
The Four Factors to Look for in a Pearl Bracelet

Contributed by Webmaster

By Michelle Yamamoto

Similar to the four Cs for judging the quality of a diamond, gemologists, jewelers, and connoisseurs have four traits they look for in a pearl, as well. The letters may not be as easy to remember as four Cs, but to figure out the value of a pearl bracelet, you will need to think about four factors.

Luster

According to Professional Jeweler Magazine, luster is the combination of a high, reflective sheen on the surface of a pearl combined with an almost three-dimensional glow that seems to emanate from within the heart of a pearl. Although this may sound a bit abstract, the concept is really rather simple. If you were to ask a jeweler to let you examine a very expensive pearl bracelet beside a less expensive one, the contrast would be obvious.

There is a chemistry involved with the different lusters. A pearl is made of layers of nacre, which is the substance an oyster secretes to form both pearls and mother-of-pearl. Nacre is, itself, made of layers of regularly arranged crystals. A healthy oyster makes nicely arranged crystals. The more layers of nacre on a pearl, the nicer it will look.

Good luster is indicative of thick nacre. A pearl bracelet is subjected to more abuse than a necklace or earring, so with this jewelry luster is very important. Some less expensive pearls have thin nacre that can scratch off easily.

Shape

Rarest of all pearls are the perfectly spherical ones. Jewelers are well versed in how to use all pearl shapes in creating lovely jewelry. A pearl that is somewhat flat on one side will go nicely mounted in a broach. And several strings of irregular pearls make a fine, modern-style pearl bracelet.

Color

Pearls are available in pink, blue, green, or lavender, as well as the more popular white, off-white, and black. These more obscure colors actually occur naturally in some species of freshwater oyster. However, some pearls are dyed and tinted. Ask the jeweler how his pearls got their color. Natural color demands a higher price.

Size

Naturally, a bigger pearl always commands a higher price than its cousin of the same quality. Gemologists classify pearls with a diameter over 8mm as very large.

Michelle Yamamoto has been writing articles for the family business on black pearls for 12 years. More information and articles can be found at the Pearl Center.