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Elliptic Curves for Security
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Abstract

This memo specifies two elliptic curves over prime fields that offer high practical security in cryptographic applications, including Transport Layer Security (TLS). These curves are intended to operate at the ~128-bit and ~224-bit security level, respectively, and are generated deterministically based on a list of required properties.

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[1.](#) Introduction

Since the initial standardization of elliptic curve cryptography (ECC [[RFC6090](#)]) in [[SEC1](#)] there has been significant progress related to both efficiency and security of curves and implementations. Notable examples are algorithms protected against certain side-channel attacks, various 'special' prime shapes that allow faster modular arithmetic, and a larger set of curve models from which to choose. There is also concern in the community regarding the generation and potential weaknesses of the curves defined by NIST [[NIST](#)].

This memo specifies two elliptic curves ("curve25519" and "curve448") that lend themselves to constant-time implementation and an exception-free scalar multiplication that is resistant to a wide range of side-channel attacks, including timing and cache attacks. They are Montgomery curves (where $y^2 = x^3 + Ax^2 + x$) and thus have birationally equivalent Edwards versions. Edwards curves support the fastest (currently known) complete formulas for the elliptic-curve group operations, specifically the Edwards curve $x^2 + y^2 = 1 +$

dx^2y^2 for primes p when $p = 3 \bmod 4$, and the twisted Edwards curve $-x^2 + y^2 = 1 + dx^2y^2$ when $p = 1 \bmod 4$. The maps to/from the Montgomery curves to their (twisted) Edwards equivalents are also given.

This memo also specifies how these curves can be used with the Diffie-Hellman protocol for key agreement.

2. Requirements Language

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in [RFC 2119](#) [[RFC2119](#)].

3. Notation

Throughout this document, the following notation is used:

p Denotes the prime number defining the underlying field.

$GF(p)$ The finite field with p elements.

A An element in the finite field $GF(p)$, not equal to -2 or 2 .

d A non-zero element in the finite field $GF(p)$, not equal to 1 , in the case of an Edwards curve, or not equal to -1 , in the case of a twisted Edwards curve.

P A generator point defined over $GF(p)$ of prime order.

$X(P)$ The x-coordinate of the elliptic curve point P on a (twisted) Edwards curve.

$Y(P)$ The y-coordinate of the elliptic curve point P on a (twisted) Edwards curve.

u, v Coordinates on a Montgomery curve.

x, y Coordinates on a (twisted) Edwards curve.

4. Recommended Curves

4.1. Curve25519

For the ~128-bit security level, the prime $2^{255}-19$ is recommended for performance on a wide-range of architectures. Few primes of the form 2^c-s with s small exist between 2^{250} and 2^{521} , and other choices of coefficient are not as competitive in performance. This

prime is congruent to 1 mod 4 and the derivation procedure in [Appendix A](#) results in the following Montgomery curve $v^2 = u^3 + A*u^2 + u$, called "curve25519":

p 2²⁵⁵-19

A 486662

order 2²⁵² + 0x14def9dea2f79cd65812631a5cf5d3ed

cofactor 8

The base point is $u = 9$, $v = 14781619447589544791020593568409986887264606134616475288964881837755586237401$.

This curve is birationally equivalent to a twisted Edwards curve $-x^2 + y^2 = 1 + d*x^2*y^2$, called "edwards25519", where:

p 2²⁵⁵-19

d 37095705934669439343138083508754565189542113879843219016388785533085940283555

order 2²⁵² + 0x14def9dea2f79cd65812631a5cf5d3ed

cofactor 8

X(P) 15112221349535400772501151409588531511454012693041857206046113283949847762202

Y(P) 46316835694926478169428394003475163141307993866256225615783033603165251855960

The birational maps are:

$$\begin{aligned}(u, v) &= ((1+y)/(1-y), \sqrt{-486664}*u/x) \\ (x, y) &= (\sqrt{-486664}*u/v, (u-1)/(u+1))\end{aligned}$$

The Montgomery curve defined here is equal to the one defined in [\[curve25519\]](#) and the equivalent twisted Edwards curve is equal to the one defined in [\[ed25519\]](#).

4.2. Curve448

For the ~224-bit security level, the prime 2⁴⁴⁸-2²²⁴-1 is recommended for performance on a wide-range of architectures. This prime is congruent to 3 mod 4 and the derivation procedure in

[Appendix A](#) results in the following Montgomery curve, called "curve448":

p $2^{448}-2^{224}-1$

A 156326

order $2^{446} -$

0x8335dc163bb124b65129c96fde933d8d723a70aadc873d6d54a7bb0d

cofactor 4

The base point is $u = 5$, $v = 355293926785568175264127502063783334808976399387714271831880898435169088786967410002932673765864550910142774147268105838985595290606362$.

This curve is birationally equivalent to the Edwards curve $x^2 + y^2 = 1 + d \cdot x^2 \cdot y^2$ where:

p $2^{448}-2^{224}-1$

d 611975850744529176160423220965553317543219696871016626328968936415087860042636474891785599283666020414768678979989378147065462815545017

order $2^{446} -$

0x8335dc163bb124b65129c96fde933d8d723a70aadc873d6d54a7bb0d

cofactor 4

X(P) 345397493039729516374008604150537410266655260075183290216406970281645695073672344430481787759340633221708391583424041788924124567700732

Y(P) 363419362147803445274661903944002267176820680343659030140745099590306164083365386343198191849338272965044442230921818680526749009182718

The birational maps are:

$$\begin{aligned}(u, v) &= ((y-1)/(y+1), \sqrt{156324} \cdot u/x) \\ (x, y) &= (\sqrt{156324} \cdot u/v, (1+u)/(1-u))\end{aligned}$$

Both of those curves are also 4-isogenous to the following Edwards curve $x^2 + y^2 = 1 + d \cdot x^2 \cdot y^2$, called "edwards448", where:

p $2^{448}-2^{224}-1$

d -39081

order 2^446 -

0x8335dc163bb124b65129c96fde933d8d723a70aad873d6d54a7bb0d

cofactor 4

X(P) 224580040295924300187604334099896036246789641632564134246125461
686950415467406032909029192869357953282578032075146446173674602635
247710

Y(P) 298819210078481492676017930443930673437544040154080242095928241
372331506189835876003536878655418784733982303233503462500531545062
832660

The 4-isogeny maps between the Montgomery curve and this Edwards curve are:

$$\begin{aligned}(u, v) &= (y^2/x^2, (2 - x^2 - y^2)*y/x^3) \\ (x, y) &= (4*v*(u^2 - 1)/(u^4 - 2*u^2 + 4*v^2 + 1), \\ &\quad -(u^5 - 2*u^3 - 4*u*v^2 + u)/ \\ &\quad (u^5 - 2*u^2*v^2 - 2*u^3 - 2*v^2 + u))\end{aligned}$$

The curve `edwards448` defined here is also called "Goldilocks" and is equal to the one defined in [\[goldilocks\]](#).

5. The X25519 and X448 functions

The "X25519" and "X448" functions perform scalar multiplication on the Montgomery form of the above curves. (This is used when implementing Diffie-Hellman.) The functions take a scalar and a u-coordinate as inputs and produce a u-coordinate as output. Although the functions work internally with integers, the inputs and outputs are 32-byte strings (for X25519) or 56-byte strings (for X448) and this specification defines their encoding.

The u-coordinates are elements of the underlying field $GF(2^{255-19})$ or $GF(2^{448-2^{224}-1})$ and are encoded as an array of bytes, `u`, in little-endian order such that $u[0] + 256*u[1] + 256^2*u[2] + \dots + 256^{(n-1)}*u[n-1]$ is congruent to the value modulo p and $u[n-1]$ is minimal. When receiving such an array, implementations of X25519 (but not X448) MUST mask the most-significant bit in the final byte. This is done to preserve compatibility with point formats which reserve the sign bit for use in other protocols and to increase resistance to implementation fingerprinting.

Implementations MUST accept non-canonical values and process them as if they had been reduced modulo the field prime. The non-canonical

values are $2^{255}-19$ through $2^{255}-1$ for X25519 and $2^{448}-2^{224}-1$ through $2^{448}-1$ for X448.

The following functions implement this in Python, although the Python code is not intended to be performant nor side-channel free. Here the "bits" parameter should be set to 255 for X25519 and 448 for X448:

```
def decodeLittleEndian(b, bits):
    return sum([b[i] << 8*i for i in range((bits+7)/8)])

def decodeUCoordinate(u, bits):
    u_list = [ord(b) for b in u]
    # Ignore any unused bits.
    if bits % 8:
        u_list[-1] &= (1<<(bits%8))-1
    return decodeLittleEndian(u_list, bits)

def encodeUCoordinate(u, bits):
    u = u % p
    return ''.join([chr((u >> 8*i) & 0xff)
                    for i in range((bits+7)/8)])
```

Scalars are assumed to be randomly generated bytes. For X25519, in order to decode 32 random bytes as an integer scalar, set the three least significant bits of the first byte and the most significant bit of the last to zero, set the second most significant bit of the last byte to 1 and, finally, decode as little-endian. This means that resulting integer is of the form $2^{254} + 8 * \{0, 1, \dots, 2^{(251)} - 1\}$. Likewise, for X448, set the two least significant bits of the first byte to 0, and the most significant bit of the last byte to 1. This means that the resulting integer is of the form $2^{447} + 4 * \{0, 1, \dots, 2^{(445)} - 1\}$.

```
def decodeScalar25519(k):
    k_list = [ord(b) for b in k]
    k_list[0] &= 248
    k_list[31] &= 127
    k_list[31] |= 64
    return decodeLittleEndian(k_list, 255)

def decodeScalar448(k):
    k_list = [ord(b) for b in k]
    k_list[0] &= 252
    k_list[55] |= 128
    return decodeLittleEndian(k_list, 448)
```


To implement the $X_{25519}(k, u)$ and $X_{448}(k, u)$ functions (where k is the scalar and u is the u -coordinate) first decode k and u and then perform the following procedure, which is taken from [curve25519] and based on formulas from [montgomery]. All calculations are performed in $GF(p)$, i.e., they are performed modulo p . The constant a_{24} is $(486662 - 2) / 4 = 121665$ for curve25519/ X_{25519} and $(156326 - 2) / 4 = 39081$ for curve448/ X_{448} .

```
x_1 = u
x_2 = 1
z_2 = 0
x_3 = u
z_3 = 1
swap = 0
```

For $t = \text{bits}-1$ down to 0:

```
  k_t = (k >> t) & 1
  swap ^= k_t
  // Conditional swap; see text below.
  (x_2, x_3) = cswap(swap, x_2, x_3)
  (z_2, z_3) = cswap(swap, z_2, z_3)
  swap = k_t
```

```
  A = x_2 + z_2
  AA = A^2
  B = x_2 - z_2
  BB = B^2
  E = AA - BB
  C = x_3 + z_3
  D = x_3 - z_3
  DA = D * A
  CB = C * B
  x_3 = (DA + CB)^2
  z_3 = x_1 * (DA - CB)^2
  x_2 = AA * BB
  z_2 = E * (AA + a24 * E)
```

// Conditional swap; see text below.

```
(x_2, x_3) = cswap(swap, x_2, x_3)
(z_2, z_3) = cswap(swap, z_2, z_3)
Return x_2 * (z_2^(p - 2))
```

(Note that these formulas are slightly different from Montgomery's original paper. Implementations are free to use any correct formulas.)

Finally, encode the resulting value as 32 or 56 bytes in little-endian order. For X25519, the unused, most-significant bit MUST be zero.

The cswap function SHOULD be implemented in constant time (i.e. independent of the swap argument). For example, this can be done as follows:

```
cswap(swap, x_2, x_3):  
    dummy = mask(swap) AND (x_2 XOR x_3)  
    x_2 = x_2 XOR dummy  
    x_3 = x_3 XOR dummy  
    Return (x_2, x_3)
```

Where `mask(swap)` is the all-1 or all-0 word of the same length as `x_2` and `x_3`, computed, e.g., as `mask(swap) = 0 - swap`.

5.1. Side-channel considerations

X25519 and X448 are designed so that fast, constant-time implementations are easier to produce. The procedure above ensures that the same sequence of field operations is performed for all values of the secret key, thus eliminating a common source of side-channel leakage. However, this alone does not prevent all side-channels by itself. It is important that the pattern of memory accesses and jumps not depend on the values of any of the bits of k . It is also important that the arithmetic used not leak information about the integers modulo p , for example by having $b*c$ be distinguishable from $c*c$. On some architectures, even primitive machine instructions, such as single-word division, can have variable timing based on their inputs.

Side-channel attacks are an active research area that still sees significant, new results. Implementors are advised to follow this research closely.

5.2. Test vectors

Two types of tests are provided. The first is a pair of test vectors for each function that consist of expected outputs for the given inputs. The inputs are generally given as 64 or 112 hexadecimal digits that need to be decoded as 32 or 56 binary bytes before processing.

X25519:

Input scalar:

a546e36bf0527c9d3b16154b82465edd62144c0ac1fc5a18506a2244ba449ac4

Input scalar as a number (base 10):

31029842492115040904895560451863089656
472772604678260265531221036453811406496

Input u-coordinate:

e6db6867583030db3594c1a424b15f7c726624ec26b3353b10a903a6d0ab1c4c

Input u-coordinate as a number:

34426434033919594451155107781188821651
316167215306631574996226621102155684838

Output u-coordinate:

c3da55379de9c6908e94ea4df28d084f32eccf03491c71f754b4075577a28552

Input scalar:

4b66e9d4d1b4673c5ad22691957d6af5c11b6421e0ea01d42ca4169e7918ba0d

Input scalar as a number (base 10):

35156891815674817266734212754503633747
128614016119564763269015315466259359304

Input u-coordinate:

e5210f12786811d3f4b7959d0538ae2c31dbe7106fc03c3efc4cd549c715a493

Input u-coordinate as a number:

88838573511839298940907593866106493194
17338800022198945255395922347792736741

Output u-coordinate:

95cbde9476e8907d7aade45cb4b873f88b595a68799fa152e6f8f7647aac7957

X448:

Input scalar:

3d262fddf9ec8e88495266fea19a34d28882acef045104d0d1aae121
700a779c984c24f8cdd78fbff44943eba368f54b29259a4f1c600ad3

Input scalar as a number (base 10):

599189175373896402783756016145213256157230856
085026129926891459468622403380588640249457727
683869421921443004045221642549886377526240828

Input u-coordinate:

06fce640fa3487bfda5f6cf2d5263f8aad88334cbd07437f020f08f9
814dc031ddbdc38c19c6da2583fa5429db94ada18aa7a7fb4ef8a086

Input u-coordinate as a number:

382239910814107330116229961234899377031416365
240571325148346555922438025162094455820962429
142971339584360034337310079791515452463053830

Output u-coordinate:

ce3e4ff95a60dc6697da1db1d85e6afbdf79b50a2412d7546d5f239f
e14fbaadeb445fc66a01b0779d98223961111e21766282f73dd96b6f

Input scalar:

203d494428b8399352665ddca42f9de8fef600908e0d461cb021f8c5
38345dd77c3e4806e25f46d3315c44e0a5b4371282dd2c8d5be3095f

X25519:

After one iteration:

422c8e7a6227d7bca1350b3e2bb7279f7897b87bb6854b783c60e80311ae3079

After 1,000 iterations:

684cf59ba83309552800ef566f2f4d3c1c3887c49360e3875f2eb94d99532c51

After 1,000,000 iterations:

7c3911e0ab2586fd864497297e575e6f3bc601c0883c30df5f4dd2d24f665424

X448:

After one iteration:

3f482c8a9f19b01e6c46ee9711d9dc14fd4bf67af30765c2ae2b846a

4d23a8cd0db897086239492caf350b51f833868b9bc2b3bca9cf4113

After 1,000 iterations:

aa3b4749d55b9daf1e5b00288826c467274ce3ebbdd5c17b975e09d4

af6c67cf10d087202db88286e2b79fcee3ec353ef54faa26e219f38

After 1,000,000 iterations:

077f453681caca3693198420bbe515cae0002472519b3e67661a7e89

cab94695c8f4bcd66e61b9b9c946da8d524de3d69bd9d9d66b997e37

6. Diffie-Hellman

6.1. Curve25519

The X25519 function can be used in an elliptic-curve Diffie-Hellman (ECDH) protocol as follows:

Alice generates 32 random bytes in $f[0]$ to $f[31]$ and transmits $K_A = X25519(f, 9)$ to Bob, where 9 is the u-coordinate of the base point and is encoded as a byte with value 9, followed by 31 zero bytes.

Bob similarly generates 32 random bytes in $g[0]$ to $g[31]$ and computes $K_B = X25519(g, 9)$ and transmits it to Alice.

Using their generated values and the received input, Alice computes $X25519(f, K_B)$ and Bob computes $X25519(g, K_A)$.

Both now share $K = X25519(f, X25519(g, 9)) = X25519(g, X25519(f, 9))$ as a shared secret. Both MUST check, without leaking extra information about the value of K , whether K is the all-zero value and abort if so (see below). Alice and Bob can then use a key-derivation function that includes K , K_A and K_B to derive a key.

The check for the all-zero value results from the fact that the X25519 function produces that value if it operates on an input corresponding to a point with order dividing the co-factor, h , of the

curve. This check is cheap and so MUST always be carried out. The check may be performed by ORing all the bytes together and checking whether the result is zero as this eliminates standard side-channels in software implementations.

Test vector:

Alice's private key, f:

77076d0a7318a57d3c16c17251b26645df4c2f87ebc0992ab177fba51db92c2a

Alice's public key, X25519(f, 9):

8520f0098930a754748b7ddcb43ef75a0dbf3a0d26381af4eba4a98eaa9b4e6a

Bob's private key, g:

5dab087e624a8a4b79e17f8b83800ee66f3bb1292618b6fd1c2f8b27ff88e0eb

Bob's public key, X25519(g, 9):

de9edb7d7b7dc1b4d35b61c2ece435373f8343c85b78674dadfc7e146f882b4f

Their shared secret, K:

4a5d9d5ba4ce2de1728e3bf480350f25e07e21c947d19e3376f09b3c1e161742

6.2. Curve448

The X448 function can be used in an ECDH protocol very much like the X25519 function.

If X448 is to be used, the only differences are that Alice and Bob generate 56 random bytes (not 32) and calculate $K_A = X448(f, 5)$ or $K_B = X448(g, 5)$ where 5 is the u-coordinate of the base point and is encoded as a byte with value 5, followed by 55 zero bytes.

As with X25519, both sides MUST check, without leaking extra information about the value of K, whether the resulting shared K is the all-zero value and abort if so.

Test vector:

Alice's private key, f:

```
9a8f4925d1519f5775cf46b04b5800d4ee9ee8bae8bc5565d498c28d
d9c9baf574a9419744897391006382a6f127ab1d9ac2d8c0a598726b
```

Alice's public key, X448(f, 5):

```
9b08f7cc31b7e3e67d22d5aea121074a273bd2b83de09c63faa73d2c
22c5d9bbc836647241d953d40c5b12da88120d53177f80e532c41fa0
```

Bob's private key, g:

```
1c306a7ac2a0e2e0990b294470cba339e6453772b075811d8fad0d1d
6927c120bb5ee8972b0d3e21374c9c921b09d1b0366f10b65173992d
```

Bob's public key, X448(g, 5):

```
3eb7a829b0cd20f5bcfc0b599b6feccf6da4627107bdb0d4f345b430
27d8b972fc3e34fb4232a13ca706dcb57aec3dae07bdc1c67bf33609
```

Their shared secret, K:

```
07fff4181ac6cc95ec1c16a94a0f74d12da232ce40a77552281d282b
b60c0b56fd2464c335543936521c24403085d59a449a5037514a879d
```

7. Security Considerations

The security level (i.e. the number of "operations" needed for a brute-force attack on a primitive) of curve25519 is slightly under the standard 128-bit level. This is acceptable because the standard security levels are primarily driven by much simpler, symmetric primitives where the security level naturally falls on a power of two. For asymmetric primitives, rigidly adhering to a power-of-two security level would require compromises in other parts of the design, which we reject. Additionally, comparing security levels between types of primitives can be misleading under common threat models where multiple targets can be attacked concurrently [[bruteforce](#)].

The ~224-bit security level of curve448 is a trade-off between performance and paranoia. Large quantum computers, if ever created, will break both curve25519 and curve448, and reasonable projections of the abilities of classical computers conclude that curve25519 is perfectly safe. However, some designs have relaxed performance requirements and wish to hedge against some amount of analytical advance against elliptic curves and thus curve448 is also provided.

8. Acknowledgements

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The X25519 function was developed by Daniel J. Bernstein in [[curve25519](#)].

9. References

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[Appendix A](#). Deterministic Generation

This section specifies the procedure that was used to generate the above curves; specifically it defines how to generate the parameter A of the Montgomery curve $y^2 = x^3 + Ax^2 + x$. This procedure is intended to be as objective as can reasonably be achieved so that it's clear that no untoward considerations influenced the choice of curve. The input to this process is p , the prime that defines the underlying field. The size of p determines the amount of work needed to compute a discrete logarithm in the elliptic curve group and choosing a precise p depends on many implementation concerns. The

performance of the curve will be dominated by operations in $\text{GF}(p)$ so carefully choosing a value that allows for easy reductions on the intended architecture is critical. This document does not attempt to articulate all these considerations.

The value $(A-2)/4$ is used in several of the elliptic curve point arithmetic formulas. For simplicity and performance reasons, it is beneficial to make this constant small, i.e. to choose A so that $(A-2)$ is a small integer which is divisible by four.

For each curve at a specific security level:

1. The trace of Frobenius MUST NOT be in $\{0, 1\}$ in order to rule out the attacks described in [\[smart\]](#), [\[satoh\]](#), and [\[semaev\]](#), as in [\[brainpool\]](#) and [\[safecurves\]](#).
2. MOV Degree [\[reducing\]](#): the embedding degree k MUST be greater than $(r - 1) / 100$, as in [\[brainpool\]](#) and [\[safecurves\]](#).
3. CM Discriminant: discriminant D MUST be greater than 2^{100} , as in [\[safecurves\]](#).

[A.1.](#) $p = 1 \bmod 4$

For primes congruent to $1 \bmod 4$, the minimal cofactors of the curve and its twist are either $\{4, 8\}$ or $\{8, 4\}$. We choose a curve with the latter cofactors so that any algorithms that take the cofactor into account don't have to worry about checking for points on the twist, because the twist cofactor will be the smaller of the two.

To generate the Montgomery curve we find the minimal, positive A value, such that $A > 2$ and $(A-2)$ is divisible by four and where the cofactors are as desired. The `find1Mod4` function in the following Sage script returns this value given p :


```

def findCurve(prime, curveCofactor, twistCofactor):
    F = GF(prime)

    for A in xrange(3, 1e9):
        if (A-2) % 4 != 0:
            continue

        try:
            E = EllipticCurve(F, [0, A, 0, 1, 0])
        except:
            continue

        order = E.order()
        twistOrder = 2*(prime+1)-order

        if (order % curveCofactor == 0 and
            is_prime(order // curveCofactor) and
            twistOrder % twistCofactor == 0 and
            is_prime(twistOrder // twistCofactor)):
            return A

def find1Mod4(prime):
    assert((prime % 4) == 1)
    return findCurve(prime, 8, 4)

```

Generating a curve where $p = 1 \bmod 4$

A.2. $p = 3 \bmod 4$

For a prime congruent to 3 mod 4, both the curve and twist cofactors can be 4 and this is minimal. Thus we choose the curve with these cofactors and minimal, positive A such that $A > 2$ and $(A-2)$ is divisible by four. The find3Mod4 function in the following Sage script returns this value given p:

```

def find3Mod4(prime):
    assert((prime % 4) == 3)
    return findCurve(prime, 4, 4)

```

Generating a curve where $p = 3 \bmod 4$

A.3. Base points

The base point for a curve is the point with minimal, positive u value that is in the correct subgroup. The findBasepoint function in the following Sage script returns this value given p and A:


```
def findBasepoint(prime, A):  
    F = GF(prime)  
    E = EllipticCurve(F, [0, A, 0, 1, 0])  
  
    for uInt in range(1, 1e3):  
        u = F(uInt)  
        v2 = u^3 + A*u^2 + u  
        if not v2.is_square():  
            continue  
        v = v2.sqrt()  
  
        point = E(u, v)  
        order = point.order()  
        if order > 8 and order.is_prime():  
            return point
```

Generating the base point

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