

Pool Cleaning Guide - When and How to Clean the Swimming Pool

A luxurious addition to any home, one that will benefit all household members through its fun nature, the pool is something we all dream of having. Once you do become a pool owner, though, you must keep in mind one thing – a clean pool is a safe pool to swim in!

The biggest mistake you can make from your position as a pool owner is to neglect cleaning chores as this won't only put you at risk of developing a series of health issues, but it will eventually end up costing you money as the equipment will degrade or get damaged. These are easily avoidable repercussions if you simply follow the guidelines we will provide here regarding pool care, chores that come naturally with ownership of this fun addition.



What Equipment Should You Stock Up On?

- **Telescopic pole:** An extendable rod that you connect other cleaning equipment to. Standard models measure 8' when retracted and 16' when fully extended. It provides you the reach you need to brush or skim the pool during cleaning.
- **Skimmer net:** It is used to collect debris from the water, regardless of the gunk's size. Generally, there are two types of skimmer nets available – flat and bag. Flat skimmers work for routine cleaning as the debris is easy to shake off of them, while bag skimmers can hold a much larger quantity of dirt, but are a bit tougher to empty.
- **Manual vacuum:** It attaches to the pole and connects to a vacuum hose that attaches to the pool's filter tank suction port. Its role is to suck out all the dirt that settles on the surfaces.

- **Brush:** It attaches to the telescopic pole. Its purpose is to scrub the floor, walls, and ladders to remove algae and dirt from these surfaces.
- **Automatic pool cleaner:** It is an automatic device that moves across the surfaces of the pool and collects debris encountered in its path. There are three types you will encounter, more precisely robotic pool cleaners, suction side cleaners, and pressure-side cleaners, each with a different type of functioning manner but with a generally similar result. What makes this hefty acquisition worthwhile is the fact that it provides complete pool cleaning to ease your work and cut on upkeep time.
- **pH tester:** To know how to maintain water balance, you first need to be aware of the water's pH. This is where the tester comes in, in a matter of seconds or minutes providing you with answers regarding the pH level of the water sample that you use it on.

Basic Maintenance Explained

A sheltered pool that you have indoors won't need as much cleaning as an in-ground or above-ground pool that you have set up outdoors. Here, we will provide you with guidance for cleaning outdoor pools as these are the most common and require the most extensive and frequent attention. So, to keep the pool clean, the basic tasks you have to perform include:

- **Brush sediments from surfaces:** At least once per week, use a brush attached to a telescoping pole to scrub the walls, floor, and steps. This way, any sediments stuck on the surfaces are released and flow toward the main drain for the filter system to remove them.
- **Skim leaves and large-size debris:** Skim the water daily as it is best to make sure there is no debris in the water to prevent more serious contamination. Using a skimmer that you attach to a telescopic pole, or with an automatic skimmer, get out leaves, insects, twigs, and anything else that might have fallen in the water.
- **Clean the skimmers:** Every day, you must check to see if large debris is stuck in the pool skimmers and get anything trapped there out. Make sure that the water level is halfway up the skimmer as well. In case water levels rise because of rainfall, empty as much water as needed to restore proper water level.
- **Test water chemistry:** We will cover this subject in detail in the following. Generally, testing is required either once every few days, weekly, monthly, or once every few months, depending on the water balance aspect you intend to check.
- **Check the filter for debris:** This should be performed every week. If you have a D.E. filter, backwash it every 1-2 weeks. In case you have a sand filter, backwash it once per month. Exact directions for cleaning the filters are always provided with the manufacturer's instructions, so feel free to check there.
- **Use the pump:** Preferably, you should run the pump daily to keep the pool clean and maximize the effectiveness of the chemicals you use for water balance upkeep. There are manufacturer instructions provided for each pump model. Check these guidelines and follow them closely.

How to Circulate Pool Water

Question: How often is it needed?

Answer: For proper upkeep of the filter system, perform water circulation every day, or at least once every 2-3 days. Run the pump for 8 to 12 hours to ensure proper circulation ensues when you shock the water.

The pool circulation system draws water through the skimmers and drains it via the centrifugal pump. As the water passes through the skimmer, a basket retains the large-size debris in it. There is a filter set in place as well, the pressure that the impeller makes forcing the water through it so that any debris that escaped won't make it through any further.

To help the circulation system of the pool, you must get rid of the debris as quickly as possible when you see that it has fallen on the water, clean the pool regularly, and set the return jets to spin the water in a circular motion that pushes it towards the skimmers. If you maintain this system well, it guaranteed pristine water to swim in as algae and bacteria growth are prevented. Moreover, proper circulation ensures good mixing and dispersing of the chemicals used for water balance through the system.

Note: The circulation system works smoother in a circular-shaped pool than it does in a rectangle- or odd-shaped pool.

How to Handle Pool Water Chemistry

Question: How often is it needed?

Answer: Weather conditions and frequency of use impact the rate at which you should test water balance. However, generally, it is recommended to check the pH and chlorine levels 2-3 times per week, total alkalinity once per week, calcium hardness and TDS every month, metals every 3-4 months, and salt levels (if you have a salt chlorination system installed) should be tested as recommended in the accompanying instructions manual of the system.

The role of these chemicals is to keep the pool safe for use by reducing residual buildup and preventing the growth of algae and bacteria. Regularly test the water as often as we recommended previously using specialty strips or digital pool water testers, the latter being more convenient due to their more modern and accurate readings.

After you test the water, you get an idea of what you need to add or reduce to balance water chemistry. Calculate the quantity of chemicals that need to be added according to the shape and size of the pool. Some of the additives that you are likely going to work with include chlorine, algaecide, clarifier, flocculants, metal sequestrant, and other chemicals and sanitizers.

- **pH:** The pool water pH should stay between 7.2 and 7.8. If levels are higher than this, use hydrochloric acid to lower them. In case pH is lower, use sodium carbonate to bring it back to normal.
- **Alkalinity:** Ideally, the pH tends to be more alkaline rather than acidic. But beware that too much alkalinity ends up hurting your skin and eyes. The alkalinity level should stay between 80 PPM and 120 PPM. If it is lower, either shock the pool or add sodium bicarbonate. If levels are higher, use muriatic acid to normalize them.
- **Calcium hardness:** Must be maintained as it is essential to pool plumbing, equipment operation, and water cleanliness. Ideally, it should be from 200 PPM to 400 PPM. Higher levels cause cloudy water, piping buildup, and filter clogging. On the other hand, lower levels cause the materials and surfaces of the pool to break down faster than they should. To adjust calcium hardness, you must use calcium chloride.
- **Sanitizers:** There are several options when it comes to sanitizing the pool water. What most pool owners turn to is chlorine, either in tablet or granule form. Granules are mostly used in shock treatment as they disperse quickly, whereas, tablets distribute slower but better in the water. The purpose of chlorine is to kill germs. Another option for sanitizing the water is to use biguanide, a chlorine and bromine-free substance that attaches to cell membranes and destroys them. Bromine is another viable solution as it disinfects the water without being destabilized by high temperatures.

How to Shock the Water

Question: How often is it needed?

Answer: To make sure that algae growth won't occur and chlorine levels are always kept in check, your best course of action is to shock the pool every 1-2 weeks.

Chloramine forms when chlorine mixed with sweat and other similar contaminants in the water, creating a more substantial molecule that causes itchy and dry skin, irritates the eyes, and can even cause digestive problems when ingested. When you shock the pool, either using chlorine or non-chlorine chemicals, you raise free chlorine levels to prevent issues like algae and bacteria growth and to eradicate chloramines. For the procedure, you can use calcium hypochlorite, lithium hypochlorite, or Dichlor.

How to proceed:

- First off, to make sure that you will do a good job, aim to have free chlorine levels at least 10 times bigger than chloramine levels.
- Test the water to measure the free chlorine and total chlorine levels. Now, you can deduct the free chlorine level from the total chlorine level to learn the combined chlorine level that indicates how much chlorine you need to add in the process.
- Calculate the optimal amount of shock using the instructions on the shocking chemical product packaging as guidance. Add the shock to a 5-gallon bucket of water.
- Turn on the pool pump, dump the pool shock solution in the water, and wait 8-12 hours for the pump to circulate the water and mix in the solution.
- When the time passes, check chlorine levels to confirm they are in the clear.

Is a Very Dirty Pool Salvageable?

If the pool has not been cleaned or dealt with at all for several months, it is probably full of debris. Chances are that green or black algae have developed in it by this point too. While it does take more effort to clean it, this doesn't mean that it is an impossible task. What you should do in this demanding situation is:

- Use a deep leaf net to remove all the debris from the water's surface.
- Check the pH level and adjust chemicals as needed to bring them in a safe range. It will take a few days to follow through with this part because of the advanced existing issues with water purity and clarity.
- Now, you can proceed to shock the pool. This will take several days as well as you must repeat the process as many times as needed until the water becomes clear and wait 24 hours between shock treatments.
- Let the pool filter run overnight to clear out any dirt and bacteria in the water. Do this for a few days. Make sure that you also backwash the filter multiple times per day so that it won't clog.
- Now that you finally have a proper water balance, you can see the bottom of the pool. Brush and vacuum all the surfaces thoroughly to eliminate all debris and gunk, or let a heavy-duty robotic pool cleaner do all the work for you instead.

Conclusion

Installing a pool is likely one of the most fun additions you can make to your home, but as you can see, it requires quite extensive upkeep if you want to swim in safe conditions. While the pool cleaning chores are indeed many, you can considerably reduce your efforts and time spent on them by using an automatic pool cleaner that tends to regular maintenance on its own. This way, you only have to take care of chemistry balance and the occasional pool shocking rather than have to slave every few days skimming and brushing the pool.

Nevertheless, whatever option you prefer, what is important is to abide by the guidelines provided here to make sure the water you swim in does not harbor bacteria, algae, and other contaminants that can lead to infections and irritations.

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