

To help insure you are getting the best value for your investment, you should ask some basic questions before you sign a contract for a pool. Pools are a major investment, and as evidenced below, not all pools are built using the same standards.



We don't consider this first section to be a question, it's merely some minimum standards you should understand or confirm before you give a company thousands of dollars to start a project. Do they have an office? If so, you should visit it, the condition of the office might tell you something about the contractor. What are the payment terms? You should make payments as the project progresses. Large down payments, for example 25% or greater should be avoided.

1. **What specific equipment will be installed for my pool?** Most homeowners will not be able to evaluate the pool equipment is "right" for their pool. Nevertheless, proposals that merely list the types of equipment such as, "heater, filter, pump" leave you open for contractors that will install anything that might be left over from another job or even used. The proposal you sign should be very specific on the model and quantities of all items provided. Even diving boards have a wide range in cost and quality. Are they supplying the least expensive board you will want to replace in 2-3 years, or one that will last a decade? Ask them to specify the stand and board and why it was selected.
2. **Should I be concerned about soil conditions?** The answer is yes. One of the most critical factors in the long term success of your pool is the weight bearing capacity of the soil. Pools at risk include those that are built on loose fill, within 10 feet of a retaining wall, adjacent to a descending or ascending slope, or in low lying area with ground water. We always recommend a soil test if any of these conditions exist.
3. **What materials will be used to backfill around the pool?** Many homes in our area have heavy clay soil that holds water and can be disruptive around the pool. In these situations, the area around the pool should be backfilled with sand, not excess spoil which is often expansive and can lead to frost heave and deck problems in the future.

4. **How will the pool water be plumbed and filtered?** Pools are no different than cars; some are much more efficient than others. Pools with the proper amount of returns or inlets (one at least every 20' of the pool perimeter) and skimmers (one for every 400 feet of surface area) and on opposite sides of the pool, proper turnover (6 hours or less) and a correctly sized filter will use less chemicals, energy and require less maintenance than pools with poor hydraulics. You should ask the contractor to list the number of returns, skimmers, turnover, filter specifics and the flow rate for the pool. The proper flow rate in gallons per minute required to meet the turnover requirements for the pool is easily calculated and should be specified in the proposal.
5. **How will I know if my pool water is at the correct flow rate?** Your pool should have a flow meter on the equipment pad so the flow rate can easily be observed and verified. They are required on all commercial pools and cost the contractor less than \$ 100. In our opinion, no new pool should be without one.
6. **What will be the warranty?** A one year warranty is the minimum, most contractors offer extended warranties. Residential contractors should be able to provide extended warranties on equipment and plumbing leaks. Equally important is how the warranty will be administered. Will you be calling a cell number or an office? You will generally with better results with a company that has an office with service people that are dedicated to servicing pools and pool equipment.
7. **What will be the water depths?** Pool proposals should specify water depth. Many customers think they have an 8' deep pool, but the water depth is only 7.5' because the contractor was measuring the depth from the top of the deck instead of the water level. If you plan on diving pool, the contractor should specify the diving envelope as specified by ANSI/NSPI-5-2003, since all diving boards and stands are manufactured to these standards. For example, a TYPE III Diving pool has an 8' deep well and specific dimensions for the pool bottom and slopes.
8. **How will I maintain water level in the pool?** If you do not want to have to fill your pool with a garden hose, and hope you don't get interrupted and forget to turn it off; you should ask that an electronic water level controller be installed.
9. **Questions for the auto cover motor / reel box.** If your pool has an automatic cover, you should confirm how the motor end will be covered. Will it have an aluminum lid or a concrete / paver lid to match the deck? How many brackets will they have for the cover? You should ask how the cover box will be constructed. Some use pressure treated lumber; which is a poor construction option. If it's a polymer or concrete box, how will it be drained? You should confirm a drain line from the box to an appropriate drain area. Drilling holes in the bottom of the drain box is not a good option; this introduces water into the area adjacent to the pool.
10. **How will my pool be filled?** If your home has well water, the water will typically have a high iron content which could stain the liner or plaster if used for the initial fill. You should fill the pool with treated water to avoid this problem. If your use source water is from a city, it is most likely satisfactory, but we would recommend you have it tested in advance.