

AUTORE

Of all the pearls across the globe, there is one that is rare and revered. In pristine waters where the temperature is gentle and the atmosphere nurturing, there is a pearl with a strange perfection which bears the fingerprint of forever, the South Sea pearl.

The South Sea pearl is a labour of love, spending two silent years within the host oyster – the *Pinctada maxima* (commonly known as the silver or gold lip) or the *Pinctada margaritifera* (commonly known as the black lip). The breathtaking gift that is finally delivered into our world is well worth the wait.

Each pearl is judged and valued on AUTORE's Five S's™. These five specific virtues are: Shine, Surface, Shade, Shape and Size.



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Shine



As in all things, true beauty comes from within, so the virtue rated above all others in a South Sea pearl is its lustre. Lustre is the result of light reflected from the pearl's surface combined with its deep inner glow (iridescence). South Sea pearls are made up of many fine layers of a crystal-like substance called nacre, comprising of organic and inorganic materials secreted from within the living tissue of the oyster. The quality and thickness of nacre gives a pearl both its radiance and its deep glow. The combination of light reflecting on the pearl's surface and light refracting between each layer of nacre within the pearl is what makes this gem unique. Lustre has the magic to minimise other imperfections and is considered the soul of the pearl.

There are five broad categories of lustre

- I Brilliant lustre: producing a mirror reflection
- II Excellent lustre: producing a very clear reflection
- III Good lustre: producing a good reflection
- IV Average lustre: the reflection appears opaque
- V Poor lustre: producing very little reflection



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Surface

There are two essential aspects to be considered when assessing the surface of a pearl: blemishes and the pearl's grain.



BLEMISHES

The surface of a pearl is essentially its skin. Because South Sea pearls have layers of lustrous nacre built up over time, a flawless surface is extremely rare. As pearls are a gift of nature from a living mollusc, the most beautiful and valuable pearls may still have slight imperfections which appear in the form of small blemishes. These naturally bestowed 'beauty marks' characterise each pearl as an individual creation. Blemishes come in many varieties. The most common blemishes are listed below.

1. Spot: the most common type of blemish, which usually appears as a small, shallow hole, a sunken area or a small indented scar on the pearl's surface
2. Bump: a blemish resembling a raised scar or blister. Bumps are uneven and sometimes discoloured areas of the pearl's surface
3. Chip: an area of the pearl's surface which appears to be cut out or chipped off
4. Scratch: a mark resembling a line produced by scratching
5. Wrinkle: small creases on the pearl's outer layer producing a crumpled or shrunken appearance



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A grading system has been developed by AUTORE to identify the extent of visible blemishes, regardless of type. Sometimes an individual pearl or strand can be classified with more than one of these grades. A single pearl, in this case, would mean it is in between grades and a strand would be made of pearls with different grades.

- A. Blemish free or very small blemishes hardly discernable by the naked eye
- B1. One to four visible blemishes concentrated on one small area of the pearl
- B2. Blemishes visible on 30% of the pearl's surface, not necessarily on the same area
- C1. Blemishes visible on 50% or more of the pearl's surface, not necessarily in the same area
- C2. Heavy blemishes on the majority of the pearl's surface
- D. Heavy or deep blemishes and/or thin coating of nacre



The grading of a Baroque pearl differs from all other South Sea pearl shapes. Its grade is based predominantly on its shape, surface appearance and its ability to be diversely used in jewellery and strands, rather than by reference to its surface blemishes and pearl grain.

- A. Smooth skin with good lustre however not necessarily spotless
- B. Smooth skin with good lustre, spotted or wrinkled on less than 30% of the pearl's surface
- C. Extremely asymmetrical, spotted or wrinkled on less than 30% of the pearl's surface
- D. A 'D' grade baroque pearl could be classified on the following characteristics:
 - Heavy spotting on the majority of the pearl's surface
 - Heavy wrinkling on the majority of the pearl's surface
 - Discolouration under the pearl's surface

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PEARL GRAIN

The pearl grain refers to the composition of the pearl's skin and its structure. The tighter the structure of the pearl, the less evident is its grain. The grain will appear as slight ripples on the pearl's surface.

In cases where the grain is only just visible, it will give the pearl a slightly fractured appearance. As these fractures become larger and more evident, they will appear as 'cracks' within the structure of the pearl.

- CL (CLEAR) No pearl grain visible
- VSL (VERY SLIGHT) Very slight pearl grain visible
- SL (SLIGHT) Slight pearl grain visible on 30% of the pearl's surface
- MD (MEDIUM) Medium pearl grain visible on 50% or more of the pearl's surface
- HY (HEAVY) Heavy pearl grain visible on entire pearl surface

For example, a perfectly clean pearl with a very slight grain will be considered an A/VSL. In the case where a pearl is still perfectly clean but where the grain is clearly visible, appearing as 'cracks', the pearl will be classified as a A/MD or A/HY.



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Shade



The species of oyster and the environment in which they grow are the main factors behind determining a pearl's colour and complexion. South Sea pearls are highly coveted for their rich, varied colours. Pearls from the *Pinctada maxima* oyster come in shades of White, Ivory, Silver, Blue, Yellow and rich Gold. Pearls from the *Pinctada margaritifera* oyster (referred to as Tahitian or Black pearls) come in shades of Aubergine, Blue, Green and Grey, all with various hues. Every pearl reflects colour in a different way – boldly on the surface or hinting at hues from within layers of nacre.

South Sea pearl colours can be categorised as belonging to either a White, Yellow or Black range:

WHITE RANGE

White
Ivory
Silver
Grey
Blue

YELLOW RANGE

Cream
Yellow
Green
Champagne Rose
Gold

BLACK RANGE

Aubergine
Green Peacock
Green
Peacock Green
Sea Green
Lime

Blue
Royal Blue Peacock
Grey
Grey Royal Blue
Grey Green
Grey Aubergine

COLOUR DEPTH/VARIATIONS

All of the base colours come in dark and light forms. Some South Sea pearls may be labeled as 'intense' when their colour is extremely deep or 'light' when there is a soft hint of colour.

Colour code I= Intense
L= Light

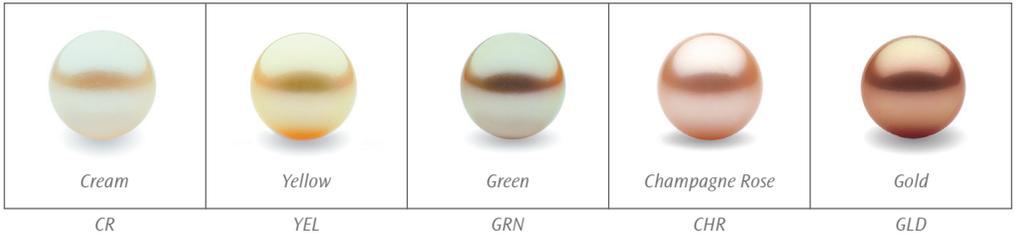
Variations of these base colours occur quite often and in some cases two colours can be combined. The appropriate description for pearls combining two colours would be I SIL/BLU (Intense Silver Blue) or L YEL/GRN (Light Yellow Green).

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WHITE RANGE



YELLOW RANGE



BLACK RANGE



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HUE

South Sea pearls often show beautiful iridescent overtones, especially pinks and greens. These hues come from the layered structure of nacre and the behaviour of light as it reflects from both the upper and lower layers of the pearl's surface.

In some cases, more than one hue is visible. To categorise this, the dominant hue will be listed first followed by the more subtle hue, this is classified as 'slight' (SL). For example WH/PK SL GRN (White Pink Slight Green).

Colour is a highly subjective quality and current market demands may result in higher prices for some colours more than for others. However, it is important to remember that although colour adds to the beauty of a pearl, it does not solely determine its allure. Shine, Surface, Shade, Shape and Size combine to make each South Sea pearl unique.

The pearl colours printed in the AUTORE Pearl Classification Guide are generally accurate. However, colour variations, particularly in relation to the range of possible hues must be allowed for. For more information on an exact pearl colour reference, please consult an industry-approved pearl pantone guide.

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PINK



GREEN



BLUE



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Shape



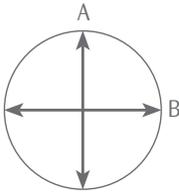
South Sea pearls come in a variety of shapes, making them an incredibly difficult gem to classify without a professionally trained eye. A product of nature, each pearl is individual and unique. The major categories of South Sea pearl shapes are; Round, Near Round, Drop, Button, Baroque and Circle. With the exception of Round and Near Round pearls, there is a variation of different types within each shape category. However, to simplify pearl shapes, some general principles can be applied.

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ROUND

Pearls are formed in oysters seeded with a spherical bead (nucleus) made from freshwater mussel shell. Only a small percentage of harvested pearls are perfectly round. As a broad principle, a pearl is considered Round when the variation in its diameter is less than 2.5%. Therefore, a pearl measuring 10mm can have up to 0.25mm variance and a pearl measuring 20mm can have up to 0.50mm variance.

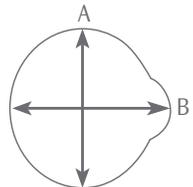
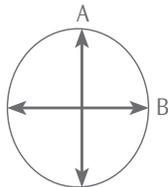


The difference between diameter A and diameter B is less than 2.5%



NEAR ROUND

A pearl is classified Near Round rather than Round when the variation in its diameter is roughly more than 2.5%. This percentage may vary when there are lumps or slight variations to the pearl's shape. Near Round pearls are ideal for jewellery and strand making as they appear round once set.



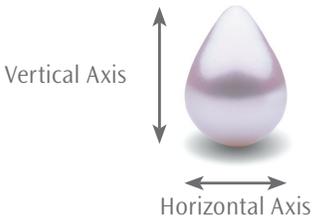
The difference between diameter A and diameter B must be more than 2.5%

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DROP

There are several types of pearls that fall within the Drop shape category. They include Teardrop, Oval and Egg shaped pearls, as well as the more unusual Semi Drop and Cone shapes. While variations in the category can be quite dramatic, the one basic principle is that the vertical axis of a Drop pearl must always be longer than its horizontal axis. Short Oval shaped pearls can be similar to Near Round pearls in appearance. The greater the difference in size between the vertical axis and the horizontal axis, the more unusual and rare the pearl is.



The vertical axis of a Drop must always be longer than its horizontal axis



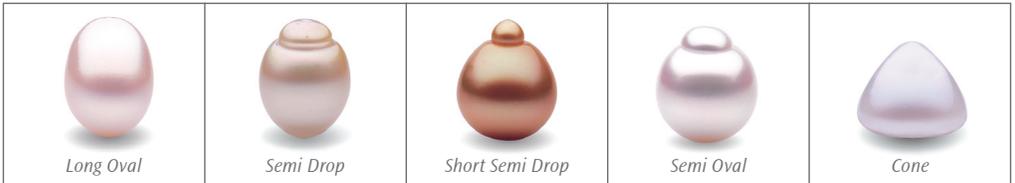
TE DR

LO DR

SH DR

EG

SH OV



LO OV

SE DR

SH SE DR

SE OV

CO DR

LO OV

SE DR

SH SE DR

SE OV

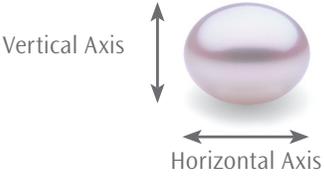
CO DR

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BUTTON

As with the Drop category, Buttons can also vary dramatically in appearance. However, in direct contrast to a Drop pearl, the vertical axis of a Button pearl must always be shorter than its horizontal axis. High Button pearls can be similar to Near Round pearls in appearance.



The vertical axis of a Button pearl must always be shorter than its horizontal axis



High Button

Medium Button

Dome Button

HI BUT

ME BUT

DO BUT



Cone Button

Low Button

Disc Button

CO BUT

LO BUT

DI BUT

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BAROQUE

The Baroque pearl is the most individual South Sea pearl produced by the *Pinctada maxima* oyster. Generally speaking, a Baroque pearl is irregular or free form in shape. If the Baroque pearl is relatively symmetrical, it can be used in a number of different ways in jewellery and strands.

Occasionally, Baroque pearls will have what are called 'Fish Tails'. In some circumstances, one side of a Baroque pearl will be symmetrical or round, these pearls are classified as Semi Baroque.



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CIRCLE

A pearl that has one or more parallel grooves etched around its circumference is called a Circle. All shapes can be classified as Circle pearls if these rings or grooves are present. The only exception is when a Drop pearl has a ring around its apex, in which case the pearl is classified as a Semi Drop and not a Circle.

Circle Category

- 1 = One to two grooves
- 2 = Three or more grooves but still good reflection
- 3 = Multiple grooves distorting reflection

 1	 1	 1	 1	 2
 2	 2	 3	 3	 3

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Non-Beaded



KESHI

Possessing an individual allure entirely different to that of a nucleated cultured pearl, a non-beaded South Sea pearl ("Keshi") is created by chance when the oyster rejects the nucleus but retains the mantle tissue, that was originally inserted for the creation of the pearl sac. This enables the oyster to continue to secrete nacre which forms the 'Keshi' pearl.

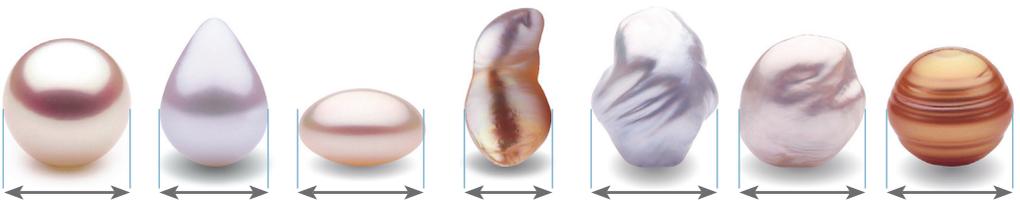
Size

South Sea pearls are renowned for their large sizes. The *Pinctada maxima* oyster is the largest species of oyster capable of producing a pearl.

South Sea pearls are measured in millimetres. South Sea pearls commonly range from 9-20+mm, with the majority falling within a range of 10-17mm. Though extremely rare, the irregularly shaped Baroque South Sea pearl can reach sizes up to 40mm or more. The largest fine quality Round South Sea pearl cultivated by one of AUTORE's South Sea pearl producers, Cygnet Bay Pearls, measured in at a magnificent 22.8mm.

Pearls are generally measured using a milligauge which can measure the pearl to within 0.01mm accuracy. The exception is in relation to the size of Baroque pearls which are usually impossible to measure by milligauge because of their irregularity. Consequently, Baroque pearls are measured by sieve.

The lines indicate the points at which the diameter of each pearl is measured.



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WEIGHT

The weighing unit for pearls is momme, an old Japanese measure of weight still used for all pearls. One momme is equal to 3.75 grams or 18.75 cts

Values

All of the five virtues (Shape, Surface, Shade, Shine, Size) affect the value of the South Sea pearl. Below AUTORE identifies some basic values used to assess each virtue.

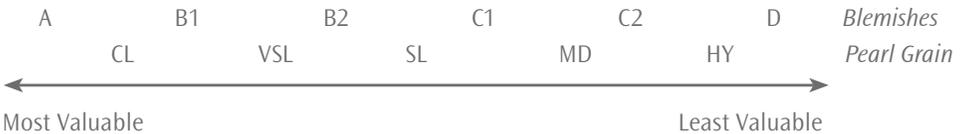
SHINE

As far as the pearl lustre is concerned, the more lustrous the pearl, the higher its value.



SURFACE

As with lustre, the less blemishes and pearl grain on the surface, the more valuable the pearl.



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Abbreviations Guide

SHAPES

ROUND.....	RD
NEAR ROUND.....	NRD
DROP.....	DR
Tear Drop.....	TE DR
Long Drop.....	LO DR
Short Drop.....	SH DR
Egg.....	EG
Short Oval.....	SH OV
Long Oval.....	LO OV
Semi Drop.....	SE DR
Short Semi Drop.....	SH SE DR
Semi Oval.....	SE OV
Cone.....	CO DR
BUTTON.....	BUT
High Button.....	HI BUT
Medium Button.....	ME BUT
Dome Button.....	DO BUT
Cone Button.....	CO BUT
Low Button.....	LO BUT
Disc Button.....	DI BUT
BAROQUE.....	BRQ
Pebble.....	PEB BRQ
Boulder.....	BO BRQ
Nugget.....	NU BRQ
Pear.....	PE BRQ
Semi Baroque.....	SE BRQ
Fish Tail.....	FI TA BRQ
Double Boulder.....	DO BO BRQ
CIRCLE.....	CIR
KESHI.....	KE

COLOURS

WHITE RANGE	
White.....	WH
Ivory.....	IV
Silver.....	SIL
Grey.....	GRY
Blue.....	BLU
YELLOW RANGE	
Cream.....	CR
Yellow.....	YEL
Green.....	GRN
Champagne Rose.....	CHR
Gold.....	GLD
BLACK RANGE	
Aubergine.....	AU
Green Peacock.....	GRN PEA
Green.....	GRN
Peacock Green.....	PEA GRN
Sea Green.....	SEA GRN
Lime.....	LIM
Blue.....	BLU
Royal Blue Peacock.....	ROY BLU PEA
Grey.....	GRY
Grey Royal Blue.....	GRY ROY BLU
Grey Green.....	GRY GRN
Grey Aubergine.....	GRY AU

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HUE

PINK.....	PK
White Pink.....	WH PK
Green Pink.....	GRN PK
Gold Pink.....	GLD PK
GREEN.....	GRN
White Green.....	WH GRN
Silver Green.....	SIL GRN
Gold Green.....	GLD GRN
BLUE.....	BLU
Silver Blue.....	SIL BLU
Pink Blue.....	PK BLU
Green Blue.....	GRN BLU

COLOURS VARIATIONS

Intense.....	I
Light.....	L
Slight.....	SL

PEARL GRAIN

Clear.....	CL
Very Slight.....	VSL
Slight.....	SL
Medium.....	MD
Heavy.....	HY

