

A reputable jeweler is your best source for cultured pearls. An AJA Jeweler can explain how to balance a number of qualities and size variables to get the best selection available within a certain price range. You will be able to evaluate pearls on the basis of the following criteria:

Lustre

The combination of surface brilliance and a deep-seated glow, the luster of a good-quality pearl should be bright, not dull. Your reflection should be seen clearly on the surface of a pearl. Any pearl that looks too chalky or dull indicates low quality.

Surface

Cleanliness of the pearl surface refers to the absence of disfiguring spots, bumps or cracks. A pearl with a clean surface will have a higher value than a spotted, bumpy or cracked one.

Shape

Since cultured pearls are grown by oysters and subject to the whims of Mother Nature, it is very rare to find a perfectly round pearl. While rounder pearls are more valuable, asymmetrical, or baroque, pearls have a unique charm and are available at a more moderate cost.

Color

Rose Silver/White Cream Gold Blue/Gray Cultured pearls occur in colors from rose to black. While color is a matter of preference, rose or silver/white pearls tend to look best on fair skin tones, while cream and gold-tone pearls are flattering to darker complexions.

Size

Measured by their diameter in millimeters, the average cultured pearls sold today are between 7 and 7 1/2 millimeters. Generally, the larger the pearl, the more valuable it will be.

More delicate than other gemstones and precious metals, cultured pearls need special care to ensure they will remain clean, bright and lustrous for generations to come. Cosmetics, perfume and hair spray all contain elements that may dull the lustre of a pearl. Even acids present in the body oils and perspiration may have a damaging effect.