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# What Smart Consumers Look For In A Pearl

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Freshwater pearls are a certain type of the pearl family that is characterized by their wide array of colors, shapes, and excellent price ranges. A smart pearl shopper should know what to look for in each of these aspects, if they are to get the best deal for the best value.

## A Primer on Freshwater Pearls

Freshwater pearls typically come in four different colors: lavender, white, peach, and black. Freshwater pearls can be literally any color of the rainbow- sometimes even mixing several colors to get the rainbow effect itself. Black freshwater pearls, however, are always dyed to get the dark color. The effect looks much like a black tone with a slight rainbow overtone- much like gasoline would create.

Sizes of these pearls typically remain anywhere from 6 millimeters to 10 millimeters in diameter. Pearls over the 10 millimeter mark (or around it) are very rare to find in perfect condition. These types of pearls are almost always as a result of natural cultivation, as opposed to pearl farms that create pearls in a much speedier environment.

There are four names associated with different pearl grades: A, AA, AAA, and Presidential. Presidential pearls appear perfectly round and are over 95% blemish free. AAA pearls appear round, but remain 80%-90% blemish free. AA pearls have a medium luster, and are no more than 60% blemished. Lastly, the A graded pearl is noticeably misshapen, contain no luster, and can be anywhere from 70% to 90% blemish free.

## Freshwater Pearls and the Culture Process

There are two main terms to describe the culturing process of a freshwater pearl: tissue nucleated and bead nucleated.

Tissue nucleated pearls are more natural, and are composed completely of nacre (a key factor in grading a pearl). Bead nucleated pearls have a rounder shape, making them more usable for jewelry. The trade off here is quality over shape. To make things worse, only around 2% of all freshwater pearls are round (or near round). Luckily, each freshwater mussel can produce around 40 pearls if need be.

Knowing which type of cultivation method was used can help appraise a pearl, or even help a consumer pick out the best pearl that suits his or her tastes. It won't help in every case, but it gives more information on what to look for. (If you are told that a pearl is bead nucleated, you should make sure it has good luster- since the trade off for bead nucleated freshwater pearls is quality over shape.)

## Tips for Consumers

If you're buying a freshwater pearl (or jewelry with freshwater pearls) in the near future, you should only buy from trusted sources. Unless you yourself are a pearl expert, you may get burned from shady dealers who claim that pearls are worth more than they really are (in some cases, just a little extra luster can make pearls worth much more in value; and vice

versa!)

Consumers should also pay close attention to size. Since freshwater pearls are rarely quite large, even small differences in size can end up equating to a lot of money. Where possible, try to find a third party to appraise the pearl if there are any doubts to its worth or authenticity.

Since there are many types of pearls (and fakes!), getting burned is quite easy. Keep a keen eye over what you're buying and keep the above information in mind to get the best deal possible next time you visit a jewelry store.

Beautiful Freshwater pearls and Pearl earrings for sale.