

# Pool Quote Red Flags Checklist

A pre-signing checklist for South African homeowners. Print it, take it to every site meeting, and tick each item off in writing before you accept a pool builder's quote.

## 1. Excavation and site access

- Rock or shale excavation rate (per cubic metre)**  
Sandstone, granite or dolerite can add R30,000 to R120,000.
- Site access assessment**  
Crane, mini-excavator or hand-dig labour where TLB cannot reach.
- Spoil removal off-site**  
Many quotes assume spoil left on property; adds R6,000 to R18,000.
- Dewatering high water tables**  
Coastal or low-lying sites: R4,000 to R15,000.

## 2. Drainage, fencing, coping, lighting and reinstatement

- Sub-soil drainage and hydrostatic relief**  
Non-negotiable in clay, coastal or sloped sites (R3,500 to R12,000).
- SANS 10400-D pool fencing**  
Legally required; often shown as 'by others' (R8,000 to R45,000).
- Coping, paving and surrounds**  
Quotes often price the pool only (R12,000 to R85,000).
- Garden and landscape reinstatement**  
Lawns, irrigation and paving damaged by excavation.
- Pool lighting + DB connection + COC**  
Includes wiring, not just fittings (R4,500 to R18,000).
- Backwash plumbing and soakaway**  
Required by most municipalities (R2,500 to R8,000).

## 3. Equipment upgrades worth pricing in

- Salt chlorinator vs basic chlorinator**  
Upgrade R6,000 to R14,000; cuts chemical cost 40 to 60%.
- Variable-speed pump**  
R4,500 to R12,000 above single-speed; 18 to 30 month payback.
- Heat pump**  
R28,000 to R55,000 installed; +4 to 6 months swim season.
- Automated controller**  
R8,000 to R22,000; retrofitting later costs 30 to 50% more.
- Thermal or slatted cover**  
R6,000 to R85,000; cuts evaporation 60 to 80%.

#### 4. Payment schedule red flags

- Deposit no more than 30% before site establishment**  
Larger deposits shift risk entirely onto the homeowner.
- Final payment after commissioning + snag list**  
Never pay final before pool runs 7 to 14 days clean.
- 5 to 10% retention held for defects**  
Standard practice; protects against early failures.
- Payments tied to milestones, not dates**  
Pay for completed work, not the calendar.
- Itemised variation rate schedule**  
Pre-agree rates for rock, water table and other extras.
- All invoicing on the books, no cash discounts**  
Cash deals void your CPA protection.

#### 5. Final quote comparison checklist

- Quote itemised by stage**  
Excavation, shell, plumbing, finish, equipment, surrounds.
- Inclusions and exclusions in plain language**  
Not buried in clauses or 'standard terms'.
- Site visit completed before pricing**  
No site visit means generic assumptions.
- Soil and access conditions stated in writing**  
Protects you from variation surprises.
- SANS 10400-D safety scoped**  
Fencing, covers, self-closing gates.
- Equipment make and model specified**  
Not 'pump and filter'; exact spec required.
- Warranty terms in writing**  
Shell, finish, equipment and workmanship.
- Public liability insurance + references**  
Verified by phone, not just printed.

**Pro tip:** If two quotes differ by more than 15%, it is almost always because of different scope assumptions, not different builder quality. Normalise the scope first, then compare price.