THE PERFECT PEARLS

Are my pearls real? Checklist

Seven home checks, from most to least reliable. None can tell natural from cultured; that needs a lab X-ray.

Most reliable

- ◇ Under 10x magnification: smooth with small natural marks (real) or grainy and glittery (imitation)
- ◇ Drill hole: sharp edge (real) or peeling, flaking coating (imitation)

Helpful

- ◇ Strand: small differences between pearls (real) or all perfectly identical (warning sign)

Can be fooled

- ◇ Tooth test: slightly gritty (real) but polished pearls feel smooth
- ◇ Weight: plastic feels light, but glass feels heavy
- ◇ Temperature: real pearls start cool, but so can glass
- ◇ Paperwork: ask the seller, as the FTC suggests

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Sources: Jewellery Business, Detecting pearl imitations and treatments; Jewelers Mutual; FTC; GIA. Checked October 2026.
Check details before you rely on them. Free to print and pass on.