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How to Buy Pearls

By Yan Berry

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by: **Yan Berry**

Pearls are an enduring classic of romantic beauty and sophistication suitable for almost any occasions or celebrations. Pearls may be worn with formal eveningwear, with a business suit, or casually with a sweater and jeans. The official June birthstone provides an ideal choice for brides, young women looking for a touch of elegance, or a cherished gift for birthday, Christmas, graduation, sweet-sixteen, anniversary, or just to say I love you.

Once rare and expensive, modern cultured pearls have become an affordable luxury. To choose consider six factors contribute to the value of a pearl: luster, nacre thickness, shape, surface texture, size, and color.

Luster– the Essence of Pearl Beauty

Pearls gain their unique beauty from the play of light reflecting through layers of fine crystalline nacre gradually deposited by an oyster. Nearly transparent nacre gives the deepest luster and the highest reflection. A high-quality pearl will have a brilliant even reflection with a fine warm glow or radiance. Lower quality pearls have a dull sheen.

High-quality Akoya saltwater pearls have a higher luster than South Sea or Tahitian pearls, which tend to have a softer, more diffuse reflection.

Color and Overtones

The dominant color of a pearl comes from the main reflection from the pearl surface. The deeper reflected light draws the inner color from the pearl, called the overtone.

Light colored pearls are available in shades of white, cream, and golden. White with pink or silver overtones are generally the most valuable. The most desirable dark colored pearls are black with

How to Buy Pearls

green or blue overtones. Color matching is also important when buying pearl jewelry. Perfectly matched pearls in color and size are more valuable than poorly matched pearls.

Shape and Surface Texture

The highest quality pearls are perfectly round with smooth surface, very few surface imperfections, and even coloration. Lower quality pearls may be nearly round, or show more surface imperfections, such as wrinkles or large pits on the surface.

Pearl Size and Necklace Length

The pearls in a strand are measured in a range, such as 7–7.5mm. They are strung with the largest pearls at the center of the necklace and gradually smaller towards the clasp. Larger pearls are more valuable and they create a more dramatic look. High-quality pearls larger than 9 mm are scarce and

very expensive.

The classic and most common pearl necklace length is the 17–19 inch princess. It is a good choice for a first pearl necklace because it can be worn with many things.

Decide Pearl Types

There are four types of pearls: Classic Akoya Pearls Large Exotic Black Tahitian Pearls Large Golden or White South Sea Pearls Inexpensive Decorative Freshwater Pearls

The above four types of pearls are all cultured pearls. Akoya, Tahitian and South Sea pearls grow in ocean saltwater so they are also called saltwater pearls.

Akoya pearls are the most popular type for their appealing high luster, luxury and affordability.

Decide Pearl Quality

Pearls usually have four grades: A, AA, AAA, and AAA+ quality. AAA and AAA+ quality are the highest quality.

AAA and AAA+ quality pearls are the most desired pearls for gifts. They have high luster and very clean surface skins.

AA quality pearls have medium luster and slight to medium surface imperfection. They are ideal gifts for someone who will be happy to own a piece of fine pearl jewelry.

A quality pearls have low luster and medium to heavy blemishes. They are not popular for gifts due to their low quality.

Decide where to buy pearls

How to Buy Pearls

You can buy pearls from retail stores, online shops or online auctions. When shop for pearls, it is recommended to buy pearls from these places: stores that grade pearls carefully; stores that provide certificate and offer money back guarantees.

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Yan Berry

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How to care for pearls

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Pearls are delicate and soft gems compared with other gemstones. They need extra gentle care. Here is a guide to pearl care.

- Clean – wipe pearls regularly and gently with a soft cloth moistened with water. Pearls can absorb perfume, skin oils and dirt easily. Do not clean pearls with detergents and don't soak pearls in water.
- Protect – avoid temperature extremes and chemicals such as vinegar, alcohol and hair spray. They can damage pearl surfaces.
- Wear - put on pearls after you have applied makeup and hair spray.
- Store – pearls can be scratched easily. They should be stored in a soft place such as a velvet box or a satin pouch. Avoid putting pearls next to diamond or gemstones jewelry.
- Restring – for a frequently worn pearl necklace, it is recommended to restring the necklace once every one or two years since silk thread may get weakened over time.

Mrs. Berry is a pearl expert. She is also the founder of Premium Pearl, a leading online provider of high quality pearl jewelry.

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