



Pearl Facts/Guarantee Sheet

The pearls you have just purchased are called freshwater or sweetwater pearls. They are “cultured,” which means that the mollusks that grew them were implanted or seeded by humans. Practically all pearls sold today are cultured. Your pearls are most likely products of China or Japan.

Freshwater pearl cultivation can be traced as far back as the 13th century in China. It was in Japan that they were first grown and harvested commercially. Today they are grown in mussels, most often the *sankaku*.

Cultured pearls are formed by a mussel when a small piece of mantle has been inserted and becomes an irritant. The mantle is the membranous tissue which secretes nacre and lines the inner surface of a shelled mollusk. The mussel covers the irritating tissue with nacre. This nacre is the protective pearly substance for which a pearl is so highly valued. The shape of a pearl is determined in part by the shape of the irritant.

Until the 1930's, a small shell bead and a piece of mantle were inserted as an irritant. However, around this time it was accidentally discovered that only a piece of mantle is necessary. This simplified technique results in pearls having more nacre than pearls which have a shell bead nucleus inserted as well. It was also discovered that after the first harvest, mussels can spontaneously grow pearls a second and third time.

Freshwater pearls come in all many colors: creamy yellow, pink, grey and white are their predominant natural hues. Even though some are bleached, dyed, or irradiated to enhance or darken the pearl's natural color they are still considered natural and offer you a greater palate of colors at a reasonable price.

THE ART OF KNOTTING: No two pearls are exactly alike. Therefore, when knotting a strand of pearls, a good deal of time is required to match them for size, quality, and color. We have chosen 100% silk rather than nylon cord because it has a soft reflective quality, greater strength, and is available in various colors and weights, which favorably accentuates how the pearl strands lay.

Knotting a strand of pearls takes practice, patience and experience. If it is knotted too tightly the strand will not lie flat, too loose and there will be unsightly gaps between the knots and the pearls. Knotting is important because it prevents the pearls from rubbing against each other and impacting the nacre. If the strand should break, you would only potentially lose the pearl(s) between each knot.

The Process: The silk cord required for each strand is double the final length. This length of silk is threaded onto a beading needle, which is a thin wire that passes easily through the hole of each pearl. The holes in eight pearls (four at either end of the complete necklace) are enlarged by drilling. This is done so that the silk can be doubled back through the end pearls for added security and to form the loop used to attach the clasp. Four of the drilled pearls and all but the last four drilled pearls are



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then strung onto the silk. Knots are formed by creating a loop between two pearls. This loop is then placed on a tapestry needle, which helps form the knot, and then slides flush against each pearl. This ensures that the pearls are snug and cannot shift between the knots. The last four drilled pearls are then added and knotted. The four knots at the beginning and end of the strand are then glued to insure they do not come untied. A single strand of 18" pearls takes approximately one hour to complete. If a knot is tied incorrectly at any point then project has to be undone and started again.

Silk is a natural product, which means that your strand will need to be re-strung periodically. How often, depends upon how regularly you wear it and how you care for it. It is the industry standard to restring pearls once a year. However, with careful maintenance, I feel that once every three to five years should be sufficient. Check your strand after each wear for: frayed knots (especially by the clasp), or stretching of the silk between the knot and the bead.

CARE AND FEEDING OF THE SILK AND THE PEARLS

1. Never hang or wear your pearl strand wet.
2. Wipe with a damp cloth after each wearing.
3. Periodically wash in mild soap and water and lay flat to dry for 24 hours.
4. Store it gently coiled in a cloth or ziplock bag.
5. Do not store it in the sun and keep it out of reach of small children.

Pearl luster can be damaged by oil, hair spray, perfume, friction, or liquid and cream cleaners.

Wash your hands after using personal care products and allow about 5 minutes for the fumes to wick off your neck and hair before putting on your pearls. The cost of restringing your pearls will vary. Please call or come in for a quote.

My rule for jewelry wear is: Last on, First off.

JUDIE GUMM GUARANTEE:

Our stringing, for properly cared for pearl strands (as described above), is guaranteed for one year from date of purchase. We cannot, however, guarantee the luster.