



GIA®

PEARL



Perfect shining spheres. Lustrous baroque forms.
Seductive strands, warm to the touch.
Pearls are simply and purely organic. The value of a natural or cultured pearl is directly tied to its quality, which is determined by assessing seven key factors in a system that GIA developed.

THE GIA 7 PEARL VALUE FACTORS™ AND WHAT TO LOOK FOR

PEARL - SIZE

In general, the larger the pearl, the more valuable it is. Different varieties come in different sizes: South Sea cultured pearls are the largest and average 13 mm in diameter.



PEARL - SHAPE

Pearls come in seven basic shapes: round, near-round, oval, button, drop, semi-baroque, and baroque. Perfectly spherical pearls and symmetrical drops are the most valued. There are exceptions, though. Well-formed oval or baroque cultured pearls are also prized by pearl lovers. Some pearls have grooves or ridges around their circumference. These pearls are described as circled and they can occur in any shape.



PEARL - COLOR

Pearl body colors vary by variety. Although white and black are traditional, unusual colors like purple or orange are becoming more popular. Overtones in a pearl's luster and the rainbow iridescence known as orient also add to the color of a pearl.

PEARL - LUSTER

Of the seven pearl value factors, luster might be the most important. Luster is what gives a natural or cultured pearl its unique beauty. Pearls with high luster have sharp bright reflections on the surface. Different pearl varieties have different standards for luster.



PEARL - SURFACE

If surface characteristics, such as abrasions or scratches, are numerous or severe, they can affect the durability of the pearl and severely depress its value. Surface characteristics have less effect on the pearl's beauty and value if they are few in number, or if they are minor enough to be hidden by a drill-hole or mounting.



PEARL - NACRE THICKNESS

Luster and nacre quality are closely related. If the nucleus is visible under the nacre, or if the pearl has a dull, chalky appearance, you can assume that the nacre is thin. This affects the luster as well as the durability of the pearl. Nacre thickness is evaluated to make sure that cultured pearls are durable as well as beautiful.

PEARL - MATCHING

Jewelry designers sometimes deliberately mix colors, shapes, and sizes for unique effects, but for most pearl strands, earrings, or other multiple-pearl jewelry, the pearls should match in all the quality factors.

TIPS AND ADVICE

CONSIDER MIXING PEARL COLORS AND TYPES.

Although single-color strands are still the most common, mixing pearl colors and types is a fresh way to wear pearls. Multicolor strands often contain rare colors because it is too difficult to find enough of them to create a whole strand.

ADD VERSATILITY WITH AN ADJUSTABLE CLASP OR PEARL ENHANCER.

Traditional strands range from 14-16-inch chokers to 17-18-inch princess to longer matinee, opera, and rope lengths. New clasps allow you to create different lengths. For example, a long strand might be worn single, double, or as a shorter necklace. A pearl enhancer is a removable pendant that slips over the strand of pearls.

HAVE YOUR PEARLS RESTRUNG BEFORE THEY BREAK.

Although pearls last generations, the string they are knotted on may not. Be sure to have your pearls checked regularly and have them professionally restrung if there are signs of wear.

PEARLS CAN BE DAMAGED BY MANY CHEMICALS AND ALL ACIDS, SO SHOULD BE TREATED WITH CARE.

It's best to wipe pearls with a very soft cloth after each wearing. Never use an ultrasonic or steam cleaner and never store pearls in a plastic bag or cotton wool. Always apply perfume, hair products and cosmetics *before* putting on your pearl jewelry. When dressing, pearls should be the last thing you put on and the first thing you take off.

EXPECT YOUR PEARL TO BE TREATED IN SOME WAY.

Pearls are routinely treated to improve color, shape, surface appearance, weight and durability. Processes may include bleaching, heating, dyeing, irradiation, coating, or filling.

CONSIDER A GIA PEARL CLASSIFICATION REPORT FOR AN OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF PEARL QUALITY.

A GIA report identifies the pearl type, mollusk, and any detectable treatments, in addition to providing a rigorous quality assessment based on the GIA 7 Pearl Value Factors.

FAQ

Q: WHY ARE FRESHWATER PEARLS SO MUCH LESS EXPENSIVE THAN AKOYA OR SOUTH SEA CULTURED PEARLS?

A: Freshwater cultured pearls are one of the jewelry world's biggest bargains. Production is so large that lovely lustrous examples are affordable, particularly in off-round shapes. One reason that they are plentiful is that each mollusk can produce dozens of pearls, unlike some other types, which only grow one pearl per shell.

Q: WHY DO PEARL STRANDS HAVE KNOTS IN BETWEEN EACH PEARL?

A: Experts recommend knots in between each pearl to prevent them from rubbing against each other. Knots also help keep you from losing all your pearls if the string breaks.

Q: I HAVE A STRAND OF PEARLS THAT SHOWS TOO MUCH STRING: CAN IT BE FIXED?

A: Over the years, the string stretches and weakens. Your pearls can easily be restrung, just ask your local jeweler for advice.

Q: SHOULD A STRAND OF TAHITIAN PEARLS BE BLACK TO BE VALUABLE?

A: Although Tahitian cultured pearls are thought of as black, most are actually gray. Some are green-gray, blue-gray, or even grayish purple known as "aubergine." Yellowish green to greenish yellow Tahitian pearls are sometimes called "pistachio" in the trade. These unusual colors are popular, either alone or in mixed strands. What makes these pearls exceptional is their iridescent overtone that can be blue to green, yellowish green, or pink to purple. Dark green-gray to blue-gray Tahitian pearls with pink to purple overtones are highly prized and known by the trade term "peacock."

Q: WHAT ARE "CHOCOLATE PEARLS"?

A: Chocolate pearls are Tahitian cultured pearls bleached to a uniform brown color. Because this requires relatively expensive Tahitian pearls as a starting point, many companies now market dyed brown pearls. Rich natural-brown Tahitian pearls are available but are exceptionally rare.

Q: WHAT'S A MAJORCA "PEARL"?

A: Majorca Pearl is a brand name of imitation pearls that were originally manufactured in Majorca, Spain. They are glass beads covered in an iridescent material made from fish scales.

GIA exists to connect people to the understanding of gems.
As a long-standing scientific authority, GIA is not only a unique source for gem knowledge,
its grading reports inspire confidence wherever they appear.

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