

# Shape

This is a category where you could drive yourself crazy. I might look at a pearl and say it looks oval shape. You might look at the same pearl and say it looks more barrel shape. Who is correct? For the sake of simplicity we will designate 3 categories for shape. They will be Round, Semi or Off –Round and Baroque

## Round

Round is the most recognizable and sought after shape. When the Japanese select pearls for shape, they let the pearls roll down a large inclined piece of glass. Some pearls veer off to the right or left and some roll straight down. The ones that come straight down are Round



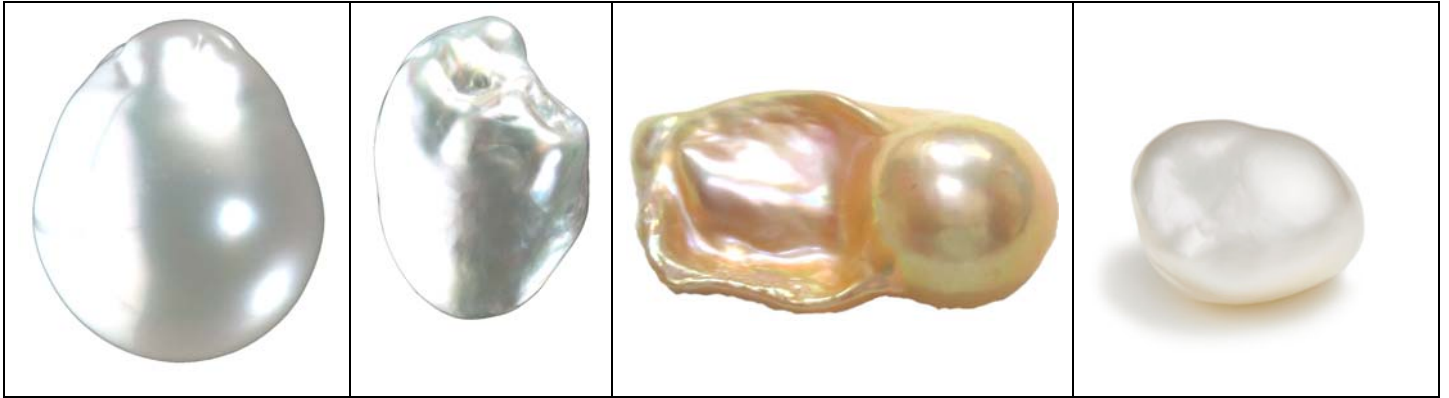
## Semi or Off-Round

The Semi or Off-Round category encompasses a wide variety of shapes. It includes pearls that are so slightly out of round that it is very difficult for the untrained eye to notice that they aren't perfectly round to pearls that are button shape, drop shape, coin shape etc. Pearls in this category are uniform and proportioned in their shape as opposed to irregular in shape which leads us to the last category.



## Baroque

Baroque pearls are irregular in shape. There are 2 classes of Baroque pearls, baroque and semi-baroque. To give an example, you might consider a pearl in the shape of a stone to be semi-baroque while one with a nacre build up on it that looks like a tail on the



All things being equal, a round pearl will be more valuable than an off-round or semi-round pearl and both of these will be more valuable than a baroque or semi-baroque pearl. If however all things are not equal a round pearl is not always the most valuable. For example, one pearl can be very round, thin coated with low luster. Another pearl can be slightly off-round, having heavy nacre coating and high luster. Even though this pearl isn't round it is worth more than the round pearl because of its thick coating and high luster.

European countries prefer off-round, heavily coated, high luster pearls with spotting to the thin coated lower luster clean round pearls that are popular in America. There are a lot more of this type pearl cultivated than there are round pearls. So, you are paying a premium for pearls that are round but might not be as good a quality as others that aren't round. Things like this are what make cultured pearls such an interesting industry.