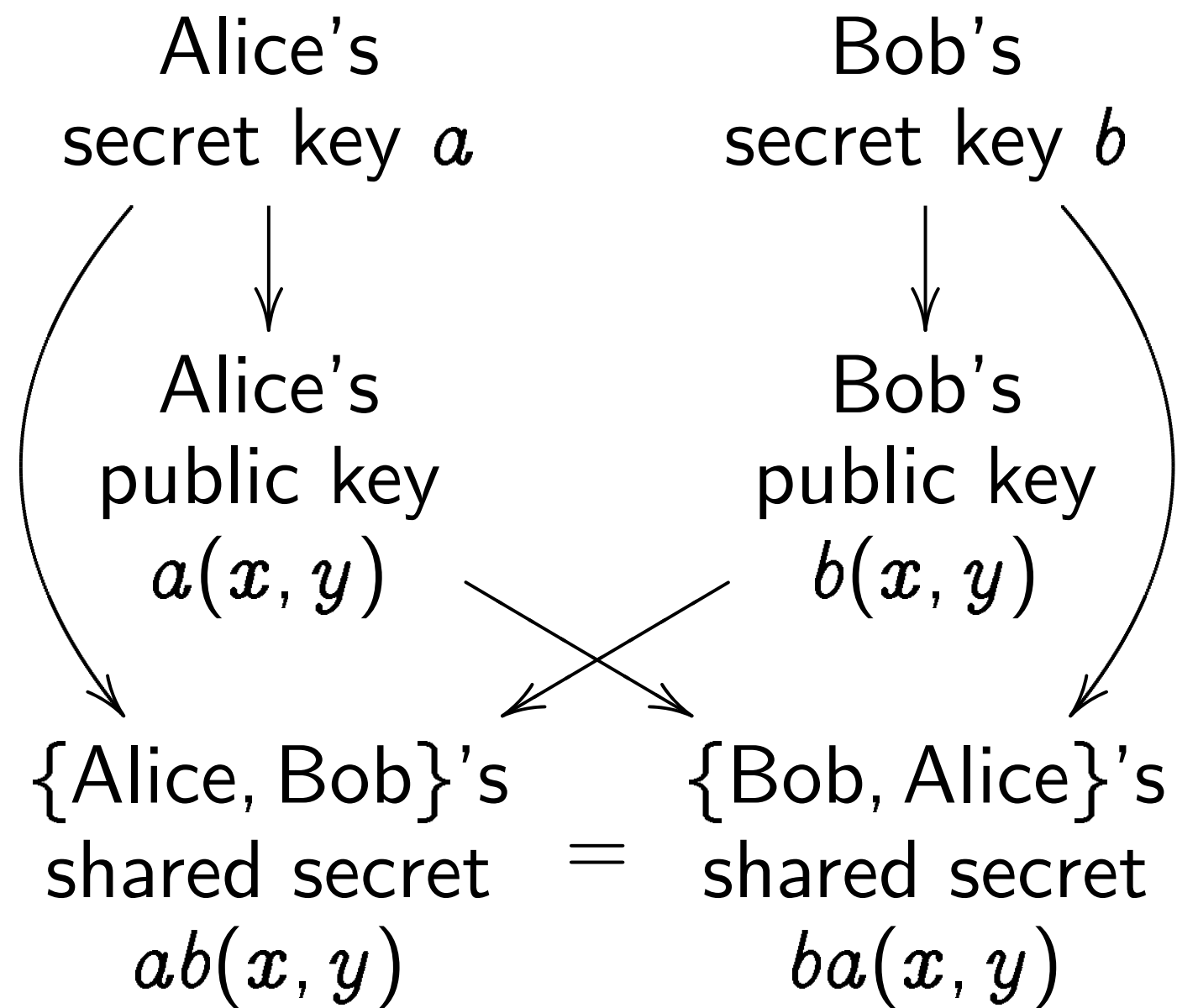
Attacker sees more than $a(x, y)$ and $b(x, y)$.

Attacker sees *time* for Alice to compute $a(b(x, y))$.

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Fix: **constant-time** code, performing same operations no matter what scalar is.



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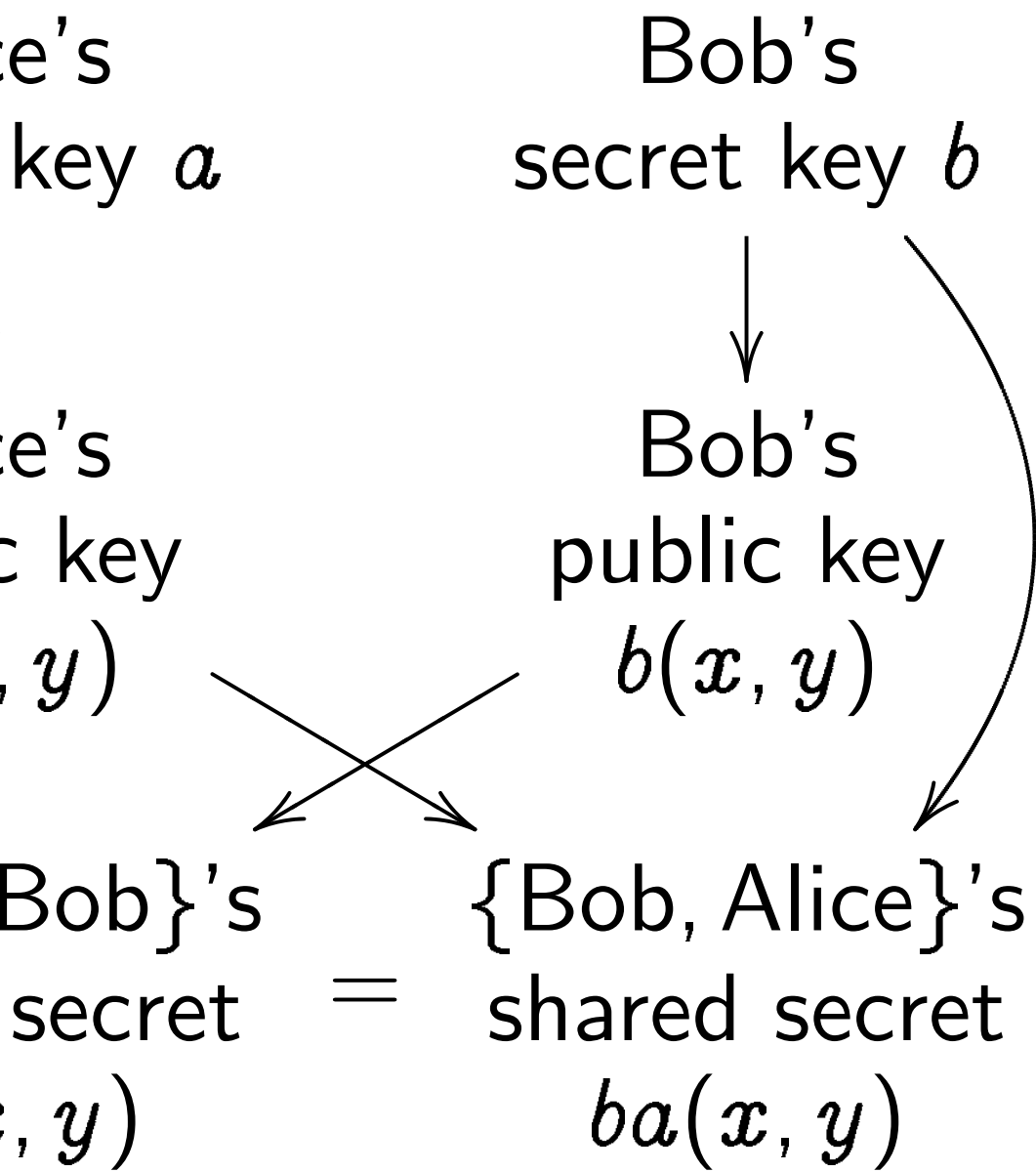
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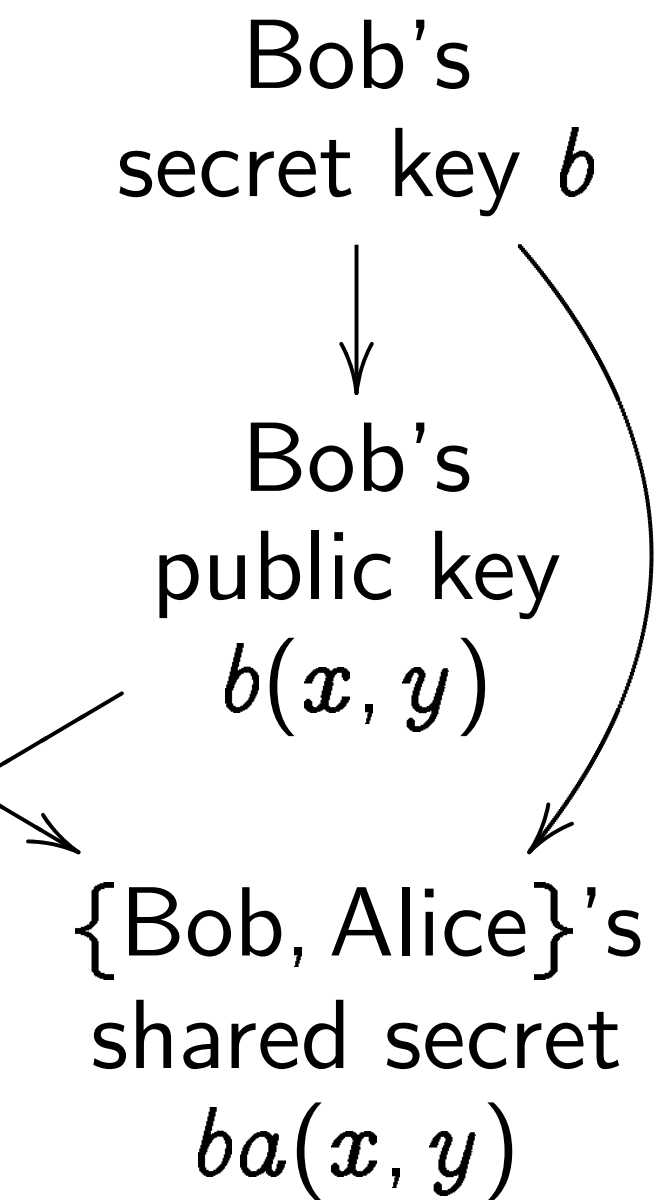
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Addition

$x^2 + y^2$
 Sum of
 $((x_1y_2 +$
 $(y_1y_2 -$



tic!
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yptography.
72 security

Timing attacks

Attacker sees more than $a(x, y)$ and $b(x, y)$.

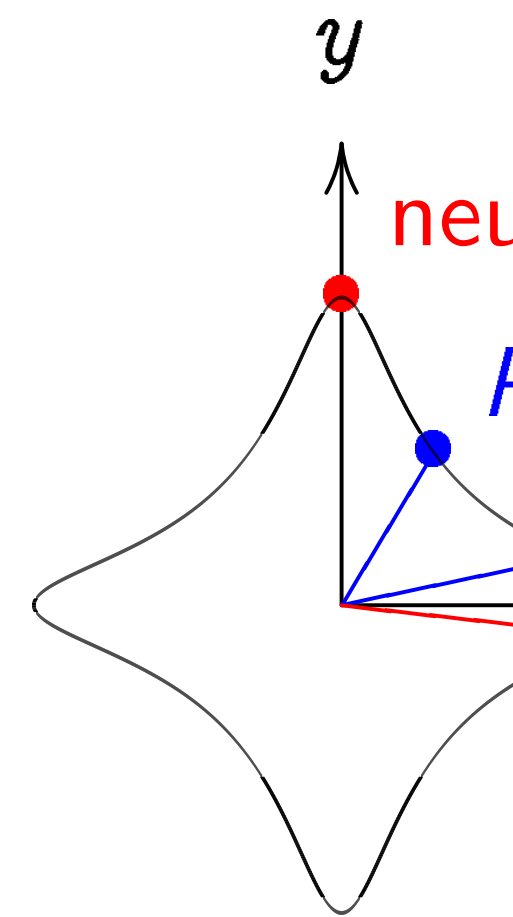
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Addition on an ellipse



$$x^2 + y^2 = 1 - 30a$$

Sum of (x_1, y_1) and

$$((x_1 y_2 + y_1 x_2) / (1 -$$

$$(y_1 y_2 - x_1 x_2) / (1 -$$

Timing attacks

Attacker sees more than $a(x, y)$ and $b(x, y)$.

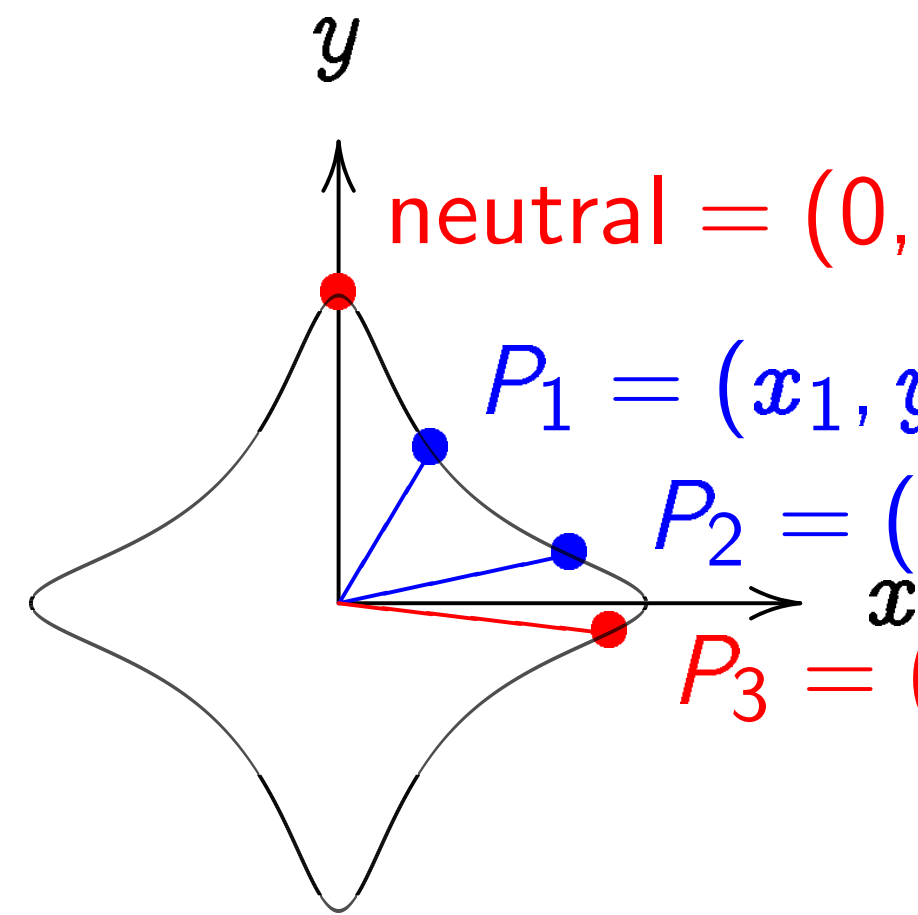
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Addition on an elliptic curve



$$x^2 + y^2 = 1 - 30x^2y^2.$$

Sum of (x_1, y_1) and (x_2, y_2)

$$\left(\frac{x_1y_2 + y_1x_2}{1 - 30x_1x_2y_1y_2} \right)$$

$$\left(\frac{y_1y_2 - x_1x_2}{1 + 30x_1x_2y_1y_2} \right)$$

Timing attacks

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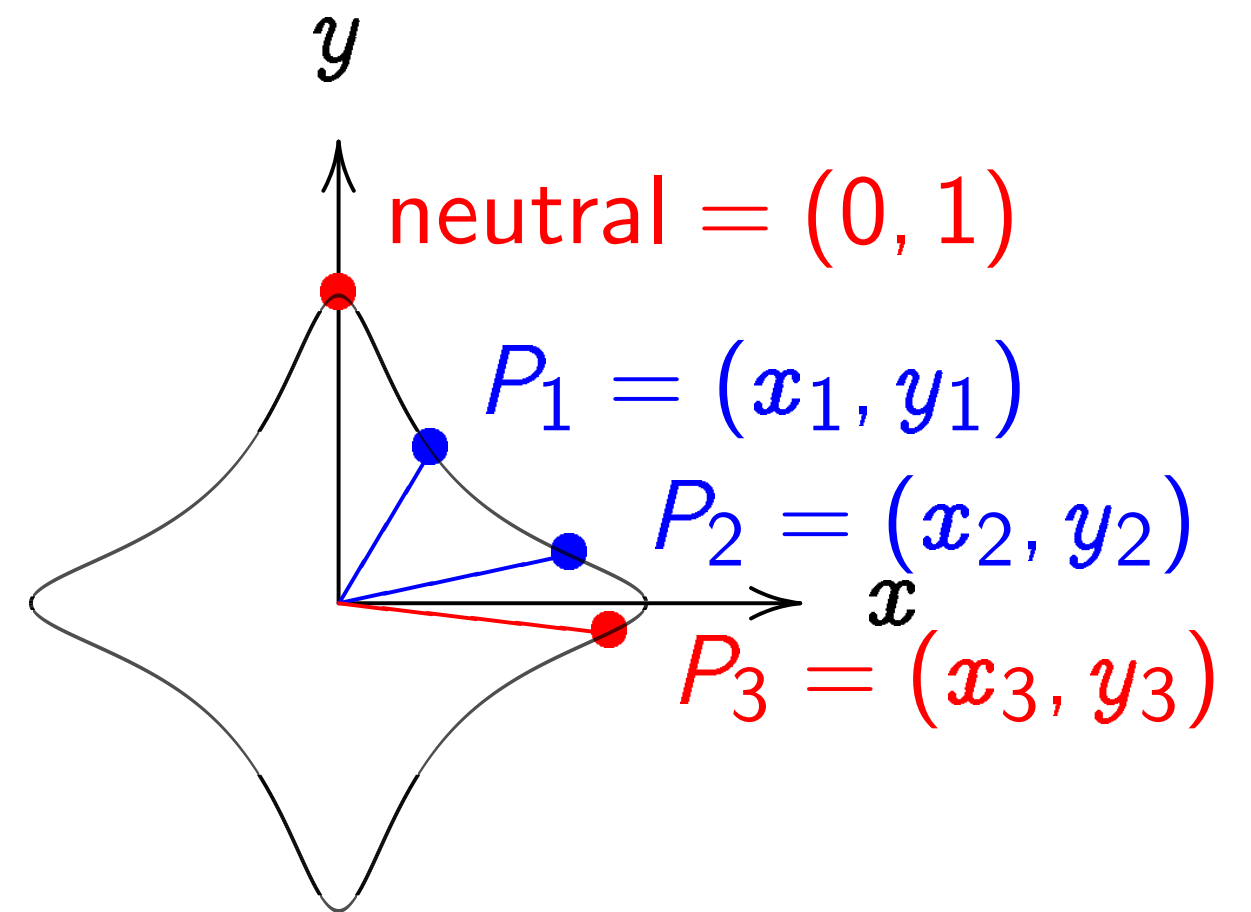
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Addition on an elliptic curve



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Sum of (x_1, y_1) and (x_2, y_2) is
 $((x_1y_2 + y_1x_2)/(1 - 30x_1x_2y_1y_2),$
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attacks

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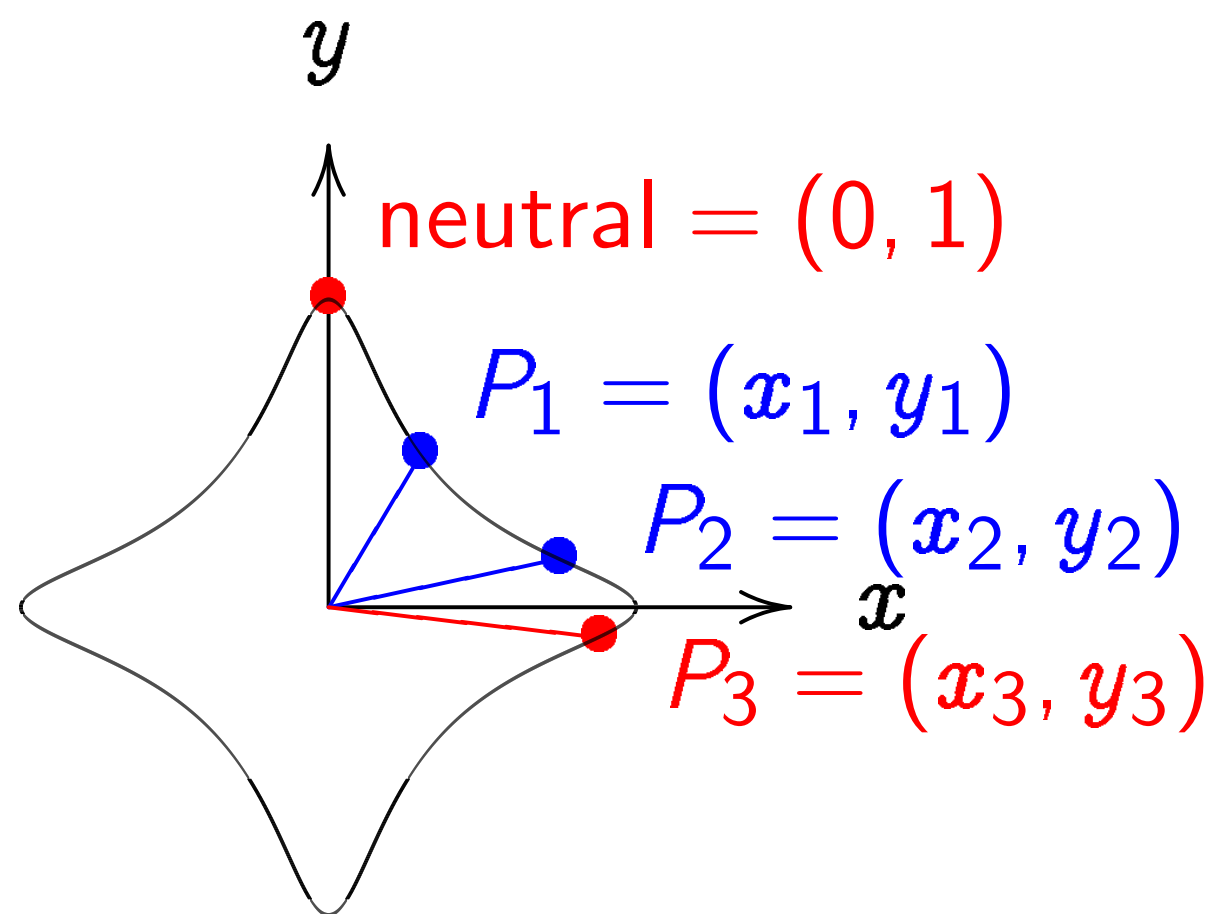
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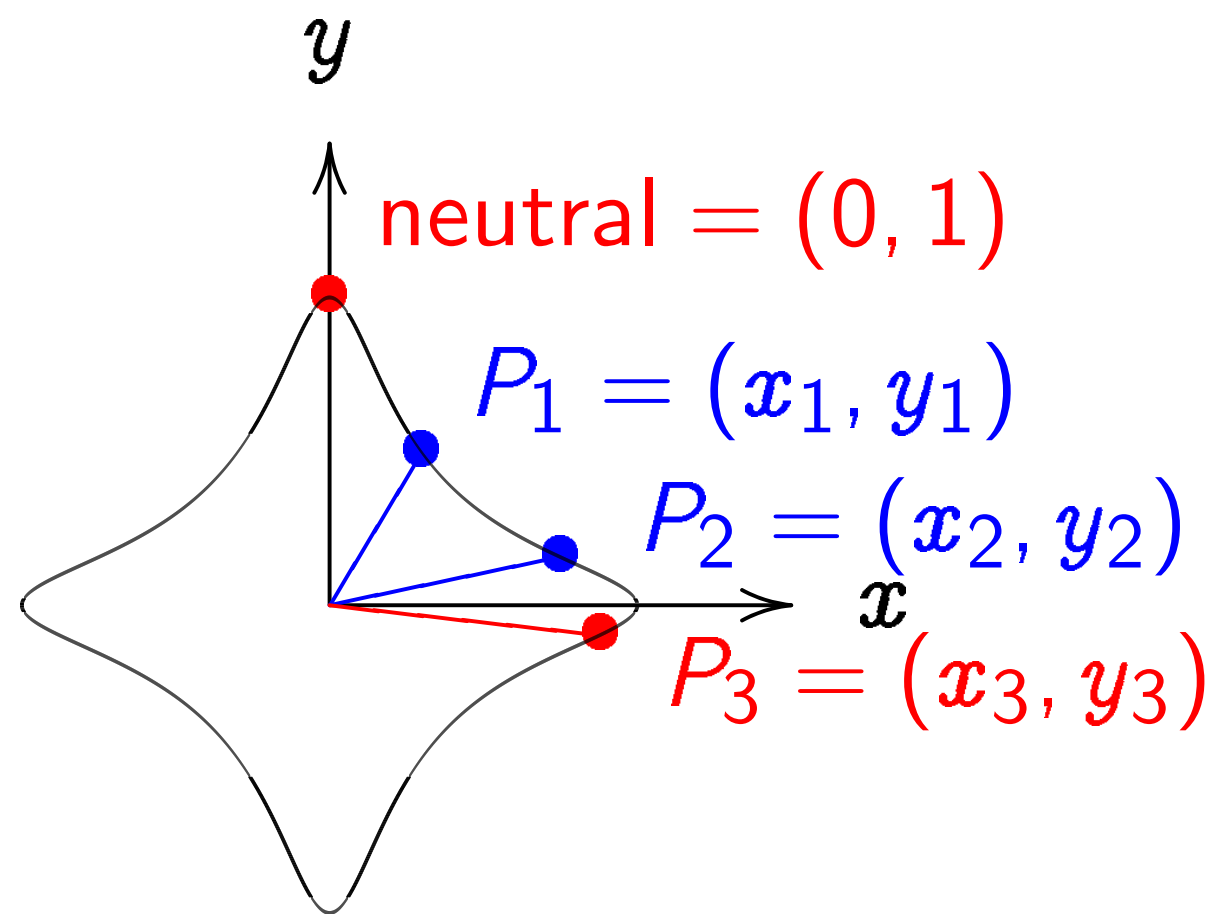
The clo

$$x^2 + y^2$$

Sum of

$$(x_1y_2 + \\ y_1y_2 -$$

Addition on an elliptic curve

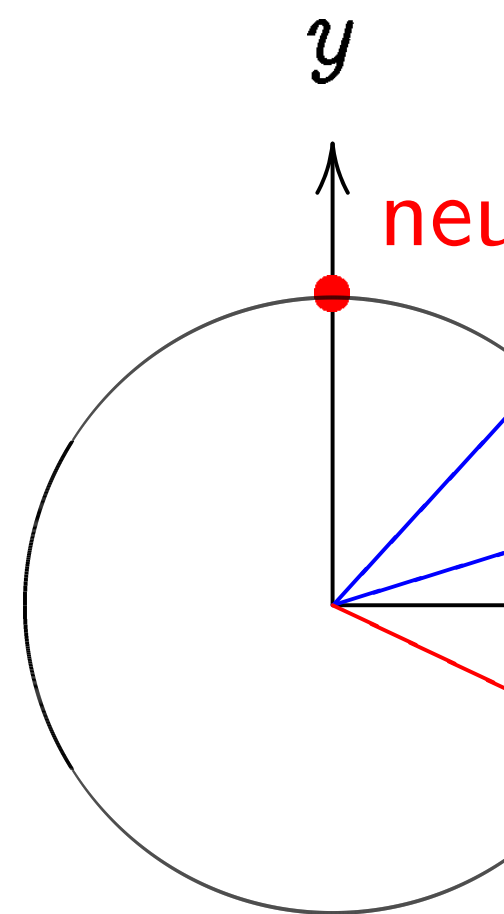


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The clock again, f

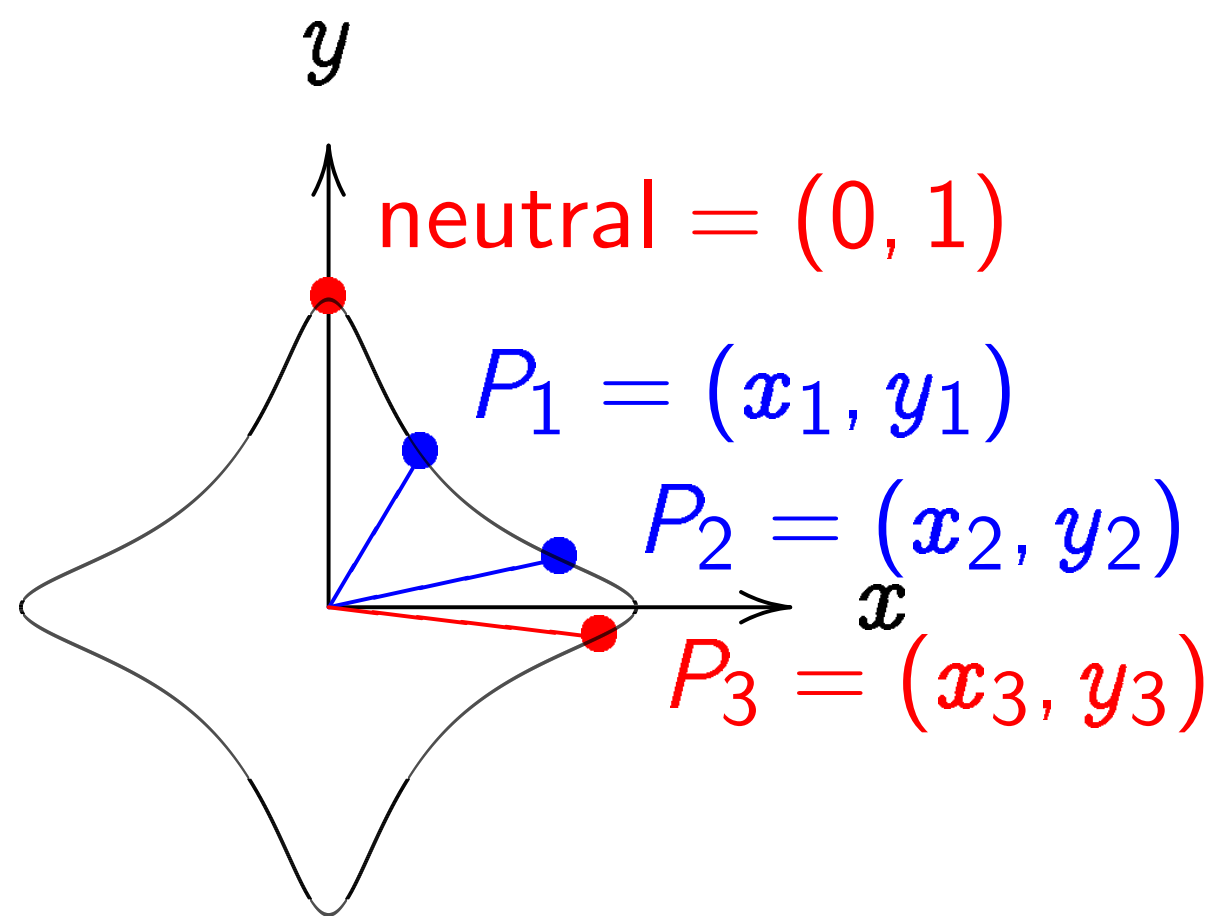


$$x^2 + y^2 = 1.$$

Sum of (x_1, y_1) and

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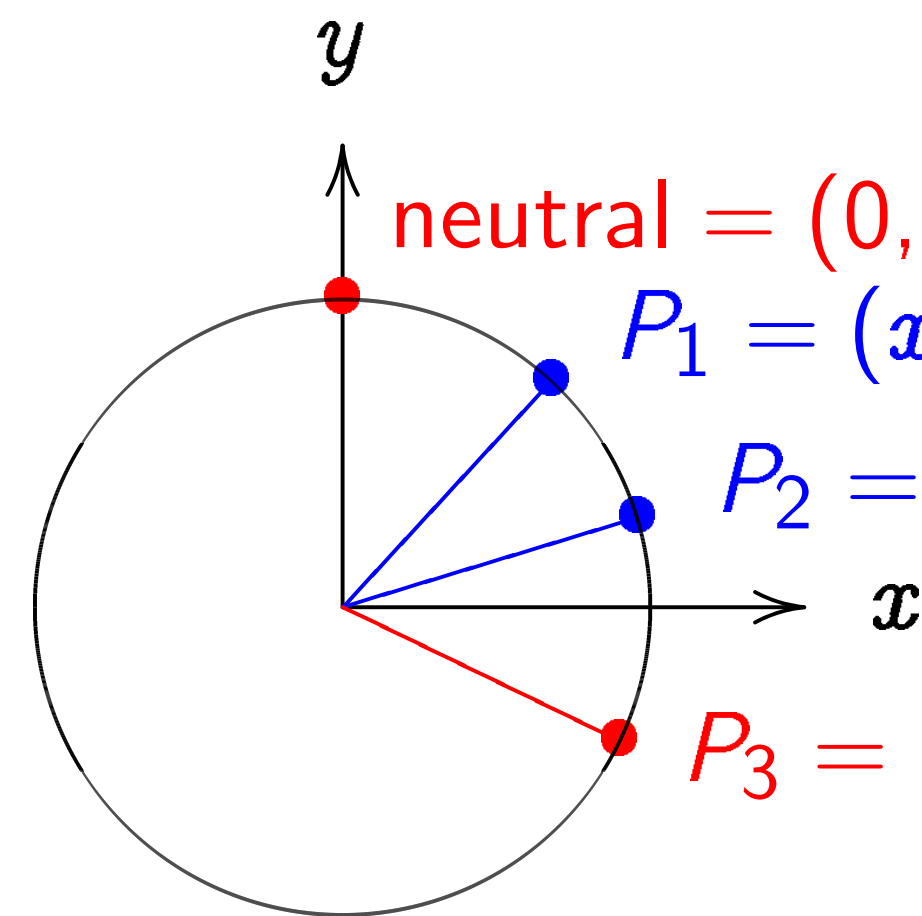
Addition on an elliptic curve



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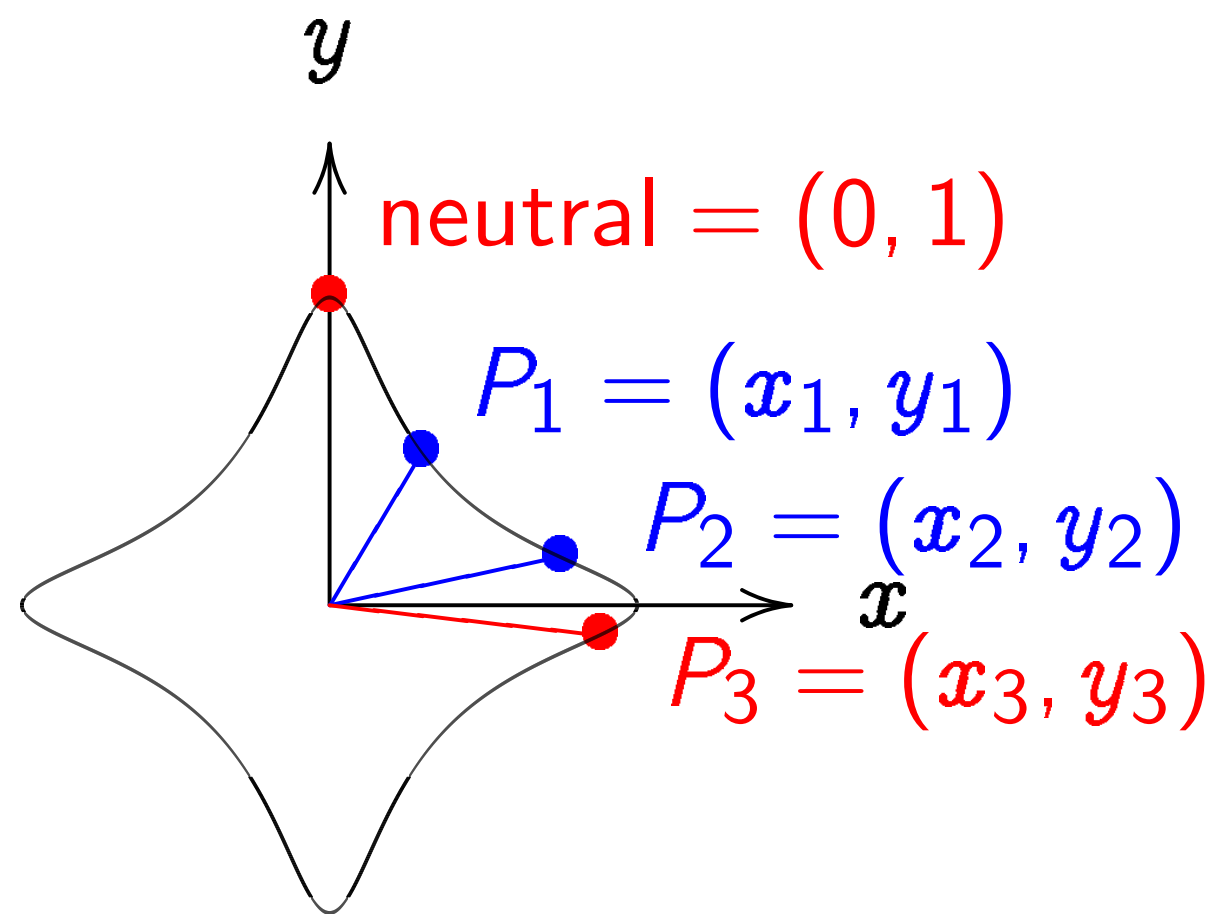
The clock again, for compar



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Addition on an elliptic curve

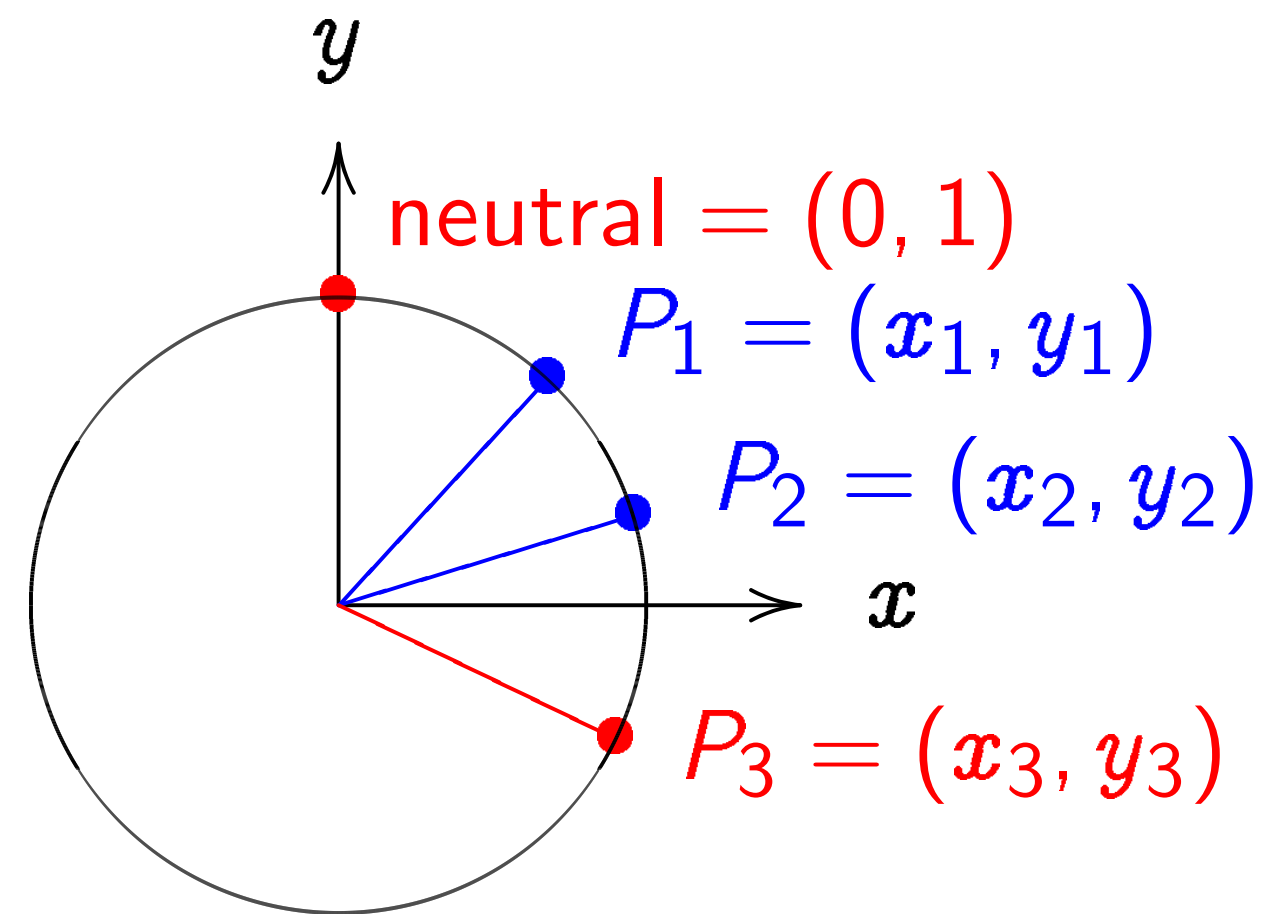


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The clock again, for comparison:

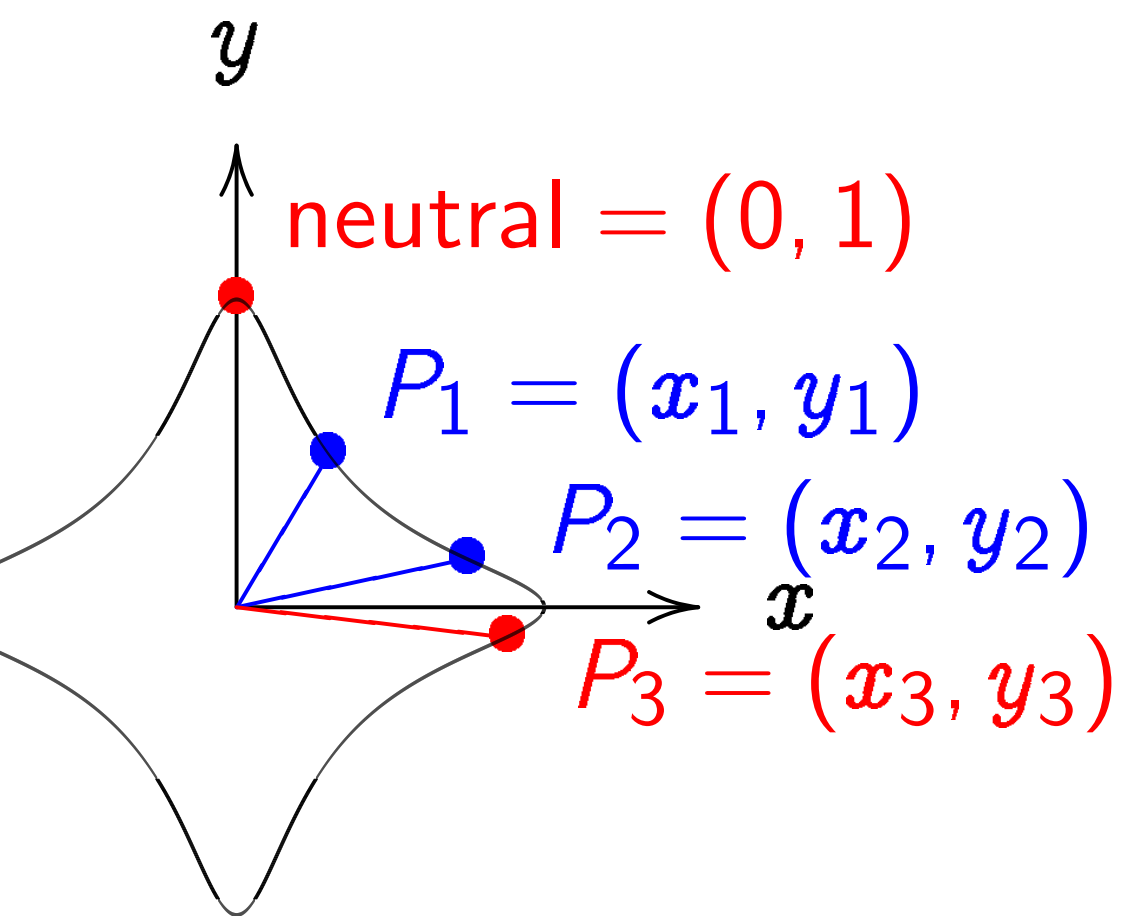


$$x^2 + y^2 = 1.$$

Sum of (x_1, y_1) and (x_2, y_2) is

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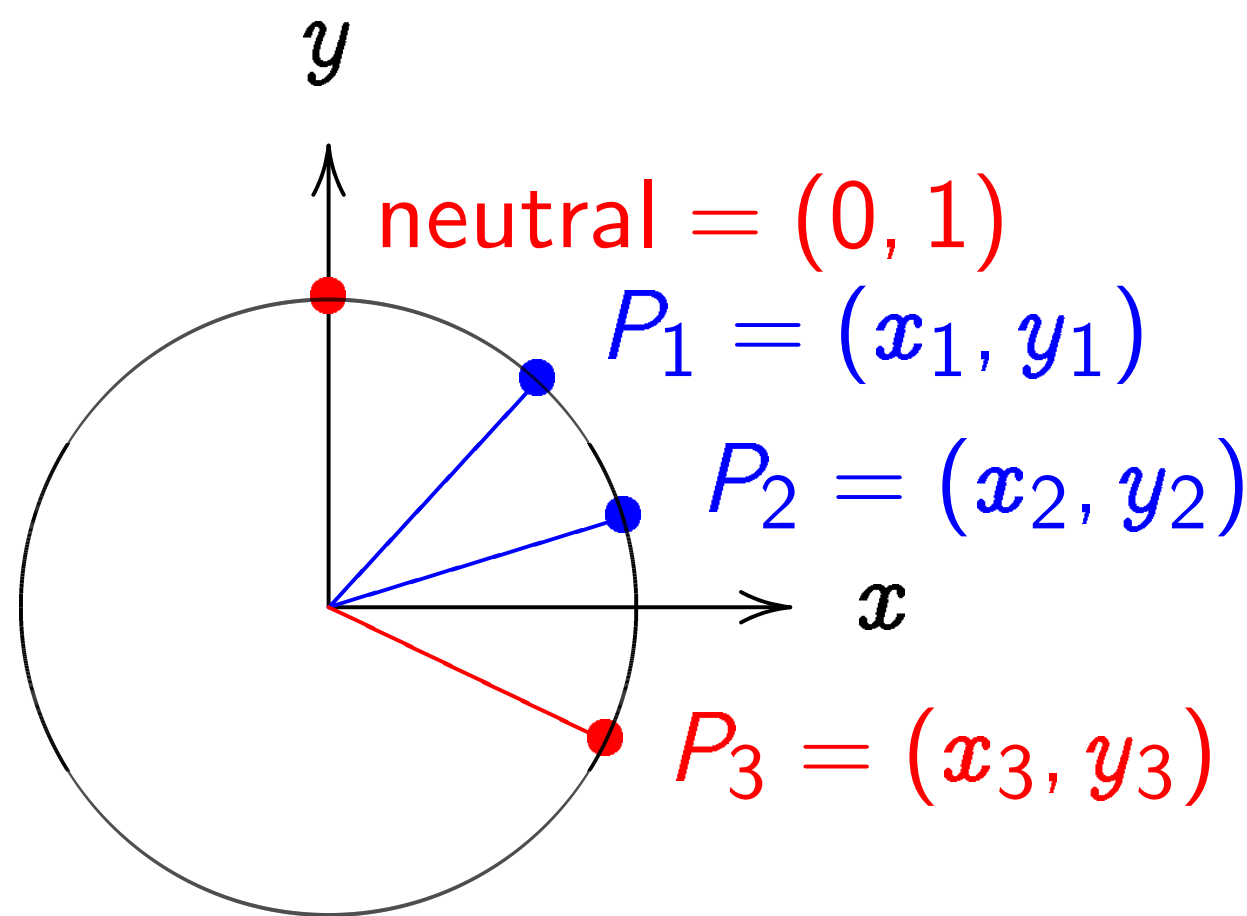
on an elliptic curve



$$= 1 - 30x^2y^2.$$

(x_1, y_1) and (x_2, y_2) is
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(x_1, y_1)

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$$x_3 = \frac{x}{1 -}$$

$$y_3 = \frac{y}{1 -}$$

Elliptic curve

neutral = (0, 1)

$P_1 = (x_1, y_1)$

$P_2 = (x_2, y_2)$

$P_3 = (x_3, y_3)$

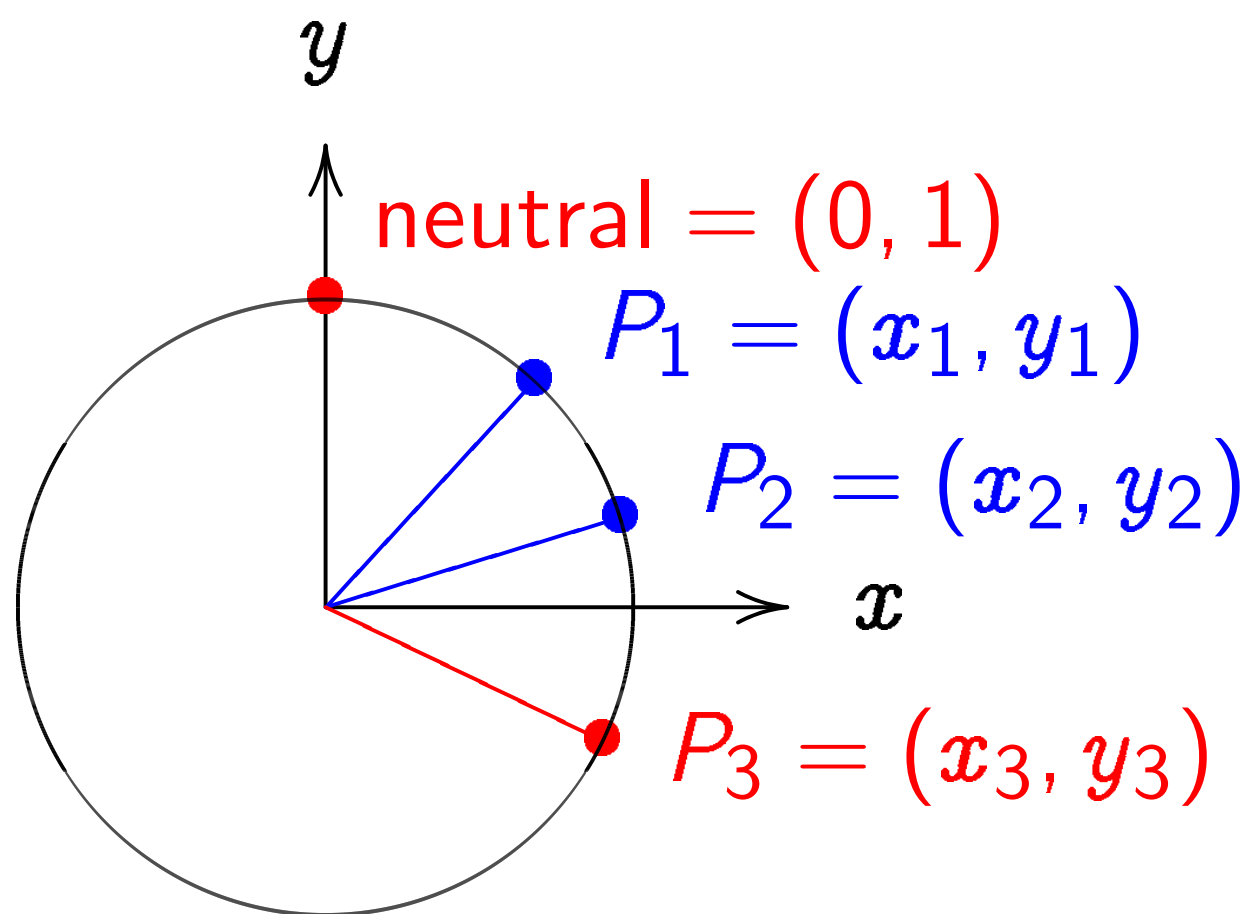
$x^2 + y^2 = 1$.

and (x_2, y_2) is

$(-30x_1x_2y_1y_2),$

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$(x_1y_2 + y_1x_2,$

$y_1y_2 - x_1x_2).$

More elliptic curve

Choose an odd prime

Choose a *non-square*

$\{(x, y) \in \mathbf{F}_p \times \mathbf{F}_p$

$$x^2 + y^2 = 1 - d$$

is a "complete Edwards"

"The Edwards add"

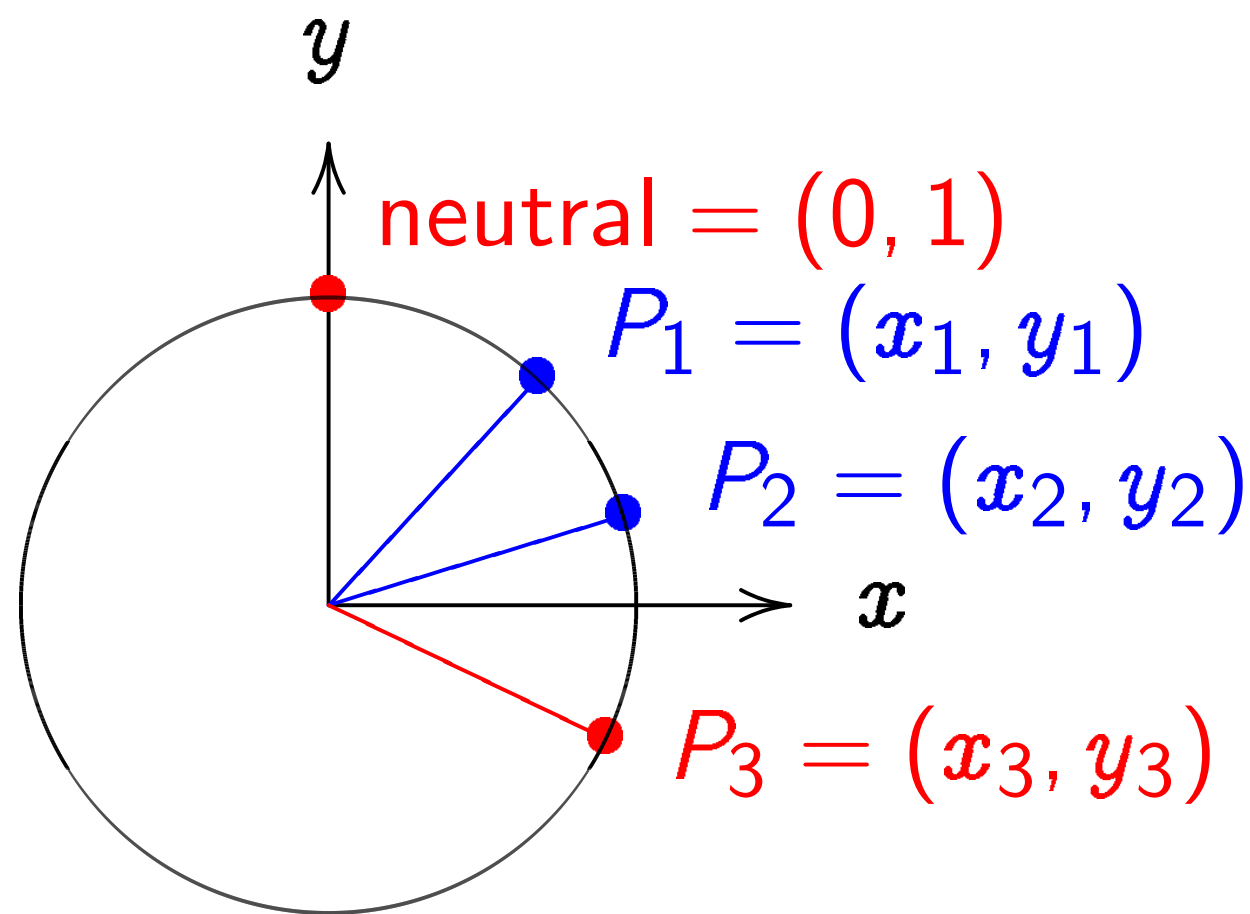
$(x_1, y_1) + (x_2, y_2)$

where

$$x_3 = \frac{x_1y_2 + y_1x_2}{1 + dx_1x_2y_1y_2}$$

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More elliptic curves

Choose an odd prime p .

Choose a *non-square* $d \in \mathbf{F}_p$

$$\{(x, y) \in \mathbf{F}_p \times \mathbf{F}_p : \\ x^2 + y^2 = 1 + dx^2 y^2\}$$

is a “complete Edwards curve”

“The Edwards addition law”

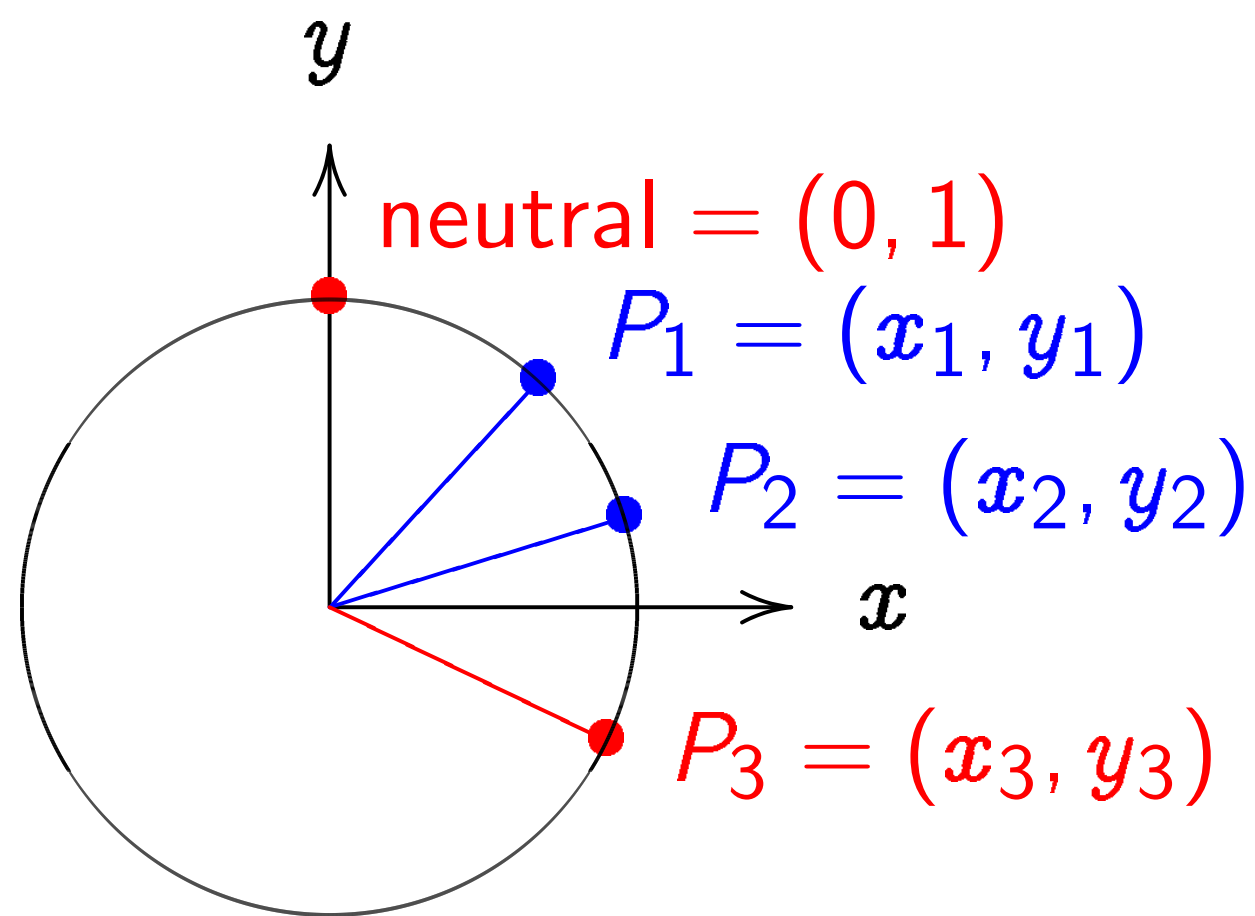
$$(x_1, y_1) + (x_2, y_2) = (x_3, y_3)$$

where

$$x_3 = \frac{x_1 y_2 + y_1 x_2}{1 + dx_1 x_2 y_1 y_2},$$

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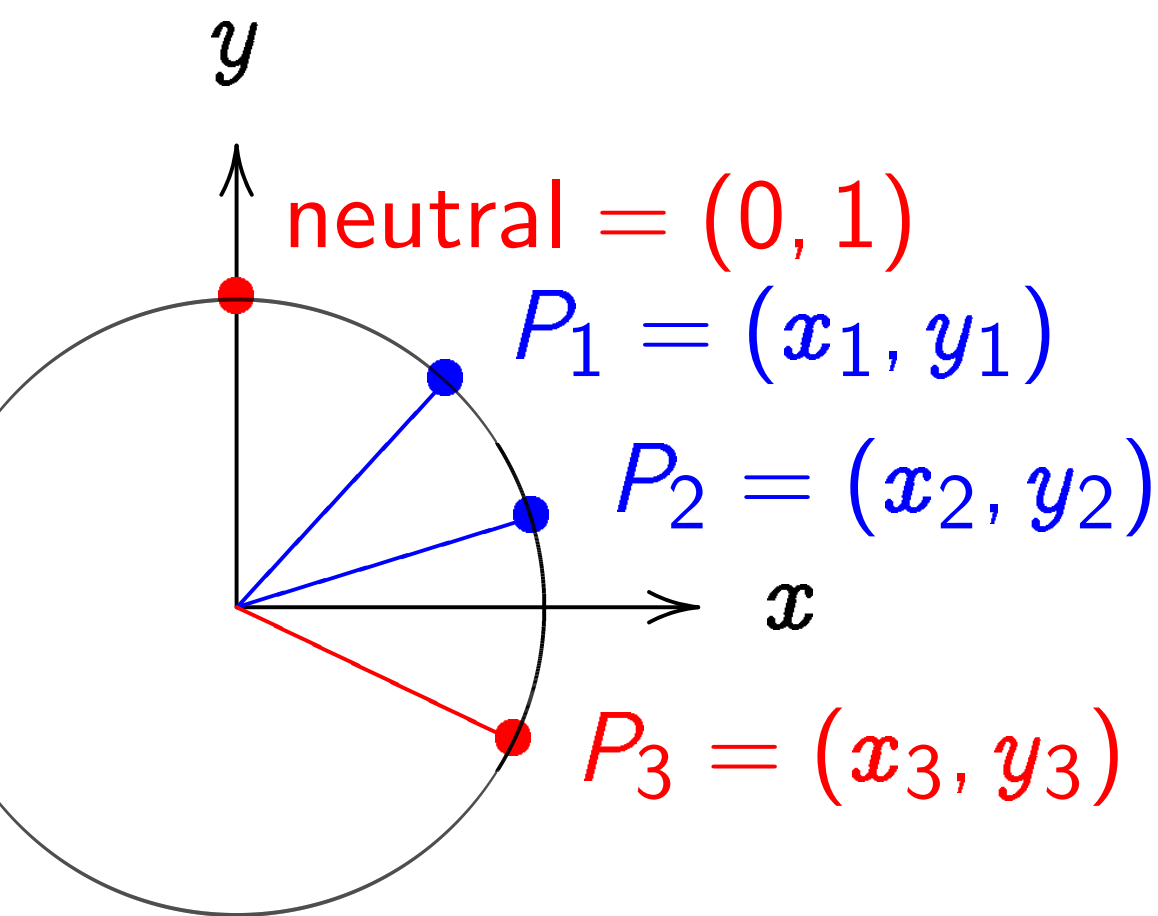
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$x_1 x_2$).

More elliptic curves

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$\{(x, y) \in \mathbf{F}_p \times \mathbf{F}_p :$

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"The Edwards addition law":

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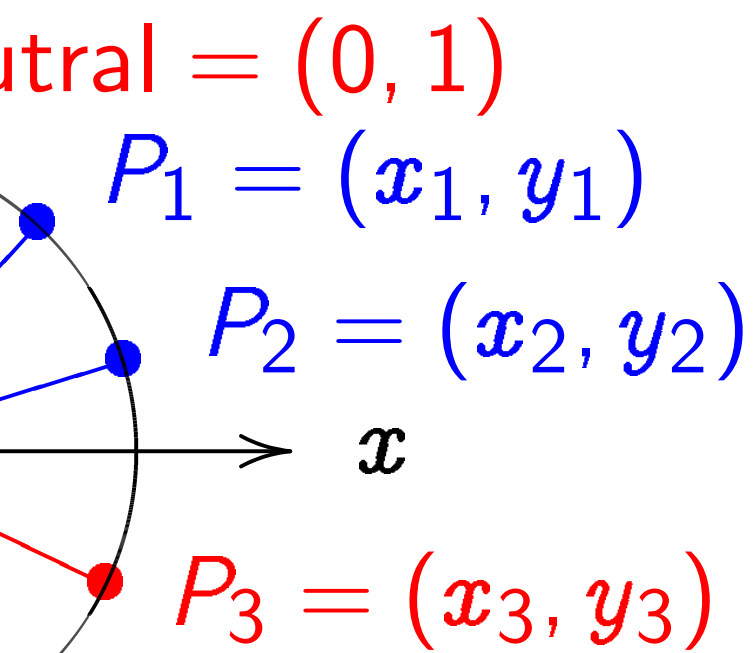
$$y_3 = \frac{y_1 y_2 - x_1 x_2}{1 - dx_1 x_2 y_1 y_2}.$$

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More elliptic curves

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(x_3, y_3)

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in the Edwards addition law
What if the denominators are

More elliptic curves

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Montgomery-curve ECDH using the “Montgomery ladder” — our recommended method for Diffie–Hellman key exchange (e.g., for forward secrecy).

Montgomery ladder works only with u -coordinates of curve points P .

Montgomery ladder computes nP and $(n + 1)P$ recursively from $\lfloor n/2 \rfloor P$ and $(\lfloor n/2 \rfloor + 1)P$ using one bit of n with **no branches**.

Curve selection

- Many different standards
- 1999 ANSI X9.62.
- 2000 IEEE P1363.
- 2000 SEC 2.
- 2000 NIST FIPS 186-2
- 2001 ANSI X9.63.
- 2005 Brainpool.
- 2005 NSA Suite B
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$l \approx 2^{200}$

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Avoiding known attacks

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The number of curves

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Standard attacks to

$l \approx 2^{200}$ is adequate

$l \approx 2^{256}$ is conservative

l must not divide

$p; p - 1; p^2 - 1;$

$p^3 - 1; \dots; p^{20} - 1$

This guarantees that

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Avoiding known attacks

The curve must be elliptic.

The number of curve points

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a large prime number ℓ .

Standard attacks take time

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ℓ must not divide

p ; $p - 1$; $p^2 - 1$;

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Require large “CM
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Brainpool, Suite B
SafeCurves: require

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Avoiding unnecessary structure

Simplify the security story:

avoid possible attack vectors

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Require large “CM field
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Brainpool, Suite B, ANSSI,
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Known attacks

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Our recommendation, fully rigid:
 b is *smallest* positive integer
passing explained criteria.

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ECC security

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ECC security

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hard to compute ECC user's secret key from public key.

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ECC implementations

- produce incorrect results for some rare inputs;
- leak secret data for input points *off* curve;
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Example of new requirement:
twist security.

If curve isn't twist-secure:

Twist attacks break
ladder implementations
that don't check whether
input point is on curve.

Security-simplicity conflict.

Security

so far:

compute ECC user's

key from public key.

Real-world ECC

being broken!

Implementations

produce incorrect results

on some rare inputs;

leak secret data

by outputting points *off* curve;

leak secret data

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and attackers exploit this.

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Curve
Anomalous
M-221
E-222
NIST P-224
Curve1174
Curve25519
BN(2,254)
brainpoolP256r1
ANSSI FRP256
NIST P-256
secp256k1
E-382
M-383
Curve38318
brainpoolP384r1
NIST P-384
Curve3617

ECC user's
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Curve	Safe?	
Anomalous	False	Tr
M-221	True ✓	Tr
E-222	True ✓	Tr
NIST P-224	False	Tr
Curve1174	True ✓	Tr
Curve25519	True ✓	Tr
BN(2,254)	False	Tr
brainpoolP256t1	False	Tr
ANSSI FRP256v1	False	Tr
NIST P-256	False	Tr
secp256k1	False	Tr
E-382	True ✓	Tr
M-383	True ✓	Tr
Curve383187	True ✓	Tr
brainpoolP384t1	False	Tr
NIST P-384	False	Tr
Curve3617	True ✓	Tr

Better choices of curves allow **simple** implementations to be **secure** implementations.

This is the primary motivation for SafeCurves.

Example of new requirement: **twist security**.

If curve isn't twist-secure:

Twist attacks break ladder implementations that don't check whether input point is on curve.

Security-simplicity conflict.

Curve	Safe?	Parameters	
		field	equation
Anomalous	False	True ✓	True ✓
M-221	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
E-222	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
NIST P-224	False	True ✓	True ✓
Curve1174	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
Curve25519	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
BN(2,254)	False	True ✓	True ✓
brainpoolP256t1	False	True ✓	True ✓
ANSSI FRP256v1	False	True ✓	True ✓
NIST P-256	False	True ✓	True ✓
secp256k1	False	True ✓	True ✓
E-382	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
M-383	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
Curve383187	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
brainpoolP384t1	False	True ✓	True ✓
NIST P-384	False	True ✓	True ✓
Curve3617	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓

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Curve	Safe?	Parameters:			
		field	equation	base	rho
Anomalous	False	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
M-221	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
E-222	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
NIST P-224	False	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
Curve1174	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
Curve25519	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
BN(2,254)	False	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
brainpoolP256t1	False	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
ANSSI FRP256v1	False	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
NIST P-256	False	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
secp256k1	False	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
E-382	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
M-383	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
Curve383187	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
brainpoolP384t1	False	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
NIST P-384	False	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓
Curve3617	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓

choices of curves

simple implementations
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security.

isn't twist-secure:

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implementations

don't check whether

point is on curve.

simplicity conflict.

Curve	Safe?	Parameters:			ECDLP security		
		field	equation	base	rho	transfer	dis
Anomalous	False	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	False	False
M-221	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True
E-222	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True
NIST P-224	False	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True
Curve1174	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True
Curve25519	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True
BN(2,254)	False	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	False	False
brainpoolP256t1	False	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True
ANSSI FRP256v1	False	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True
NIST P-256	False	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True
secp256k1	False	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	False
E-382	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True
M-383	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True
Curve383187	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True
brainpoolP384t1	False	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True
NIST P-384	False	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True
Curve3617	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True
		True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True ✓	True

