

# On the Exponential Diophantine Equation $x^2 + D = y^n$ : a brief survey

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## Abstract

*We give a survey on some important results on the exponential Diophantine equation  $x^2 + D = y^2$ .*

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**ACM/AMS Classification:** 11D41, 11D61.

## 1. Introduction

In this paper, we focus our attention to the equation

$$x^2 + D = y^n, \text{ in integers } x, y, n \geq 3 \quad (1)$$

where  $D$  is a positive integer. We present however, for some particular cases, solutions with  $x = 1$  (i.e.  $x < 3$ ).

V. A. Lebesgue [35] proved in 1850 that there are no non-trivial solutions for  $D = 1$ . Nagell [44] proved in 1923 that equation (1) has no solutions for  $D = 3$  and  $D = 5$ . Because Lebesgue and Nagell were the first mathematicians with concrete results concerning equation (1), this equation is called in [17] the Lebesgue-Nagell equation.

S.Ramanujan [53] asked in 1913 if the Diophantine equation  $x^2 + 7 = 2^n$  had any positive solutions  $(x, n)$  other than  $(1, 3)$ ,  $(3, 4)$ ,  $(5, 5)$ ,  $(11, 7)$  and  $(181, 15)$ . Nagell [45] ([48] in English) proved in 1948 that these are the only solutions. That's why equation  $x^2 + 7 = 2^n$  is often called the Ramanujan-Nagell equation. Cohen [28] made a survey of its history and related problems. Ribenboim collected Nagell's works in [49].

A comprehensive survey on equation (1) is given by Abu Muriefah and Bugeaud [1]. We complete that survey with recent results, especially when  $D$  is in some infinite set (see section 3 of the present survey).

## 2. The Diophantine equation $x^2 + D = y^n$ , where $D$ is fixed

As mentioned in section 1, equation (1) was solved by Lebesgue for  $D = 1$  and by Nagell for  $D = 3$  and  $D = 5$ . The case  $D = 3$  was also proved by Brown [16], and then by Cohn [26].

Ljunggren [38] solved (1) for  $D = 2$ , finding the only solution  $5^2 + 2 = 3^3$ . Cohn asserted in [25] that Euler found the same solution for  $D = 2$  in [31]. Nagell [46] also gave the solution for  $D = 2$ . Nagell [47] solved the case  $D = 4$ , obtaining the only solutions  $2^2 + 4 = 2^3$  and  $11^2 + 4 = 5^3$ . A more elementary proof for this case was given by Sury [58].

Cohn [25] completed the solutions for 77 values of  $D$ , where  $1 \leq D \leq 100$ , using elementary methods. He established that there are no solutions at all for  $D \in \{1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14, 21, 22, 24, 27, 29, 30, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 41, 42, 43, 46, 50, 51, 52, 57, 58, 59, 62, 66, 68, 69, 70, 73, 75, 78, 82, 84, 85, 88, 90, 91, 93, 94, 98\}$ . He also gave solutions for 31 values of  $D$  (see Table 1):

Mignotte and de Weger [43] solved equation (1) for  $D = 74$ , obtaining  $(x, y, n) = (13, 3, 5)$ ,  $(985, 99, 3)$  and proved that equation (1) has no solution for  $D = 86$ .

Bennett and Skinner [12] applied theory of Galois representations and modular forms to solve the case  $D = 55$ , obtaining  $(x, y, n) = (3, 2, 6)$ ,  $(3, 4, 3)$ ,  $(419, 56, 3)$  and the case  $D = 95$ , obtaining  $(x, y, n) = (11, 6, 3)$ ,  $(529, 6, 7)$ .

The remaining values for  $D$  were solved in 2004 by Bugeaud, Mignotte and Siksek [17] (see Table 2).

## 3. The Diophantine equation $x^2 + D = y^n$ , with $D$ in some infinite set

In recent years, equation (1) has been analyzed also in the more general case when  $D$  is not fixed but  $D \in S$  with  $D > 0$ . One major result, called the 'Theorem BHV', was obtained in [15] by Bilu, Hanrot and Voutier, who completely solved the problem of existence of primitive divisors in Lucas-Lehmer sequences. This theorem has many applications to Diophantine equations and it was applied in some papers mentioned below.

Cohn [24] proved that if  $D = 2^{2k+1}$ , then equation (1) has solutions (three families of solutions) only when  $n = 3$ .

Arif and Abu Muriefah [7] conjectured that if  $D = 2^k$ , the only solutions are then given by  $(x; y) = (2^k; 2^{2k+1})$  and  $(x; y) = (11^{2k-1}, 5 \cdot 2^{2(k-1)/3})$ , the latter solution existing only when  $(k; n) = (3M + 1; 3)$  for some integer  $M \geq 0$ . Arif and Abu Muriefah obtained partial results towards this conjecture in [7] and also did Cohn in [27]. Arif and Abu Muriefah finally proved the conjecture in [9]. Le [34] and Siksek [55] gave alternative proofs.

Abu Muriefah and Arif [3] conjectured that "there are no solutions for the Diophantine equation  $x^2 + 3^{2k} = y^n$ , where  $n \geq 3$  unless  $k = 3K + 2$  and  $n = 3$  and then there is a unique solution  $x = 46 \cdot 3^{3K}$  and  $y = 13 \cdot 32^{3K}$ ". Luca proved this conjecture in [39].

It was proved by Arif and Abu Muriefah in [8] that equation (1) has

exactly one (infinite) family of solutions if  $D = 3^{2k+1}$ . Luca [39] solved the case  $D = 3^{2k}$  if  $\gcd(x, y) = 1$ . Liqun [36] solved the equation  $x^2 + 3^m = y^n$  for both odd and even  $m$ .

The case  $D = 2^a 3^b$  ( $a$  and  $b$  being arbitrary non-negative integers) and  $\gcd(x, y) = 1$ , was completely solved by Luca [40].

The case  $D = 5^{2k}$  has been considered by Arif and Abu Muriefah in [6], who established that equation (1) may have a solution only if 5 divides  $x$  and  $p$  does not divide  $k$  for any odd prime  $p$  dividing  $n$ . The same authors proved in [4] that if  $D = 5^{2k+1}$ , then equation (1) has no solutions for all  $k \geq 0$ . Several results has been also obtained by Abu Muriefah and Arif in [2] for  $D = q^{2k}$ , where  $q$  is an odd prime. The same equation is independently solved by Liqun in [37].

Sardha and Srinivasan [54] discussed equation (1) for  $D = p_1^{\alpha_1} \dots p_r^{\alpha_r} = D_s D_t^2$ , where  $p_1, \dots, p_r$  are primes,  $\alpha_1, \dots, \alpha_r$  are positive integers and  $D_s$  is the square free part of  $D$ . They gave many examples for  $D$  with  $D_s \leq 10000$ .

Bérczes and Pink [14] investigated equation  $x^2 + d^{2l+1} = y^n$  in unknown integers  $(x, y, l, n)$  with  $x \geq 1$ ,  $y \geq 1$ ,  $n \geq 3$ ,  $l \geq 0$  and  $\gcd(x, y) = 1$ . They extended the result of Saradha and Srinivasan [54] to the case  $h(-d) \in \{2, 3\}$ , where  $d > 0$  is a squarefree integer and  $h = h(-d)$  is the class number of the imaginary quadratic field  $\mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{-d})$ .

Pink [51] studied the case  $D = 2^a 3^b 5^c 7^d$  with  $\gcd(x, y) = 1$ , where  $a, b, c, d$  are non-negative integers.

Luca and Togbé discussed equation (1) for  $D = 7^{2k}$  [41] and for  $D = 2^a 5^b$  [42].

The case  $D = 2^a 5^b 13^c$  was studied by Goins, Luca, and Togbé [32]. The case  $D = 5^a 13^b$  was treated in [5] by Abu Muriefah, Luca and Togbé.

Arif and Abu Muriefah [10] determined all the solutions of equation  $x^2 + q^{2k+1} = y^n$ , with  $q \geq 5$  an odd prime,  $q \not\equiv 7 \pmod{8}$  and  $\gcd(n, 3h_0) = 1$  and  $n \geq 3$ ,  $h_0$  denoting the class number of the field  $\mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{-q})$ .

Le [33] gave all the solutions of equation (1) in the particular case when  $\gcd(x, y) = 1$ ,  $D = p^2$ ,  $p$  prime with  $3 \leq p < 100$ . Tengely [59] completely solved (1) for  $D = a^2$  with  $3 \leq a \leq 501$  and  $a$  odd, under the assumption  $(x, y) \in \mathbb{N}^2$ ,  $\gcd(x, y) = 1$ .

The equation  $A^4 + B^2 = C^n$  for  $AB \neq 0$  and  $n \geq 4$  was completely solved by Bennett, Ellenberg, and Nathan [11]. Ellenberg also treated this equation in [30].

Bérczes and Pink [13] completely solved the equation  $x^2 + p^{2k} = y^n$ , where  $2 \leq p < 100$  is a rational prime and integer unknowns  $x, y, n, k$  satisfy  $x \geq 1, y > 1, n \geq 3$  prime,  $k \geq 0$  and  $\gcd(x, y) = 1$ . They also established, as a corollary, that there are no solutions to the equation  $x^2 + p^{2k} = y^p$  in integer unknowns  $(x, y, p, k)$  with  $x \geq 1, y > 1, p \geq 5$  prime,  $k \geq 0$  and  $\gcd(x, y) = 1$ .

Canberci and Senay [22] established that if  $y \equiv 5 \pmod{8}$  is a prime power, then the conjecture "if  $a^2 + B^2 = y^4$  with  $\gcd(a, B, y) = 1$  and  $a$  even, and  $(a, B, y^2)$  is a Pythagorean triples then the Diophantine equation  $x^2 + B^m = y^n$  has the only positive integral solution  $(x, m, n) = (a, 2, 4)$ " holds (and also Terai conjecture, presented in [60], holds).

Cenberci and Senay [23] discussed the equation  $x^2 + q^m = p^n$ , in relation with Terai conjecture, with  $p$  and  $q$  odd primes, which satisfy  $q^2 + 1 = 2p^2$  and other conditions. They also gave all solutions for five examples with  $b$  and  $c$  primes, such that  $b^2 + 1 = 2c^2$ ,  $b < 20.000$  and  $c < 157.000$ .

Zhu and Le [63] gave all solutions of some generalized Lebesgue- Nagell equations  $x^2 + q^m = y^n$ , where the class number of the imaginary quadratic field  $\mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{-q})$  is one.

Zhu discussed in [62] equation  $x^2 + q^m = y^3$ .

Demirpolat, Cenberci and Senay [29] established that the Diophantine equation  $x^2 + 11^{2k+1} = y^n$  has exactly only one family of solution, when  $n$  is an odd integer,  $n \geq 3$ ,  $k \geq 0$ , and  $h = 1$  is the class number of the field  $\mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{-11})$ .

Cangül, Soydan and Simsek [20] found all solutions of Diophantine equation  $x^2 + 11^{2k} = y^n$ ,  $x \geq 1$ ,  $y \geq 1$ ,  $k \in \mathbb{N}$ ,  $n \geq 3$  and gave p-adic interpretation of that equation.

Cangül, Demirci, Luca, Pinter and Soydan treated in [18] equation (1) for  $D = 2^a 11^b$  and gave the complete solution  $(n, x, y)$  with  $n \geq 3$  and  $\gcd(x, y) = 1$ . Cangül, Demirci, Inam, Luca and Soydan [21] discussed equation (1) for  $D = 2^a 3^b 11^c$  and gave the complete solution  $(n, x, y)$  with  $n \geq 3$  and  $\gcd(x, y) = 1$ .

The complete solution  $(n, a, b, x, y)$  of the equation  $x^2 + 5^a 11^b = y^n$  when  $\gcd(x, y) = 1$ , except for the case when  $xab$  is odd, has been obtained by Cangül, Demirci, Soydan and Tzanakis in [19].

Pink and Rabái [52] gave all the solutions to equation  $x^2 + 5^k 17^l = y^n$  in unknown integers  $(x; y; k; l; n)$  with  $x \geq 1$ ,  $y > 1$ ,  $n \geq 3$ ,  $k \geq 0$ ,  $l \geq 0$  and  $\gcd(x; y) = 1$ .

Soydan, Ulas and Zhu [56] completely solved the equation  $x^2 + 2^a 19^b = y^n$ , where  $x \geq 1$ ,  $y > 1$ ,  $n \geq 3$ ,  $a, b \geq 0$ ,  $l \geq 0$  and  $\gcd(x; y) = 1$ .

Soydan [57] gave all the solutions to equation  $x^2 + 7^a 11^b = y^n$  for the non-negative integers  $\alpha; \beta; x; y; n \geq 3$ , where  $x$  and  $y$  co-prime, except when  $\alpha$ ,  $x$  is odd and  $\beta$  is even.

Peker and Cenberci [50] completely solved equation  $x^2 + 19^m = y^n$ , by treating the equation for  $m$  even and odd separately.

Xiaowei [61] gave a complete classification of all positive integer solutions  $(x, y, m, n)$  of the equation  $x^2 + p^{2m} = y^n$ ,  $\gcd(x, y) = 1$ ,  $n > 2$ , where  $p$  is an odd prime and solved the equation for certain interesting cases.

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Table 1: Cohn's solutions

$D = 2$	$(x, y, n) = (5, 3, 3)$
$D = 4$	$(x, y, n) = (2, 2, 3), (11, 5, 3)$
$D = 11$	$(x, y, n) = (4, 3, 3), (58, 15, 3)$
$D = 12$	$(x, y, n) = (2, 2, 4)$
$D = 13$	$(x, y, n) = (70, 17, 3)$
$D = 16$	$(x, y, n) = (4, 2, 5)$
$D = 17$	$(x, y, n) = (8, 3, 4)$
$D = 19$	$(x, y, n) = (18, 7, 3), (22434, 55, 5)$
$D = 20$	$(x, y, n) = (14, 6, 3)$
$D = 26$	$(x, y, n) = (1, 3, 3), (207, 35, 3)$
$D = 32$	$(x, y, n) = (7, 3, 4), (88, 6, 5)$
$D = 35$	$(x, y, n) = (36, 11, 3)$
$D = 40$	$(x, y, n) = (52, 14, 3)$
$D = 44$	$(x, y, n) = (9, 5, 3)$
$D = 48$	$(x, y, n) = (4, 4, 3), (4, 2, 6), (148, 28, 3)$
$D = 49$	$(x, y, n) = (24, 5, 4), (524, 65, 3)$
$D = 53$	$(x, y, n) = (26, 9, 3), (26, 3, 6), (156, 29, 3)$
$D = 54$	$(x, y, n) = (17, 7, 3)$
$D = 56$	$(x, y, n) = (5, 3, 4), (76, 18, 3)$
$D = 61$	$(x, y, n) = (8, 5, 3)$
$D = 64$	$(x, y, n) = (8, 2, 7)$
$D = 65$	$(x, y, n) = (4, 3, 4)$
$D = 67$	$(x, y, n) = (110, 23, 3)$
$D = 76$	$(x, y, n) = (7, 5, 3), (1015, 101, 3)$
$D = 77$	$(x, y, n) = (2, 3, 4)$
$D = 80$	$(x, y, n) = (1, 3, 4)$
$D = 81$	$(x, y, n) = (46, 13, 3)$
$D = 83$	$(x, y, n) = (140, 27, 3), (140, 3, 9)$
$D = 89$	$(x, y, n) = (6, 5, 3)$
$D = 96$	$(x, y, n) = (23, 5, 4)$
$D = 97$	$(x, y, n) = (48, 7, 4)$

Table 2: Bugeaud, Mignotte and Siksek's solutions

$D = 7$	$(x, y, n) = (1, 2, 3), (181, 32, 3), (3, 2, 4), (5, 2, 5), (181, 8, 5)$
$D = 15$	$(x, y, n) = (7, 4, 3), (1, 2, 4), (7, 2, 6)$
$D = 18$	$(x, y, n) = (3, 3, 3), (15, 3, 5)$
$D = 23$	$(x, y, n) = (2, 3, 3), (3, 2, 5), (45, 2, 11)$
$D = 25$	$(x, y, n) = (10, 5, 3)$
$D = 28$	$(x, y, n) = (6, 4, 3), (22, 8, 3), (225, 37, 3), (2, 2, 5), (6, 2, 6), (10, 2, 7), (22, 2, 9), (362, 2, 17)$
$D = 31$	$(x, y, n) = (15, 4, 4), (1, 2, 5), (15, 2, 8)$
$D = 39$	$(x, y, n) = (5, 4, 3), (31, 10, 3), (103, 22, 3), (5, 2, 6)$
$D = 45$	$(x, y, n) = (96, 21, 3), (6, 3, 4)$
$D = 47$	$(x, y, n) = (13, 6, 3), (41, 12, 3), (500, 63, 3), (14, 3, 5), (9, 2, 7)$
$D = 60$	$(x, y, n) = (2, 4, 3), (1586, 136, 3), (14, 4, 4), (50354, 76, 5), (2, 2, 6), (14, 2, 8)$
$D = 63$	$(x, y, n) = (1, 4, 3), (13537, 568, 3), (31, 4, 5), (1, 2, 6), (31, 2, 10)$
$D = 71$	$(x, y, n) = (21, 8, 3), (35, 6, 4), (46, 3, 7), (21, 2, 9)$
$D = 72$	$(x, y, n) = (12, 6, 3), (3, 3, 4)$
$D = 79$	$(x, y, n) = (89, 20, 3), (7, 2, 7)$
$D = 87$	$(x, y, n) = (16, 7, 3), (13, 4, 4), (13, 2, 8)$
$D = 92$	$(x, y, n) = (6, 2, 7), (90, 2, 13)$
$D = 99$	$(x, y, n) = (12, 3, 5)$
$D = 100$	$(x, y, n) = (5, 5, 3), (30, 10, 3), (198, 34, 3), (55, 5, 5)$