

THE DIFFERENT GRADES OF FRESHWATER PEARLS

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You may have noticed that freshwater pearls are marked "grade" on the product sheet, followed by one or more letters. This corresponds to the pearls' grading. Cultured pearls, like freshwater pearls, are graded according to several criteria that determine their quality and price. With the aim of providing you with the best pearls, we have selected two key criteria:

- **Luster:** The luster of a natural pearl refers to the brilliance and reflection of the pearl's surface. A high lustre means that the pearl is very shiny and reflective. It reflects light sharply. A pearl with a lower grade is duller.
- **Surface:** This is the degree of imperfections present on the pearl. High-quality pearls have few or no visible flaws such as bumps, hollows, cracks or scratches. Natural pearls are unique and their surfaces are rarely free of imperfections. The cleaner and smoother the surface, the higher the grade.

Grade	Characteristics
AAA	Excellent luster, very brilliant. The surface is virtually free of imperfections, invisible to the naked eye (95% of the surface is free of imperfections).
AA+	Very good, brilliant gloss. The surface has very few imperfections (75-90% of the surface is free of imperfections).
AA	Good gloss. The surface has a few slight imperfections (70-75% of the surface is free of imperfections).
AA-	Average gloss. Some imperfections are visible on the surface (60-70% of the surface is free of imperfections).
A	Moderate gloss. Some surface imperfections visible to the naked eye (less than 50% of surface free of imperfections).

What are freshwater pearls?

Freshwater pearls are produced by a specific species of mollusc, the pearl mussel, which lives in lakes, ponds and rivers. They are formed by inserting a shell fragment inside the mussel, serving as a nucleus around which the pearl forms entirely of mother-of-pearl. This gives them a unique beauty and brilliance, and a wide variety of shapes and colors.

This production method explains why it is rare to find perfectly round freshwater pearls. They will be more oval, more irregular, asymmetrical, even baroque... But that's also their charm.

What's the difference between a cultured pearl and a freshwater pearl? Well, there isn't one! The freshwater pearl is also a cultured pearl. It simply owes its name to the production method, which is different from that of pearls bred in marine environments.

Freshwater pearls have been very popular and trendy over the past few seasons, and have that timeless appeal we've come to love. What's more, they go with every style, from streetwear to the most sophisticated, which we love. And that's just as well: on the Perles & Co website, you'll find a wide range of freshwater pearls to make chic and elegant DIY costume jewelry. Find all our freshwater pearl jewelry tutorials and make your own original jewelry.

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