THE PERFECT PEARLS

Types of pearls chart

The main cultured pearls side by side: where they grow, the mollusk, typical size and natural colors.

Pearl	*Water*	*Mollusk*	*Typical size*	*Natural colors*
Freshwater pearls	Freshwater	Hyriopsis mussels	6 to 12 mm (Edison pearls 11 to 16 mm or more)	white, pink, purple, lavender, peach, yellow
Akoya pearls	Saltwater	Pinctada fucata	6 to 9 mm	white, cream, silvery blue
Tahitian pearls	Saltwater	Pinctada margaritifera	8 to 14 mm	charcoal, gray, silver, green, brown
South Sea pearls	Saltwater	Pinctada maxima	8 to 18 mm	white, silver
Golden South Sea pearls	Saltwater	Pinctada maxima	8 to 18 mm	champagne, golden
Keshi pearls	Saltwater (and freshwater)	Akoya, Pinctada maxima and Pinctada margaritifera oysters; GIA also accepts freshwater mussels	Small	white, silver, golden, charcoal
Edison pearls	Freshwater	Hyriopsis mussels	About 11 to 16 mm or more	white, pink, purple, peach
Kasumiga pearls	Freshwater	Hybrid of Hyriopsis schlegelii and Hyriopsis cumingii	Typically 11 to 15 mm	white, pink, purple, yellow, orange, brown
Sea of Cortez pearls	Saltwater	Pteria sterna	About 7 to 11 mm (2001 to 2002 harvests)	gray, brown
Mabe pearls	Saltwater	Mostly Pteria penguin, grown in Japan	Varies (half-round)	white, silver, silvery blue

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Sources: GIA (Gemological Institute of America) pearl descriptions. Checked October 2026.

Natural non-nacreous pearls (conch, melo, quahog) are on theperfectpearls.com.