

Rational Cubic Reciprocity

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Quadratic Reciprocity Law (Gauss). *If p and q are distinct odd primes, then*

$$\left(\frac{q}{p}\right) = (-1)^{\frac{p-1}{2}\frac{q-1}{2}} \left(\frac{p}{q}\right).$$

In other words,

$$\left(\frac{q}{p}\right) = \left(\frac{p^*}{q}\right),$$

where $p^ = \pm p$, with the sign chosen so that $p^* \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$.*

We also have the **supplementary laws**:

$$\left(\frac{-1}{p}\right) = (-1)^{(p-1)/2} \quad \text{and} \quad \left(\frac{2}{p}\right) = (-1)^{(p^2-1)/8}.$$

Consequence: Fix a prime q . Whether or not q is a square modulo a prime p depends only on the residue class of p modulo $4q$. Each outcome corresponds to $\frac{1}{2}\phi(4q)$ invertible residue classes modulo $4q$.

Question: Is there a similar reciprocity law allowing us to characterize for which p a given prime q is a perfect cube?

The Gauss–Eisenstein Cubic Reciprocity Law

Let ω be a complex primitive cube root of unity.

Theorem. *Suppose that π_1 and π_2 are primes in $\mathbf{Z}[\omega]$ with $\pi_1 \equiv \pi_2 \equiv 2 \pmod{3}$. Suppose also that $\mathbf{Nm}(\pi_1) \neq \mathbf{Nm}(\pi_2)$ and that neither $\mathbf{Nm}(\pi_1)$ nor $\mathbf{Nm}(\pi_2)$ is equal to 3. Then*

$$\left[\frac{\pi_1}{\pi_2} \right] = \left[\frac{\pi_2}{\pi_1} \right].$$

Here the cubic residue symbol $\left[\frac{\cdot}{\cdot} \right]$ is defined so that

$$\left[\frac{\alpha}{\pi} \right] \equiv \alpha^{\frac{\mathbf{Nm}(\pi)-1}{3}} \pmod{\pi},$$

and $\left[\frac{\alpha}{\pi} \right] \in \{1, \omega, \omega^2\}$.

It is ordinary rational arithmetic which attracts the ordinary man . . .

G.H. Hardy, *An Introduction to the Theory of Numbers*, Bulletin of the AMS 35, 1929

Cubic Reciprocity: Preliminaries.

Question: Fix a prime q . For which primes p is a q a cube modulo p ?

Observation: If $p \equiv 2 \pmod{3}$, then *every element* of $\mathbf{Z}/p\mathbf{Z}$ ($= \mathbf{F}_p$) is a cube, since

$$\mathbf{F}_p^\times \cong \mathbf{Z}/(p-1)\mathbf{Z},$$

and 3 is invertible modulo $p-1$.

In fact, for each integer a ,

$$(a^{(2p-1)/3})^3 \equiv a \pmod{p}.$$

So we consider primes $p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$.

Experimental Mathematics: $q = 2$

For which primes $p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$ is 2 a cube? MAPLE makes experimentation easy:

31, 43, 109, 127, 157, 223, 229, 277, 283, 307, 397, 433, 439,
457, 499, 601, 643, 691, 727, 733, 739, 811, 919, 997, 1021,
1051, 1069, 1093, 1327, 1399, 1423, 1459, 1471, 1579, 1597,
1627, 1657, 1699, 1723, 1753, 1777, 1789, 1801, 1831, 1933,
1999, 2017, 2089, 2113, 2143, 2179, 2203, 2251, 2281, 2287,
2341, 2347, 2383, 2671, 2689, 2731, 2749, 2767, 2791

List of the primes for which 2 is a cube among the first two-hundred primes congruent to 1 (mod 3)

p	$p \bmod 16$	$p \bmod 9$	$p \bmod 5$	$p \bmod 7$
31	15	4	1	3
43	11	7	3	1
109	13	1	4	4
127	15	1	2	1
157	13	4	2	3
223	15	7	3	6
229	5	4	4	5
277	5	7	2	4
283	11	4	3	3
307	3	1	2	6
397	13	1	2	5
433	1	1	3	6
439	7	7	4	5
457	9	7	2	2
499	3	4	4	2
601	9	7	1	6
643	3	4	3	6
691	3	7	1	5
727	7	7	2	6
733	13	4	3	5
739	3	1	4	4
811	11	1	1	6
919	7	1	4	2
997	5	7	2	3
1021	13	4	1	6
1051	11	7	1	1
1069	13	7	4	5
1093	5	4	3	1
1327	15	4	2	4
1399	7	4	4	6

Using the Chebotarev density theorem, one can prove:

Theorem. *Congruences on p give you no useful information.*

More precisely, let m be any positive integer. Let $a \pmod{m}$ be an invertible residue class containing an integer congruent to 1 $\pmod{3}$. Then there are infinitely many primes p with

$$p \equiv 1 \pmod{3} \text{ and } p \equiv a \pmod{m}$$

for which 2 is a cube, and infinitely many such p for which 2 is not a cube.

Congruences on p do not suffice . . . but we don't have to look only at p .

Theorem. *If $p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$, then there are integers L and M for which*

$$4p = L^2 + 27M^2.$$

Moreover, the integers L and M are uniquely determined up to sign.

Examples:

$$4 \cdot 31 = 124 = 4^2 + 27 \cdot 2^2,$$

$$4 \cdot 61 = 244 = 1^2 + 27 \cdot 3^2,$$

so we can choose $L = \pm 4$ and $M = \pm 2$ in the first case, and $L = \pm 1, M = \pm 3$ in the second.

We will normalize our choice by requiring that

L and M are positive.

$p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$	L	M	2 a cube?
7	1	1	no
13	5	1	no
19	7	1	no
31	4	2	YES
37	11	1	no
43	8	2	YES
61	1	3	no
67	5	3	no
73	7	3	no
79	17	1	no
97	19	1	no
103	13	3	no
109	2	4	YES
127	20	2	YES
139	23	1	no
151	19	3	no
157	14	4	YES
163	25	1	no
181	7	5	no
193	23	3	no
199	11	5	no
211	13	5	no
223	28	2	YES

Conjecture. *Let $p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$ be prime. Then 2 is a cube modulo p if and only if L or M is divisible by 2.*

An equivalent formulation: 2 is a cube modulo the prime $p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$ if and only if

$$p = L'^2 + 27M'^2$$

for some integers L' and M' .

$p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$	L	M	3 a cube?
7	1	1	no
13	5	1	no
19	7	1	no
31	4	2	no
37	11	1	no
43	8	2	no
61	1	3	YES
67	5	3	YES
73	7	3	YES
79	17	1	no
97	19	1	no
103	13	3	YES
109	2	4	no
127	20	2	no
139	23	1	no
151	19	3	YES
157	14	4	no
163	25	1	no
181	7	5	no
193	23	3	YES
199	11	5	no
211	13	5	no
223	28	2	no

$p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$	L	M	3 a cube?
10009	182	16	no
10039	148	26	no
10069	199	5	no
10093	175	19	no
10099	133	29	no
10111	59	37	no
10141	181	17	no
10159	188	14	no
10177	145	27	YES
10243	200	6	YES
10267	1	39	YES
10273	5	39	YES
10303	100	34	no
10321	109	33	YES
10333	142	28	no
10357	19	39	YES
10369	137	29	no
10399	23	39	YES
10429	82	26	no
10453	193	13	no
10459	173	21	YES
10477	29	39	YES
10501	71	37	no

$p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$	L	M	5 a cube?
7	1	1	no
13	5	1	YES
19	7	1	no
31	4	2	no
37	11	1	no
43	8	2	no
61	1	3	no
67	5	3	YES
73	7	3	no
79	17	1	no
97	19	1	no
103	13	3	no
109	2	4	no
127	20	2	YES
139	23	1	no
151	19	3	no
157	14	4	no
163	25	1	YES
181	7	5	YES
193	23	3	no
199	11	5	YES
211	13	5	YES
223	28	2	no

$p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$	L	M	7 a cube?
7	1	1	—
13	5	1	no
19	7	1	YES
31	4	2	no
37	11	1	no
43	8	2	no
61	1	3	no
67	5	3	no
73	7	3	YES
79	17	1	no
97	19	1	no
103	13	3	no
109	2	4	no
127	20	2	no
139	23	1	no
151	19	3	no
157	14	4	YES
163	25	1	no
181	7	5	YES
193	23	3	no
199	11	5	no
211	13	5	no
223	28	2	YES

$p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$	L	M	7 a cube?
10009	182	16	YES
10039	148	26	no
10069	199	5	no
10093	175	19	YES
10099	133	29	YES
10111	59	37	no
10141	181	17	no
10159	188	14	YES
10177	145	27	no
10243	200	6	no
10267	1	39	no
10273	5	39	no
10303	100	34	no
10321	109	33	no
10333	142	28	YES
10357	19	39	no
10369	137	29	no
10399	23	39	no
10429	82	26	no
10453	193	13	no
10459	173	21	YES
10477	29	39	no
10501	71	37	no

Conjectures: Let $p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$ and write $4p = L^2 + 27M^2$, where $L, M > 0$. Then

3 is a cube $\Leftrightarrow 3 \mid M$,

5 is a cube $\Leftrightarrow 5 \mid L$ or $5 \mid M$,

7 is a cube $\Leftrightarrow 7 \mid L$ or $7 \mid M$.

(???) Perhaps (???)

q is a cube $\Leftrightarrow q \mid L$ or $q \mid M$.

(This agrees with our conjectures even for $q = 2$ and $q = 3$, since $4p = L^2 + 27M^2$.)

$p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$	L	M	11 a cube?
100003	337	103	no
100057	175	117	no
100069	458	84	no
100129	562	56	no
100153	443	87	no
100183	383	97	no
100189	209	115	YES
100207	421	91	no
100213	575	51	no
100237	194	116	no
100267	224	114	no
100279	137	119	no
100291	491	77	YES
100297	250	112	YES
100333	515	71	YES
100357	631	11	YES
100363	355	101	YES
100393	593	43	no
100411	179	117	no
100417	139	119	no
100447	404	94	no
100459	263	111	no
100483	8	122	no

$p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$	L	M	11=cube?	$\frac{L}{3M} \pmod{11}$
100003	337	103	no	-4
100057	175	117	no	1
100069	458	84	no	4
100129	562	56	no	4
100153	443	87	no	-1
100183	383	97	no	4
100189	209	115	YES	0
100207	421	91	no	4
100213	575	51	no	-3
100237	194	116	no	1
100267	224	114	no	4
100279	137	119	no	1
100291	491	77	YES	∞
100297	250	112	YES	5
100333	515	71	YES	5
100357	631	11	YES	∞
100363	355	101	YES	-5
100393	593	43	no	4
100411	179	117	no	-3
100417	139	119	no	-3
100447	404	94	no	-2
100459	263	111	no	-4
100483	8	122	no	-1

Table of primes $p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$ together with L, M and the ratio $\frac{L}{3M} \pmod{11}$.

$p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$	L	M	11=cube?	$\frac{L}{3M} \pmod{11}$
100501	323	105	no	-1
100519	523	69	no	-3
100537	305	107	no	4
100549	83	121	YES	∞
100591	181	117	YES	-5
100609	622	24	no	1
100621	574	52	no	1
100669	626	20	no	2
100693	475	81	no	2
100699	143	119	YES	0
100741	509	73	no	-3
100747	605	73	YES	0
100801	254	112	no	2
100927	380	98	no	-2
100957	185	117	no	2
100981	457	85	no	3
100987	595	43	no	-4
100999	452	86	no	-2
101089	542	64	YES	5
101107	560	58	YES	-5
101113	442	88	YES	∞
101119	401	95	YES	-5
101149	539	65	YES	0

(continuation): table of primes $p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$ together with L, M and the ratio $\frac{L}{3M} \pmod{11}$.

Conjecture. Let $p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$, and write $4p = L^2 + 27M^2$ with L and M positive. Then 11 is a cube mod p if and only if

$$\frac{L}{3M} \pmod{11} = 0, -5, 5 \text{ or } \infty,$$

where we say $\frac{L}{3M} = \infty$ if $11 \mid M$.

This implies that if 11 divides L or 11 divides M , then 11 is a cube modulo p (since then $\frac{L}{3M} = 0$ or ∞), but this is no longer necessary.

$p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$	L	M	13=cube?	$\frac{L}{3M} \pmod{13}$
100003	337	103	YES	-4
100057	175	117	YES	∞
100069	458	84	no	-2
100129	562	56	no	-3
100153	443	87	no	1
100183	383	97	YES	-4
100189	209	115	no	2
100207	421	91	YES	∞
100213	575	51	no	-1
100237	194	116	YES	-4
100267	224	114	YES	4
100279	137	119	no	-1
100291	491	77	no	1
100297	250	112	no	5
100333	515	71	no	-1
100357	631	11	no	1
100363	355	101	no	1
100393	593	43	no	5
100411	179	117	YES	∞
100417	139	119	no	-5
100447	404	94	no	3
100459	263	111	no	2
100483	8	122	YES	4

Table of primes $p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$ together with L, M and the ratio $\frac{L}{3M} \pmod{13}$.

$p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$	L	M	13=cube?	$\frac{L}{3M} \pmod{13}$
100501	323	105	no	-5
100519	523	69	no	-3
100537	305	107	no	5
100549	83	121	no	-5
100591	181	117	YES	∞
100609	622	24	YES	-4
100621	574	52	YES	∞
100669	626	20	no	-3
100693	475	81	no	-5
100699	143	119	YES	0
100741	509	73	no	-1
100747	605	73	no	1
100801	254	112	no	3
100927	380	98	no	2
100957	185	117	YES	∞
100981	457	85	no	-3
100987	595	43	no	3
100999	452	86	no	-5
101089	542	64	no	-3
101107	560	58	no	-5
101113	442	88	YES	0
101119	401	95	no	2
101149	539	65	YES	∞

(continuation): table of primes $p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$ together with L, M and the ratio $\frac{L}{3M} \pmod{13}$.

Conjecture. Let $p \neq 13$ be a prime congruent to 1 (mod 3), and write $4p = L^2 + 27M^2$ with L and M positive. Then 13 is a cube mod p if and only if

$$\frac{L}{3M} \pmod{13} = 0, -4, 4 \text{ or } \infty,$$

where we say $\frac{L}{3M} = \infty$ if $13 \mid M$.

The Claims of Jacobi. Our conjectures can already be found in the work of Jacobi (1827).

Jacobi gives the following table:

q	classes of $\frac{L}{3M} \pmod{q}$	# of classes
5	$0, \infty$	2
7	$0, \infty$	2
11	$0, \pm 5, \infty$	4
13	$0, \pm 4, \infty$	4
17	$0, \pm 1, \pm 3, \infty$	6
19	$0, \pm 1, \pm 3, \infty$	6
23	$0, \pm 4, \pm 5, \pm 7, \infty$	8
29	$0, \pm 3, \pm 6, \pm 10, \pm 14, \infty$	10
31	$0, \pm 2, \pm 13, \pm 14, \pm 23, \infty$	10
37	$0, \pm 1, \pm 3, \pm 4, \pm 10, \pm 15, \infty$	12

Jacobi claimed proofs but never published them.

In our examples that there are $(q - 1)/3$ classes if $q \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$ and $(q + 1)/3$ classes otherwise. We can write this in a unified way as

$$\frac{1}{3} \left(q - \left(\frac{-3}{q} \right) \right),$$

since

$$\left(\frac{-3}{q} \right) = \begin{cases} +1 & \text{if } q \equiv 1 \pmod{3}, \\ -1 & \text{if } q \equiv -1 \pmod{3}, \end{cases}.$$

A Revised Conjecture. Let $q > 3$ be prime. Then there is a set S of $\frac{1}{3}(q - \left(\frac{-3}{q}\right))$ elements of $\mathbf{Z}/q\mathbf{Z} \cup \{\infty\}$, with the following property: if p is a prime distinct from q with $p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$ and $4p = L^2 + 27M^2$ (and $L, M > 0$), then

$$q \text{ is a cube mod } p \iff \frac{L}{3M} \pmod{q} \in S.$$

Also S is symmetric: $-S = S$.

Theorem (Jacobi). *This is true!*

But what is S ?

Theorem (Jacobi). *Let $q > 3$ be prime. If $p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$ is a prime distinct from q , write $4p = L^2 + 27M^2$. Then*

$$q \text{ is a cube mod } p \iff \frac{L + 3M\sqrt{-3}}{L - 3M\sqrt{-3}} \text{ is a cube in } \mathbf{F}_q(\sqrt{-3}).$$

Theorem (Lehmer). *Let $p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$ be prime and write $4p = L^2 + 27M^2$. Then q is a cube modulo p if and only if either $q \mid LM$ or $L \equiv \mu M \pmod{q}$ for some μ satisfying*

$$\mu^2 \equiv r \left(\frac{9}{2u+1} \right)^2 \pmod{q},$$

with $u \not\equiv 0, 1, -1/2, -1/3 \pmod{q}$,

$$r \equiv \frac{3u-1}{3u+3} \pmod{q}, \quad \text{and} \quad \left(\frac{r}{q} \right) = 1.$$

Digression: A Special Family of Groups.

Let $q > 3$ be prime. We will define a group structure on a certain subset of $\mathbf{Z}/q\mathbf{Z} \cup \{\infty\}$.

First we need a set. Take $\mathbf{Z}/q\mathbf{Z} \cup \{\infty\}$ and remove any square roots of -3 ; let $G(q)$ be the resulting set.

For example,

$$G(5) = \{0, 1, 2, 3, 4\} \cup \{\infty\},$$

$$G(7) = \{0, 1, 3, 4, 6\} \cup \{\infty\},$$

$$G(11) = \{0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10\} \cup \{\infty\}.$$

In general we have $\#G = q - \left(\frac{-3}{q}\right)$.

Next we need a binary operation. For x and y residue classes mod q contained in G , we define

$$x \star y = \frac{xy - 3}{x + y},$$

the computation taking place in $\mathbf{Z}/q\mathbf{Z}$. If the denominator but not the numerator vanishes, call the result ∞ . We also define

$$x \star \infty = \infty \star x = x, \text{ and } \infty \star \infty = \infty.$$

Upshot: \star makes G into a finite abelian group.

Arithmetic in G .

A concrete example: Take $q = 7$; then $G(7) = \{0, 1, 3, 4, 6\} \cup \{\infty\}$. We can compute

$$3 \star 6 = \frac{3 \cdot 6 - 3}{3 + 6} = \frac{15}{9} = \frac{8}{2} = 4,$$

since the computation takes place in $\mathbf{Z}/7\mathbf{Z}$.

A more abstract example: Let $q > 3$ be prime. Then $1 \in G(q)$. Also

$$1 \star 1 = \frac{1 \cdot 1 - 3}{1 + 1} = \frac{-2}{2} = -1.$$

Thus $1 \star 1 \star 1 = 1 \star -1 = \infty$. So 1 is an element of order 3.

Amusing consequence: $3 \mid q - \left(\frac{-3}{q}\right)$.

The Structure of G

Theorem. G is a cyclic group.

Proof (sketch). G embeds into $\mathbf{F}_q(\sqrt{-3})^\times$: map

$$a \mapsto \frac{a + \sqrt{-3}}{a - \sqrt{-3}}$$

and map ∞ to 1. □

Corollary. G has a unique subgroup of order $\frac{1}{3}\#G$, which consists precisely of the cubes under the operation \star .

The subgroup of cubes

Numerical examples

q	cubes in $G(q)$
5	$0, \infty$
7	$0, \infty$
11	$0, \pm 5, \infty$
13	$0, \pm 4, \infty$
17	$0, \pm 1, \pm 3, \infty$
19	$0, \pm 1, \pm 3, \infty$
23	$0, \pm 4, \pm 5, \pm 7, \infty$
29	$0, \pm 3, \pm 6, \pm 10, \pm 14, \infty$
31	$0, \pm 2, \pm 13, \pm 14, \pm 23, \infty$
37	$0, \pm 1, \pm 3, \pm 4, \pm 10, \pm 15, \infty$

We've seen this before.

Jacobi – Z.-H. Sun Cubic Reciprocity Law. *Let $q > 3$ be prime. If $p \neq q$ is a prime congruent to 1 (mod 3), where $4p = L^2 + 27M^2$, then*

q is a cube modulo $p \Leftrightarrow \frac{L}{3M}$ is a cube in G .

Proofs? Sketch:

Restatement of QR: q is a square mod $p \iff p^*$ is a square mod q .

Re-restatement of QR: Let p be an odd prime. Then the odd prime $q \neq p$ is a square mod p if and only if the polynomial

$$T^2 - p^*$$

has a root modulo q .

Some classical cyclotomy

Fix a prime number e .

Theorem (Gauss–Kummer). *For each prime $p \equiv 1 \pmod{e}$, one can write down a polynomial $F(T)$ of degree e with the following property: If q is a prime distinct from p , then q is an e th power modulo p if and only if $F(T)$ has a root modulo q .*

We can choose $F(T)$ as the minimal polynomial of the ‘Gaussian period’

$$\sum_{h \in H} \zeta_p^h,$$

where H is the subgroup of e th powers in \mathbf{F}_p^\times .

The case $e = 3$

Suppose $p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$. Write $4p = L^2 + 27M^2$, where the sign of L is chosen so that $L \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$.

Theorem (Gauss–Kummer). *Let $q > 3$ be a prime distinct from p . Then q is a cube modulo p if and only*

$$F(T) := T^3 - 3pT - pL$$

has a root modulo q .

We can write down the roots in $\overline{\mathbf{F}}_q$ and test whether they belong to \mathbf{F}_q .

Concluding thoughts

What if you want to know if 35 is a cube?

Not enough to know whether 5 and 7 are individually cubes.

Theorem (Sun). *Let $p, q > 3$ be distinct primes and suppose $p \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$. Write $4p = L^2 + 27M^2$ where $L \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$. Put*

$$\omega := \frac{-1 - L/3M}{2},$$

which is an element of order 3 in \mathbf{F}_p^\times . Recall that $1 \in G(q)$ has order 3. For each $i \in \{0, 1, 2\}$,

$$q^{(p-1)/3} \equiv \omega^i \pmod{p} \iff \left(\frac{L}{3M}\right)^{\#G/3} = 1^i \text{ in } G.$$

Rational quintic reciprocity?

Theorem (Dickson). *Let $p \equiv 1 \pmod{5}$. Then one can write*

$$16p = x^2 + 50u^2 + 50v^2 + 125w^2, \quad x \equiv 1 \pmod{5},$$
$$xw = v^2 - 4uv - u^2,$$

and this is near-unique.

For $q \leq 19$, Williams has computed congruence conditions on x, u, v, w which are necessary and sufficient for q to be a fifth power modulo p .

Open question: Is there a nice rational reciprocity law?