

Everything you need to know before you buy a pool!

## Everything You Need to Know Before Buying a Pool



**Elevate Outdoor Living**  
**Williamston, MI 48895**  
[Elevate-mi.com](http://Elevate-mi.com)

## How exciting is it to think about having a pool in your own backyard?

We are so excited that you reached out to us for more information. **There are so many factors to consider when making such a big investment in your backyard.** We hope you find this Buyer's Guide helpful and that it answers any potential questions you may have. We also hope it helps you with your decision on which contractor you should work with, even if it isn't us. We want everyone to be equipped with the right knowledge and to know the right questions to ask before making such an important decision.

**We created this guide to help customers make more informed decisions when it comes to big projects.** Most of the questions to ask your pool contractor can be applied to hiring any type of contractor. One of the biggest things to consider is if you generally have a good feeling about the company you are working with. Do they get just as excited as you do when they talk to you about your pool project? Are they passionate about the work they do? Are they working with you just for a paycheck or are they doing it because they genuinely love what they do? Working with a company that cares just as much about your project as you do is such a great feeling. Some companies may say they have immediate openings for pools, but that isn't necessarily a good thing. Check their online reviews and ask for customer referrals. Any reputable company should be able to provide these to you. You should also make sure any contractor you hire is listening to you. Pay attention to what they are saying to you. Make sure they are taking into consideration all the aspects of the project to be completed. Sometimes it isn't always feasible to complete the entire project at once and for you, it may make more sense to try and phase the project out. Make sure that your chosen contractor knows how to make the most of this and is able to help you create a plan that makes sense for both of you. Some contractors may also be able to offer financing as an option to complete your project. If that is important to you, make sure your contractor has options available.

## Types of pools

There are three main types of pools you can choose from to be installed at your home. Most people choose to install either Vinyl Liner, Fiberglass, or Gunite. While there are benefits to all of them, There is one type that stands out. Fiberglass pools are a great option for most families, however we understand they are not for everyone. We have chosen to install exclusively fiberglass pools, as they fit most of our clients needs. The below chart shows the pros and cons of the different types of pools available and gives a better look at why we chose fiberglass. The biggest benefit is installation time. While most other pool types typically take weeks to months from dig to swim, Fiberglass pools can be installed and filled within 2-3 days. This means more time enjoying your new pool!

## COMPARE THE POOL MARKET

|              | FIBERGLASS   | CONCRETE   | VINYL LINER  |
|--------------|--|--|--|
| INSTALLATION |  <b>UNDER 2 WEEKS</b><br>Once your fiberglass pool is delivered, the installation process is as simple as "Dig, Set, Swim!"   |  <b>2-4 MONTHS</b><br>From digging, plumbing, steel framing and rebar to spraying the gunite and letting it cure, concrete pools have the longest installation time.  |  <b>2-5 WEEKS</b><br>Pre-assembled components and complete kits from the manufacturer make vinyl liner installation less labor-intensive.                                 |
| INVESTMENT   |  <b>MORE UPFRONT</b><br>Though a high initial investment, fiberglass shells rarely require any lifetime maintenance costs down the road.  |  <b>HIGHEST</b><br>Custom-built by hand projects carry a large initial price tag. Add in the need for acid washes every 2-5 years and resurfacing every 7-10 years that run into thousands of dollars on average. |  <b>CHEAPEST</b><br>Vinyl tends to be the least expensive up front but long-term costs may aggravate you.   |
| APPEARANCE   |  <b>ELEGANT DESIGNS</b><br>Today, there's a wide variety of fiberglass pool designs and optional elements you can choose from. Plus, the smooth finish generates raves from everyone. |  <b>ROUGH WORKS OF ART</b><br>Concrete pools can be made in any size and shape allowing custom design features. But pool bottoms may be rough and hard on your feet.  |  <b>LOW RESALE VALUE</b><br>Vinyl liner pool shapes and sizes are customizable, but the overall appearance is rarely impressive.  |
| DURABILITY   |  <b>FACTORY PRECISION</b><br>Every Imagine Pools@shell is manufactured in a controlled environment and built to last.   |  <b>FOREVER?</b><br>Concrete last a long time but additional factors mean your pool may not. A higher chemical usage means more surface erosion.  |  <b>VULNERABLE</b><br>Only 20-30 millimeter thick, vinyl liner pools are prone to rips and tears.   |
| WARRANTY     |  <b>BEST AVAILABLE</b><br>Lifetime Structural Warranty<br>Lifetime Structural Osmosis Warranty  |  <b>INSTALLER BASED</b><br>Some installers offer between 1-5 years of coverage on their pool installations.   |  <b>PRORATED</b><br>Manufacturers offer limited, prorated warranties that depreciate in value over just a few years.  |
| MAINTENANCE  |  <b>1/2 HOUR PER WEEK</b><br>Fiberglass pools require fewer chemicals, are virtually algae-resistant, and never need to be drained.   |  <b>6-8 HOURS PER WEEK</b><br>More chemicals, more filtration, more scrubbing. Regular acid washes and resurfacing both require draining the pool of water.   |  <b>5-6 HOURS PER WEEK</b><br>Heavier amounts of weekly chemicals and filtration plus full liner replacements every 7-10 years that typically costs thousands of dollars. |

## Choosing Your Contractor

There are so many important details when it comes to buying and installing a pool in your backyard, but arguably the most important is the contractor you hire to install it! Every contractor has a unique process. In buying your pool this is something to consider. What is important to you as far as process goes? For example, will your contractor act as a General Contractor and deal with any subcontractors, such as electricians or concrete companies, or will that fall on you? Do you know how to hire reputable subcontractors, or does your pool have a reliable network for referring additional work to? Is your contractor able to perform all aspects of the job, like installing the auto-cover, pool fencing, or a paver pool deck, or are you responsible for finding someone else to help you with these? Will your contractor be filing permits and dealing with municipalities, or are they putting that on you? This is one of the most stressful and time consuming aspects of any project, but it is extremely necessary. In order to pull permits in the state of Michigan, **your contractor must be a licensed builder or have a material and alterations license through LARA and the state.** Please make sure any contractor you work with has one of these licenses and is completely and properly insured.

Another thing to consider is if your contractor has done any continuing education or certifications. In the case of pools, the leading industry trainings are done through the Pool and Hot Tub Alliance. **Elevate Outdoor Living is the ONLY Certified Builder Professional through PHTA in Michigan.** We are dedicated to providing clients with attention to detail and an overall excellent experience.



Something else to consider when hiring a contractor is their level of communication. When you are making what may be the second largest purchase of your life, you deserve to be treated like more than just a number. Adequate communication is a crucial part of the customer experience. Included in that communication, should be an easy to understand proposal with scope of work to be performed. All parties should have a very clear understanding of all the aspects of the job and what is included/involved. Sometimes additional costs are unavoidable as you cannot see underground conditions while quoting, however all change orders should be clearly communicated and approved by you, before work is completed. Asking your contractor how they handle these types of situations can help you avoid any hidden costs later on during the project.

# Everything you need to know before you buy a pool!

## Design

**Your new pool will become the centerpiece for your backyard.** A great way to visualize what the space will look like with your new pool before making a commitment to it is by having a professional landscape design done prior to purchase. Some pool contractors are able to provide these services to clients for a fee. Ask your contractor if this is a service they offer or if they know of one that does. During the design phase, you can make other selections such as pool decking, whether or not to add more to the space such as a fireplace or outdoor kitchen, or if the pool is really the only thing you are missing. A landscape designer will be able to take photos and measurements of the space to help you determine the best size and shape pool for your space.



Another factor in that decision may be if your pool will include heat or not. **In Michigan, using a pool heater is an important way to maximize your pool season!** Smaller pools will require less energy to heat them. Small plunge pools are a great way to add the benefits of having a swimming pool to small spaces. Factors that may play into your pool design may also include how close you are to your neighbors, how easily accessible the job site is, do you have a well and septic system, or the locations of current landscape features such as trees. All these things can change the layout of the new pool and change what size or style may be best. One of the biggest downsides to fiberglass pools is the lack of customization available. If you are wanting a pool with a diving board, you will most likely need a fiberglass shell that is 40' long to get the proper depth. This can be an issue in a small space. All of these will be discussed during a design and planning meeting with your contractor.

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## Add-ons

A fun way to add some pizzazz to your new pool is by adding certain accessories. Adding pool heat is a great way to make the most and extend a short pool season. **Gas pool heaters** typically add \$4000-5500 installed. **Another popular upgrade is choosing a pool system that is fully automated and controlled from your smartphone.** You can use it to control your heater, pump, chemical levels, deck jets, lighting and more. The average cost for this upgrade is \$2000-4000. **Deck Jets** are a simple yet elegant way to elevate your pool. They are usually about \$750-1000/ each. **Adding lighting in your pool gives beautiful reflections and makes the space more fun to use at night.** The average cost to have lighting installed in your pool is about \$4000 for a complete system. Depending on where you live, an auto-cover, pool fencing, or both may be required. These are typically an additional cost when receiving a pool quote. Be sure to ask your contractor if one of those or both are included in their quoted price. Other fun options you may want to add depending on size and depth of your pool could include **tanning ledges, pool slides, jumping rocks, or pool loungers.** Ask your contractor if they have any other fun options to bring your pool to life!



## Installation guide and how to do it correctly

When it comes to getting your new pool, the installation process can be both exciting and daunting. The process itself is extremely messy and involves tearing up your yard and removing an extensive amount of dirt. An important discussion to have with your contractor is asking them about any ways to mitigate the amount of damage to the yard as much as possible as well as verifying their policy about repairing any areas after they are done. **There are many factors that go into determining where the swimming pool will be installed.** Some things to consider include:

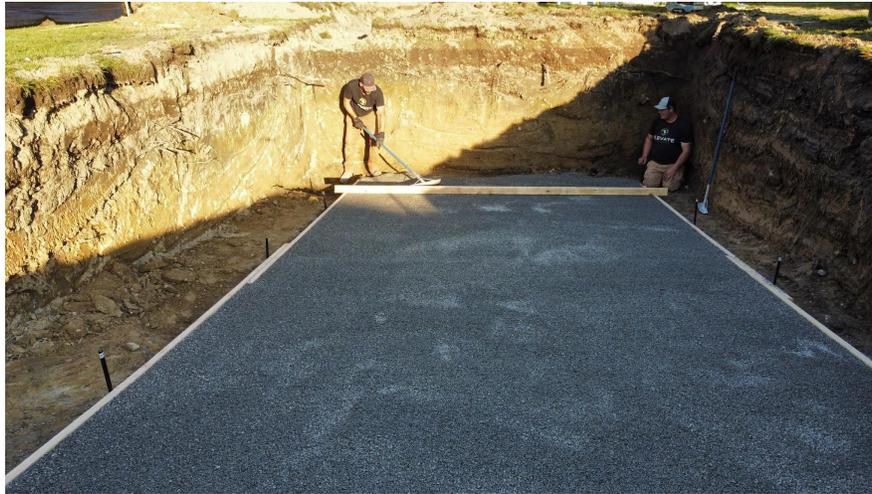
- The size and shape of the property
- Access to the site for machinery and the pool shell- fiberglass pool shells are big and require a lot of space to make it to the backyard. If access space is too small, the pool may need to be flown to the backyard with a crane. Crane trucks are typically used to set pool shells anyway, however they usually don't have to be used to move the shell on the property, unless access is an issue.
- Drainage- This can be something that is hard to understand until you start digging. Above ground factors that play into this include any water sources near the property or and slope and making sure no rain water will drain into the pool. If it is determined that drainage is an issue, additional material may be necessary for the pool to be properly installed and may require additional cost. If there is a natural water source near the property, additional permitting may be required per your local municipality.
- Location of trees and other landscaping-You want to try and avoid having your new pool near any trees, not only because of the root systems, but also to make sure your pool doesn't get filled up with leaves in the fall, which can make it difficult to properly maintain your pool.
- Underground or Overhead obstacles- Pools can be difficult to set if there are any power lines or trees overhead. You also need to be mindful of septic tanks and drain fields when determining the pool location. If these are in your yard, there may be a certain distance from them required by your city or township.
- Location of pool equipment-The location of the pool equipment is significant. No one really wants to see their equipment next to their beautiful new pool. Determining where that will go, but also how to get power to the pool equipment can be a big factor in the location of the pool.

## Everything you need to know before you buy a pool!

The following information describes our specific process for installing a pool, based on manufacturer standards. Other contractors or companies may slightly vary in their process, however there are certain aspects that should be industry standard, such as excavation, drainage with minimum 8" standpipe at the end of the deep end, and material used for backfilling your new fiberglass pool to ensure lasting results.

After carefully considering all of the above, it is time to determine the layout of the pool. The ground on which the pool will be installed needs to be as level as possible to lessen time spent excavating. Once the proper layout has been determined we will begin marking out the area for the pool to be installed, including the coping and any decking to be installed after. We will determine the proper grade for your specific space using our laser level. Once everything has been properly inspected and double checked for accuracy, we will begin excavation. It is imperative that excavation is done properly to ensure the pool itself is set at the right height and also level to prevent water from pooling in certain spots, but also so water doesn't run off your patio into the pool. Typically, excavation starts with the deep end of the pool and works backward. As we are digging, we like to have a truck onsite removing the dirt as we go, to be as efficient as possible and so you aren't left with a large pile of dirt in your yard. Once Excavation is complete, There will be a large hole, which should be fairly level and have non large rocks or clumps of dirt left in it. After this, we will begin setting the base. The base is the material the pool shell will rest on. This has to be extremely precise and level, as any falter can cause sinking or improper settling of the pool. At the deep end, we will place a sump tube that runs from the main drain pit up, to encourage any water to move away from your pool. After all the base is sufficiently leveled, we will then use a compactor to ensure the base is properly compacted and will not move, long after the pool is set.

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The next step in the installation process is setting the pool shell. Once we have ensured a level base with proper compaction, we will begin setting the shell on top of the base. We will use either a crane or an excavator to do this. We will use straps wrapped around the shell and walk the pool to the hole. We will then slowly lower the shell into the hole and check to see if the sides are level. If it is not, we will then slowly raise the shell back out and reset it. Once the sides are level we will use a grade rod to check that the height of the pool is perfect. After we have made sure the pool shell is properly set, we will continue plumbing it.



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When plumbing the pool, know that **we are using a high grade schedule 40 rigid pvc, not flexible pvc pipe.** This type of pipe requires a bit more effort to install, but **Sch. 40 hard pipe is the only type rated for underground use.** [Click here for a quick video on why we don't use flexible pvc.](#) When we install the plumbing on the pool shell, this can be done at two points of the process. The first is prior to the pool shell being installed into the ground. This method makes the process of installing the interior fittings and hanging the pipe on the shell not just easier, but safer as well. The second method is installing the plumbing fittings and pipe while the pool is in the ground. Typically, we will at a minimum install the interior fittings in the pool and run our piping when the shell is set in the hole. Our preferred method however, is to plumb the pool prior to setting it in the hole. The fittings are sealed with a liberal amount of pool approved silicone on the interior and exterior of the shell. Rigid pvc pipe will be supported with straps secured to the pool shell to help ensure the lines will not be stressed during the rest of the installation. After the returns are installed, we will install the suction lines. Pools with no extra features (i.e. slide, tanning ledge, lighting, etc.) will be plumbed with a skimmer at one end of the pool plumbed with. If your pool will have some of these additional features, two suction outlets located at the deep end of the pool.



Once the pool is plumbed and in the hole, the lines will be run to the equipment pad usually 30-60 feet away from the pool. Typically, it's best to install powered pool equipment like filter systems at or next to your house, preferably in an inconspicuous setting. Many pool owners opt to install their equipment in their yards, somewhere out of sight. One thing to consider is that the further away from your house, the higher the cost will be for electrical and gas. **A pool's filter system has two major components: the pump and the filter.** The pump circulates water, while the filter removes debris and small particles from the water. Many filter systems have other elements as well, such as flow control valves, salt chlorinators (if you've opted for a salt system), lighting switches, and heaters. We will provide both a pump and cartridge filter big enough to efficiently handle all of your system needs. After we have everything plumbed, we will begin securing it.

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Once the shell is leveled and plumbed it's time to secure the shell. We begin the process of **installing the 8" standpipe at the deep end of the pool**. This pipe gives pool professionals access to any ground water around the pool, if your pool requires draining in the future. Next, we start backfilling. With a fiberglass pool, you need to keep consistent pressure on both the inside and the outside of the shell, simultaneously. This is done by filling the pool with water at the same time as backfilling with stone. We begin with backfilling to just about a foot above the bottom of the shell, starting at the deep end. The backfill should be done using a **3/4 clean stone, with no fines (AND NO PEA STONE!)**. Using this type of material ensures proper compaction and is less likely to cause any settling or issues in the future. The backfill will be installed up until the plumbing pipes are fully encased in stone. Electricians will typically have started wiring pool equipment by the time we begin the backfill process. We prefer to have pump and filter systems wired before backfilling, so water can circulate as soon as possible. This isn't always possible, but it's our standard approach.

**Our crews should have your pool shell installed, full of water, and connected to completed plumbing work, by the end of the second or third day of construction.** Once the entire pool is backfilled and plumbed it's time to finish securing the shell.

**All in-ground fiberglass pools need some concrete around their perimeters for stability.** We will pour this concrete bond beam. The method we use will ensure that your pool will stay structurally sound for many years. First, we use multiple 12"-14" composite rebar rods drilled through the top of the fiberglass pool shell that will be encased into the concrete, helping fuse the shell to the concrete collar. Next, we pour a 12" thick concrete collar. This collar will not only help lock in the pool shell, but will also support paver coping that will be installed around your pool. Now that the pool is locked in, it's time to finish it off with a pool deck.

At Elevate, **we specialize in installing beautiful custom paver pool decks**, however we understand this may not be for everyone. Another option is to have a brushed or stamped concrete. When it comes to your pool deck we strongly recommend choosing a paver pool deck, instead of traditional concrete, for several reasons. To help you decide which is best for you, we've laid out some pros and cons to each.

# Everything you need to know before you buy a pool!

|                             | Paver Pool deck   | Concrete (stamped or Brushed Finish)   |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Appearance</b>           | Concrete pavers can be customized in a number of different shapes, colors, and materials giving you the perfect look you desire.  | Brushed concrete is typically a less desirable looking surround. Stamped concrete comes in a number of different colors and patterns to mimic much of what pavers offer.   |
| <b>Compression strength</b> | Concrete pavers have a very high compression strength of 8,000 psi or higher which makes it very resistant to cracking as well as freeze thaw cycles.   | Lower Compression strength due to curing in the field and typically only yields around 4500 psi  |
| <b>Maintenance Cost</b>     | The maintenance cost of pavers is typically replacing the joint sand every 5-7 years, and sealing the pavers (not necessary) if desired. Sealing will help protect the surface for years to come however the pavers we install have a factory sealer already on them. | Stamped concrete typically needs resealed every 5-7 years depending on wear from traffic and weather elements.   |
| <b>Repairs</b>              | Can be made easily. Should a paver crack it can simply be removed and replaced with a new one. If settling occurs, the settled areas can be pulled up, material can be added, and pavers be laid back in place.   | Concrete repairs are difficult and can be expensive. Settled concrete can be pumped up unless it is already cracked, in that case nothing can be done. If a repair is needed, it has to be cut out and new concrete has to be poured. It will always be evident of a repair. |
| <b>Slip Resistance</b>      | Pavers have a much higher slip resistance when around wet surfaces. The polymeric joint sand also helps permeate water faster.  | Brushed concrete is highly slip resistant but can wear down in high traffic areas. Stamped concrete is typically smoother and unless a grip additive is added to the mix, can be unsafe at times when wet.   |

# Everything you need to know before you buy a pool!

|                          |   |  |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Lifespan</b>          | When properly installed 50+ Years   | When properly installed can be 20-30 years, however there will typically be cracking (sometimes within the first year)   |
| <b>Installation cost</b> | Typically pavers come with a slightly higher installation cost but can vary with more intricate and customized design patterns    | Brushed concrete is usually the least expensive option. Stamped concrete is usually in between the two, but can be just as high as paver installation.   |
| <b>Installation time</b> | Pavers can typically be installed on the same timeline as concrete. It is less likely to be delayed with weather unlike concrete. | Installation time is typically quicker than pavers, although it depends on a number of different variables. Weather is the biggest enemy of concrete and conditions have to be perfect for proper install. |

## Financing

We understand that putting a pool in your backyard is an investment. We also understand that not everyone has the cash on hand ( or doesn't want to spend it all) to pay for the project in full. **We are proud to offer our customers financing options through HFS.** They offer swimming pool loans with enough funding to cover your entire outdoor project. We have included a link for you, if you think financing may be a good option for you. You are able to check rates without it affecting your credit score.

**[Get Started Here!](#)**

**Below, you will find a list of common mistakes people make when hiring a pool contractor. We hope that by providing this, you can avoid making these mistakes.**

# Everything you need to know before you buy a pool!

## **Mistake #1: Not getting everything in writing**

Make sure you know exactly what is included during your pool installation. Some contractors are not upfront about disclosing the costs and it can hurt the homeowner in the end. Some of the most common hidden costs are listed below. **Ask your contractor if any of the following is included in their proposal, and get it in writing!:**

- Hauling away dirt that is excavated for the pool shell
- Electrical hook-up for pool equipment
- Pool Fencing, which may be required depending on where you live
- Landscape around the pool area
- Patio or Decking material (or even the concrete collar)
- Drainage for yard or pool deck
- Tree removal if needed in the space
- Hitting ground water or rock during excavation

## **Mistake #2: Starting the project without knowing the exact cost of different aspects.**

Different from surprise costs popping up during a project, Unknown costs are the things you know will arise, but are unsure of their precise amounts.

Some pool builders will only give you square footage prices for patios or retaining walls, knowing full well you won't actually know the final cost for those options. These builders are more interested in closing the sale than keeping to their customer's budget.

If there is a patio involved in the project, we will include that price on our proposal and you will know the exact price of that patio. Some contractors may tell you "It will cost about \$50/ sq ft." But you have no idea what the total will end up being.

**Get your pricing for everything you might need in writing before construction begins.**

## **Mistake #3: Going with the lowest bid**

There are three things to consider when getting a pool installed. You can have Fast service, Good Quality, Low Pricing. The reality is, you can usually only pick two of these, but almost never all three. Fast and cheap probably won't be good. Good and cheap won't be fast. And fast and good won't be cheap. There will always be companies ready to install your pool for a lower price, however you need to understand that this project is an investment and in reality, lower price generally means quality won't be there down the road. Price will always be an important part of your decision, but **you should always ask yourself why your contractor is pricing themselves so low compared to others.**

## **Mistake #4: Not thinking about the future**

A big factor in getting a pool should be how long you plan to stay in your home. **A pool is a huge investment and we want to make sure it makes sense for your family.** This is a big part of why we install only fiberglass pools.

For example, if you get a vinyl liner pool, even though fiberglass better suits your needs. A vinyl liner pool might cost \$6,000 less to install than a fiberglass pool of the same size. But over the lifetime of your pool, you'll spend about \$8,000 more per liner replacement adding to the cost than it would've cost you to install a fiberglass pool in the first place.

## **Mistake #5: Not properly vetting your contractor**

**Check online reviews, verify their licensing, and obtain a copy of their liability insurance.** All of these are important steps, in addition to asking the right questions, to make sure you are hiring the right contractor,

## **Mistake #6: Not trusting you gut**

Always trust your first instinct. If at some point during your initial research, something comes up that feels off about a contractor, trust your gut. **You should only work with someone you have a good feeling about and generally makes you excited about the pool buying process!**

## **Mistake #7: Not being clear on what your dream backyard will look like.**

**Don't assume the contractor knows what you want.** Be as specific as possible and allow them to educate you on what is possible based on your budget. Before talking with a contractor, have a clear idea of what you want and where you want to install the pool. It may be a good idea to book an onsite consultation, or hire a landscape designer that knows pool installs to come up with a design with everything you want included. This is a great way to visualize your space and make sure everyone working on the project is on the same page. This also helps make sure there are no underground obstructions in line with where you envisioned the pool and that logistically, it makes sense.

**Here is a checklist of common expenses included or associated with a fiberglass pool installation project. Be sure to ask your contractor what, if any, of the following is included in their proposal:**

- Permits/Inspections
- Fiberglass pool shell
- Pool shell delivery
- Water to fill the pool
- Pump and filtration equipment
- Pool Vacuum/start up kit
- Electrical Hook-up cost
- Crane fee
- Stone Backfill
- Dirt Hauling
- Yard drainage
- Pool Fence (If Applicable)
- Automatic Cover
- Pool deck cost
- Cost of retaining wall (If Applicable)
- Any tree removal
- Landscaping
- Yard Repair