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Pool Planning Risk Checklist

Before You Build a Swimming Pool—Read This
Avoid Expensive Errors That Blow Your Budget!

Planning a Swimming Pool?

Pool Planning Risk Checklist

- Do you know what's beneath your yard?
- Have you checked permit rules & setbacks?
- Is your pool area properly drained?
- Are your safety fences up to code?
- Is your equipment correctly configured?

PLUS: Essential Tips to Avoid Costly Mistakes!

Get Your FREE Pool Planning Risk Checklist

- Serving the Okanagan & BC
- 20+ Years Pool Experts
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What most homeowners miss before building a swimming pool

Most pool budget overruns don't come from upgrades.

They come from risks that were never discussed, priced, or written down.

This checklist is designed to help homeowners protect their budget, timeline, and family safety before signing a contract.

Rule:

If something isn't clearly answered in writing, it's a risk — and risks become change orders.

The Biggest Budget & Safety Traps

- Ground conditions (rock, groundwater, clay, buried debris) can double or triple excavation costs.
- Permits, setbacks, and barrier rules can force redesigns if they aren't confirmed early.
- Electrical bonding, GFCI protection, and compliant barriers are life-safety items, not optional upgrades.

1. Site & Excavation Risk (Where the Big Money Lives)

If this section is vague, your quote isn't real.

- What's actually under the yard: rock, groundwater, clay, fill, boulders, buried concrete.
- Known risk flags: slopes, retaining walls, creeks/ditches, wet yards, springs, or known rock zones.
- Equipment and truck access: gate widths, tight turns, overhead wires, driveway
- Spoil management: on-site reuse vs haul-off, trucking hours, and dump fees.
- Cost triggers: rock hammer/blasting, dewatering, over-excavation, imported base, shoring.
- Septic fields, irrigation lines, and underground conflicts that affect pool placement.

2. Permits, Setbacks & Approvals

Surprises here stop projects cold.

- Which permits apply; building, electrical, plumbing, gas (if required).
- Who is responsible for applications and inspection bookings.
- Required setbacks from property lines, easements, septic fields, retaining walls, and structures.
- Inspection stages and how delays affect the construction schedule.
- A site placement plan that matches City or Regional District expectations — not a brochure sketch.

3. Safety Barriers & Access Control

These are not negotiable — and inspectors don't bend.

- Mandatory barrier and fence requirements: height, gaps, and climbability.
- Gate requirements: self-closing, self-latching, and proper latch placement.
- A real access-control plan when children are present (locks, alarms, cover discipline, house rules).

4. Pool Type & Design Decisions

These choices affect cost, lifespan, and future repairs.

- Pool type selected with eyes open: vinyl, fiberglass, or concrete.
- Depth profile confirmed and understood for excavation and heating impact.
- Placement considers sun exposure, wind, evaporation, and comfort.
- Features defined upfront: steps, benches, lighting, automation, heaters, covers, water features.

5. Engineering & Drainage (When the Site Is Complex)

If the site isn't flat and dry, this matters.

- Confirmation if geotechnical or structural engineering is required.
- Groundwater and hydrostatic uplift considerations.
- Drainage plan for backfill and surface water: deck drains, daylight lines, sump systems if required.

6. Plumbing & Equipment Performance

Poor planning here creates lifelong headaches.

- Circulation design that avoids dead zones.
- Practical equipment pad location: noise, service access, pipe run length.
- Pump, filter, and heater sizing documented — not guessed.
- Sanitation strategy selected and maintenance expectations understood.

7. Electrical Safety

This is a code issue — not a preference.

- Pool-experienced electrician responsible for all electrical work.
- Clear bonding plan: what is bonded, where, and how it's inspected.
- GFCI protection confirmed, tested, and commissioned.
- Trenching, conduit runs, and restoration responsibilities defined.

8. Decking, Finishes & Water Management

Finish work fails when the base is ignored.

- Slip-resistant deck materials selected, especially at steps and entries.
- Concrete or paver base prep defined: thickness, control joints, drainage slope.
- Plan for hose bibs, outdoor showers, storage, and backwash discharge.

9. Budget Reality Check (What People Forget)

This is where quotes quietly fall apart.

- Quote is fully line-itemed, not lump-sum.
- Written unit rates for excavation unknowns.
- Restoration costs included: landscaping, irrigation repair, topsoil, sod/seed, cleanup.
- Ongoing ownership costs understood: heating, chemicals, water, covers, winterizing, service.

10. Contractor Due Diligence

If this is weak, everything else is irrelevant.

- Written scope with inclusions, exclusions, and a clear change-order process.
- Realistic schedule acknowledging weather and inspection delays.
- Warranty terms in writing: structure/shell, equipment, plumbing leaks, workmanship.
- Local installs reviewed and recent clients contacted — not just online reviews.

Part 2 — Contractor Selection

How to Evaluate Pool Contractors

Must-Have Qualifications

- Active general liability insurance.
- Workers' compensation coverage.
- Proven experience with your specific pool type.

Situations That Deserve Extra Questions

- Pressure to sign quickly.
- Vague or verbal-only scopes of work.
- Reluctance to explain technical decisions.
- Large upfront payments.
- No clear construction timeline.

Consultant insight:

The best builders educate — they don't oversell.

The 5 Questions Every Pool Contractor Should Answer Clearly

If a contractor can't answer these in writing, walk away.

1. How are excavation overages handled — and what are the unit rates?
2. Can you provide a fully line-itemed quote?
3. Which permits and inspections apply, and who manages each one?
4. How will barrier and fence compliance be achieved and signed off?
5. What is the bonding and GFCI plan, and who certifies electrical compliance?

Final Reality Check

Even on a "clean" site, set a contingency.

On a risky site, insist on written unit rates and defined change-order triggers.