PINELOCH POOL
CONSTRUCTION

Frequently Asked Questions

I'm worried about making the wrong decision, how can I be sure to choose the right pool builder?

The purchase of a swimming pool and the selection of a builder can be stressful for a homeowner. Many times, you will be confronted with conflicting stories and theories as to which systems or equipment is best. Our goal at Pineloch Pool Construction is to act as your advocate. We will not withhold any information from you or slant data to our liking. We will strive to educate you on all available options and the pros and cons of those choices. In the end we feel like the better educated you are, the better chance we have to earn your project.

How much do pools cost?

There are many variables in determining cost. Overall cost can fluctuate based on amenities, options, size of the pool, choice of materials, and amount of decking. Most importantly however is the quality of the build. Our company believes in building the very best pools possible. That usually means we can't compete with the low-end bidders. There are certain things we will not sacrifice for lower price points. Our proposals are detailed so that you can see the difference.

Price vs. Value

When discussing multiple bids with clients, we often hear the term "good" price. The question is what is a "good" price? It's possible that the price you believe to be "good" could actually be overpriced for what you are getting. Just because the price may be *lower*, doesn't necessarily mean it's "good". Instead, we suggest considering value instead of price. If you compare all the amenities and options offered and the quality of the build in terms of value for your money, we believe you will find our proposals more than competitive.

Can I really get a pool at those prices I see advertised?

Yes, those pools can be built. But typically, these "deals" have many hidden costs. In many instances these pools will end up being as much, or more than, a pool offered by a quality builder after you've been charged with endless "extras". However, the main issue is the quality of construction. In order to get down to certain price point, quality must be cut in every way possible. Our slogan says it all: The bitterness of poor quality remains long after the sweetness of low price is forgotten.

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Why is there such a price difference in the bids I've received?

Many times clients think they are comparing equal bids. The truth is that even if the pools look the same on the surface, an unscrupulous pool builder can cut his costs dramatically usually at the expense of quality. You may think you're getting a deal, when in fact you are getting taken. In most cases it is not a matter of cutting one or two major corners, it is combination of many smaller cuts. To keep from being misinformed, educate yourself as much as possible, ask lots of questions, and of course, speak with previous clients to hear about their experiences.

What about pool warrantees?

Pool warrantees are extremely important. However, many are misleading or completely without substance. A warranty is only as good as the company that is offering it. If a pool builder offers lifetime warrantees on everything, but is out of business the next year, how good was your warranty? Ask our design consultants to outline our warrantees; we feel we have some of the best in the industry. We have been in business since 1983 and we stand behind our work.

How much does a pool cost to maintain?

The bad news is that pools are a "pay me now or pay me later" proposition. The good news: If you can afford to spend a little more on the front end during the construction of your pool, you will pay much less in operational costs throughout its life. For example: variable-drive pumps are more costly to install than standard pumps, but the operational savings are immense. A variable drive pump typically pays for itself within its first year of use. Saline systems, computer control units also cost more on the front end, but the payback is quick and long lasting.

How much will a pool add to the value of my home?

The industry average for return of investment on a pool is approximately 50%. Not a good investment. However, if you stay in your home beyond five years, you will recapture higher percentages. We have investigated the resales of several of our client's homes during different types of real estate markets and are happy to report a percentage much higher than the industry average, nearly 75%. For this reason, some realtors in our area list our pools by name. In most cases, pools hold their value due to quality. If at sales time your pool is looking good and operating well, it will help to sell your home. If not, it can increase the likelihood of adding strife to the sale or your negotiations.

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Is my homeowner's insurance affected by installing a pool?

In most cases, no. But in some situations, policies are affected. The real issue is do you have a pool with a diving board or a slide? Some companies will not renew your policy if you've added a pool with a diving board or slide. Though we pride ourselves on building diving board pools with conservative safety standards, not all pool builders do, and therefore the insurance companies are responding. Please contact your agent to be sure.

What are the normal avenues for financing pools?

Most banking institutions offer pool financing. Typically, lenders use home improvement or home equity loans. Please discuss with your financial advisor as to which best suits your situation. Be aware that home improvement loans many times require a multi-day waiting period to fund with an additional right of rescission period. Additionally, inform your lender of our payment and construction schedule. Some lenders demand an unrealistic timeline for construction or want to release funds only after completion of the pool. We work on a draw schedule. In other words, we are paid as we complete phases of construction and your payments fund your project along the way. If there are any concerns, have your lender contact us.

What is a draw schedule?

A draw schedule is how you pay for your pool. We require payments at certain stages of construction. When we finish a stage, you pay for that stage, then we pay for materials and labor used in that stage. Our contracts have a draw schedule outlined. Be aware of contractors who "front load" their contracts. If a contract is written so that most of your money has been collected in the first few days of construction, you have no leverage left to get the job done. Most quality pool builders have very fair draw schedules because they are interested in finishing their pools in a timely manner.

Are pools taxed?

Only pool equipment is taxed. Once you receive your bid, those equipment taxes have been included. You won't need to add any tax on top of your bid price.

How long will it take to build a pool?

Normally 50-75 calendar days from the time of excavation. 40-50 days is sometimes possible. Be aware of builders who guarantee to build your pool in less than 30 days. Gunite has a 28-day cure time, so 30 days is unrealistic. It can be done in less than 30 days, but usually to the detriment of your pool's quality and lifespan. Be advised that bad weather can knock construction off pace by several weeks.

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What size pump do I need?

The pump should be sized according to the total gallons of water contained in your pool and the turnover rate desired. Turnover is the time required to completely recirculate and filter the entire volume of the pool. Most experts agree that for water to be sanitary it needs a turnover of 8 hours or less. Pineloch Pool Construction has embraced a "low-flow" setup for our pool hydraulics.

What is a "low-flow" hydraulic setup?

Low flow systems are designed to maximize the flow of water through the pluming lines. Most pools are plumbed with 2" PVC pipe that can efficiently handle a flow rate of approximately 70 gallons per minute (gpm). However, many pool builders insist on installing pumps that can deliver over 120 gpm of water. The plumbing lines can't handle this amount of water. Instead, we find the excess water is simply converted into backpressure on the pump, overworking the motor. Simply put, you are converting electricity into heat from an overworked motor. This is a very wasteful use of your electrical budget in that most single-speed motors draw about 2800 watts.

Also consider that regardless of how large your pump is, the resulting output of waterflow to the pool is unchanged, the pipe size is the limiting factor! This overpressure will certainly shorten the lifespan of the motor but also degrades your filter, filter grids, multiport valves, heaters and saline systems.

Instead, by utilizing variable speed motors, we opt for a low-flow setup. By using variable drive pump technology, we can "dial-in" your flow rate to the maximum efficiency of the system in which they are placed. Most Pineloch Pools operate at ~50-70 gpm (the optimum efficiency of the plumbing lines) which translates to a serious reduction in electrical demand. Most of our variable drive pumps are drawing under 700 watts. Recall that the end result, the circulation and water movement to the pool body, is the same! Additionally, we are finding our equipment is lasting longer. Filter grids look brand new 3 or 4 years down the road. We aren't trying to force water through the system at a rate it isn't designed for, but simply running at a lower, more efficient rate, saving your equipment and pocketbook.

How long do I run my pumps?

Pumps should run long enough to achieve two turnovers or water cycles a day. In most cases that means approximately 8 to 10 hours a day. Climate can dramatically affect these standards. In peak summer months, you may need to increase your run time if you notice cloudy or unsanitary water. In the winter, many pools run as little a 2 to 4 hours a day. NOTE: Run your pool during the day. Many energy companies encourage pool owners to run their equipment at night, but your pool should be circulating during the heat of the day. Another advantage of low flow systems (by way of variable drive pumps) is that due to the efficiency of the system, you can afford to run your pumps much longer while still keeping the budget in control.

What is the best type of filter?

This is another area of disagreement. There are three main types of filters: cartridge, sand, and DE (Diatomaceous Earth). Sand filters were the industry standard for years but have been replaced with more effective filters and newer technology. So, the argument usually boils down to DE or Cartridge.

A cartridge filter is a tank with a series of pleated cartridges inside. Water passes through these cartridges to be filtered. In order to clean a cartridge filter, you must physically disassemble the filter, remove the individual cartridges, and wash them by hand or spray them off with a hose.

DE filters have a series of mesh-covered grids that are coated with a white powder called diatomaceous earth. Water passes through the powder, which filters the water. DE filters are equipped with a backwash line. By rotating a valve, you can reverse the flow of water through the filter, flushing the powder and debris it has collected down your sanitary sewer. For this reason, the ease of maintenance, DE is preferred.

Due to the lack of backwash line installation, cartridge filters are easier to install and therefore less expensive. In certain situations, a cartridge filter may be your only wise choice. One example would be if you have no access to a sanitary sewer connection (like rural lots with no city sewer)

The cartridge filter can remove debris as small as 8 microns whereas DE can remove down to 2 microns; therefore the DE is slightly superior in filtering ability.

In our opinion, the ease of cleaning and better filtering ability of a DE filter is worth the larger front-end expenditure. However, if a cartridge filter is the only choice, there are some very good ones on the market.

What is gunite? Is that the same as shotcrete?

Shotcrete was originally called "Gunite" when Carl Akeley designed a doubled-chambered cement gun in 1910. His apparatus pneumatically applied a sand and cement mixture at a high velocity to the intended surface. Other trademarks were soon developed known as Guncrete, Pneucrete, Blastcrete, Blocrete, Jetcrete, etc., all referring to pneumatically applied concrete. Today, the term "gunite" refers to a dry-mix shotcrete process, while the term "shotcrete" normally refers to a wet-mix shotcrete process.

So, what's the difference and why does it matter? Dry-mix, or gunite is mixed on site. Wet-mix or shotcrete is delivered to the site by ready-mix trucks just like normal concrete. Both are applied in basically the same way, through a hose and nozzle powered by a compressor truck.

We are not willing to risk our concrete being premixed. Concrete can be substantially weakened if not used within a set time frame. If a ready-mix truck is delayed for any reason and we receive a "hot mix", your pools overall strength will be compromised. All Pineloch Pools are built with gunite installations.

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What is a dual-pump spa system?

There are two different ways to run a spa. A one-pump system is where the main pool pump is used to both heat the spa and drive the therapy jets. A dual-pump system divides these duties. In a dual-pump system, the main pool pump heats the spa, while an independent secondary pump drives the therapy jets. The benefit is that the secondary pump is free from any backpressure or flow restrictions from the adjacent equipment and is installed on an independent loop. In other words, the pump that drives the therapy jets pulls hot water from the spa, to the pump, then right back to the therapy jets. What it ultimately provides is a more active spa with less duty on the main pump.

What is an automated bypass spa setup?

Due to the popularity of variable drive motors, we have added an optional bypass setup in lieu of a dual-pump system. By using a line that partially bypasses the filter and heater, we can maximize the abilities of the variable drive pump for use in the spa. We use an automated valve that opens the bypass line (remotely on demand) allowing direct return of water to the spas therapy jets. We can further customize the flow rates so that the water pressure is to your liking.

Does color or depth affect the temperature of my pool?

Colored finishes and shallow pools can run at slightly higher temperatures, but the differences are minor. In our summer climate, most pools will reach temperatures in the mid 90°s regardless of color or depth. Therefore, we suggest you *not* adjust your pool design or desired look to gain such a minor difference in temperature. Another option is the introduction of chiller systems for pools. A chiller can drop your temperature dramatically in the summer, keeping your water nice and crisp, even on 100° Texas summer day.

I want a pool, what do I need to know when buying a home?

In some cases clients are placed in the unfortunate position of owning a home that can't accommodate the pool they want to build. To avoid this, we suggest you verify how utility easements, building lines, deed restrictions, and homeowner association regulations will affect your future plans for your yard. Area realtors are very cognizant of these issues; rely on their expertise. If you are still unsure, send us a copy of the survey of the home in question and we will verify these items for you before you make an offer on the home.

Can I build my pool while my house is under construction?

Depending on your homebuilder, pool construction before closing is sometimes possible. Each instance is different. The homebuilder must feel very comfortable in your intention to ultimately buy the home in addition to the reputation of the pool builder in question. Discuss Pineloch Pools with your homebuilder and have them contact us. We take pride in the relationships we have developed with custom homebuilders in our area and are confident that they are comfortable with Pineloch Pool Construction.

My yard is very small can I still build a pool?

A quality pool builder can do almost anything with almost any yard. However, there is more to the story. Pool buyers are almost never advised to *not* build a pool, but sometimes that is the smartest choice. If your yard is so restrictive that we can't fit a decent sized pool in your yard, we will recommend other avenues. What most builders keep secret is that you pay for a certain sized pool whether you get it or not. Builders are bound by minimum charges from our sub-contractors. We want to make sure your pool is at the very least big enough to cover those charges. We call it "maximizing the minimums". Bottom line, we will be honest and open with you about your situation and discuss all the possibilities and restrictions.

What's the difference between a survey and site plan?

A true survey is an engineer-stamped legal document. An engineered survey is typically included in your home's closing papers. It is an important legal document that should be in your possession. Do not let a mortgage company or builder retain your original survey. When discussing pool construction, don't leave your original with the pool contractor. Any permitting or planning can be legally done with a photocopy. The survey is the most accurate, legal description of your property.

A site plan is usually the survey-like document provided and drawn by the homebuilder. Before closing, this is the only document they are required to provide you. Many times the site plan is not completely accurate with respect to property lines and layout, because the homebuilder may need the flexibility to move the home slightly before your slab is poured. Therefore, a survey is preferred to a site plan when designing a pool. A quality pool builder should verify whatever document you provide by taking his own measurements and doing his own survey of your property.

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Do we need to be home during construction?

Not normally. If you have made all your material and deck selections, we can manage most of the work without bothering you too much. After gunite installation, the pool shell will need to be watered down 3 times a day for 7 days and we may need your help to do that. Upon the installation of the heater, we will have to cut off your gas for a few hours. When we turn it back on, we will need access to your home to relight your pilot lights. During the filling of the pool, we may need your help to keep an eye on the fill level.

How much and what size steel is needed in my pool?

There is much discussion about how much steel is required in a swimming pool. If you ask three contractors, you'll get three different answers. Our opinion is that steel is a *reinforcing* element, and not solely responsible for the integrity of the pool structure. Too much steel can be as detrimental as not installing enough. Our structural engineers have determined correct steel sizing and spacing for our soil conditions and those are the guidelines we follow. For most installations we use #3 rebar on 8-inch centers for the floors and walls, and four #4 reinforcing bars in the perimeter beam. Of course, this is only a guideline, if unique soil conditions, or extreme design elements are included, we will consult our engineers for specific steel schedules.