THE PERFECT PEARLS

Pearl buying checklist

Take it to the store. Based on GIA's 7 Pearl Value Factors and the FTC's advice for jewelry shoppers.

Ask the seller

- ◇ Is it imitation, cultured or natural? (FTC)
- ◇ Which type: freshwater, akoya, Tahitian, South Sea?
- ◇ Is the color natural? Any treatment?
- ◇ Can I have the details in writing?
- ◇ What is the return policy?

Check the pearls

- ◇ Size in mm, and is it typical for the type?
- ◇ Shape: round, near-round, drop, baroque…
- ◇ Luster: sharp, bright reflections?
- ◇ Surface: clean or spotted?
- ◇ Nacre: no bead showing, no chips at the hole
- ◇ Matching: do the pearls look alike?
- ◇ Color: bodycolor and overtone in daylight

Before you pay

- ◇ Roll the strand: round pearls roll smoothly
- ◇ Look at the drill holes with a loupe
- ◇ Compare with another seller
- ◇ For a "natural" price, ask for a lab report

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Sources: GIA 7 Pearl Value Factors; FTC, Pearls of wisdom for jewelry shoppers. Checked October 2026.
Check details before you rely on them. Made to print at home.