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# Pool & Spa

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# Swimming Pool Options

Essential information for homeowners  
ready to build a swimming pool

By Patti Plummer





Photo courtesy of Shuman. Inland Photography. Designed by SJP. Philips, Quarter Pools and Stone, Inc. Built by Valley Pool and Spa, Kelowna, B.C., Canada.

Once you make the decision to build a swimming pool, you need to know the basics of pool construction to know what your options are. There are a number of factors, and quite a few questions, that must be taken into consideration before construction begins. Many elements—from what type of pool you want to how you will maintain the finished poolscape—should be investigated before you hire a professional to manage your project. As the project progresses, you may have additional requests for custom design elements, but as the old saying goes, “You have to know the rules in order to break them.”

Inground pools come in three basic types: concrete, fiberglass, and vinyl-lined. Deciding which material is best for you is determined by variables like budget, location, the desired style, size, and shape, and how the pool will be used.

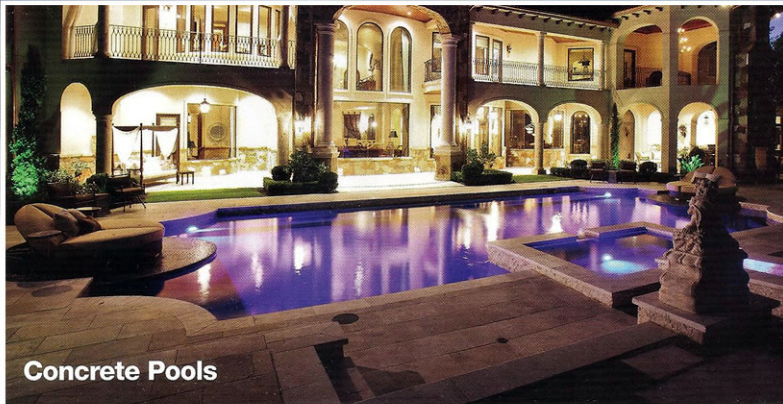
### Concrete: Customization

Concrete is the best option for a homeowner seeking a completely custom pool. If you can envision the pool of your dreams, a designer and builder can usually translate the idea into reality. However, there is a caveat: a good designer will advise that you harmonize your new pool with your property’s architecture and natural setting. For instance, if you have a view of a beautiful vista, an elegant vanishing-edge pool may be suitable while a contemporary pool would be more fitting in an urban setting.

Once the design is approved, it’s time for construction. After the hole is dug, the next step is to install the plumbing and line the excavated hole with a framework grid of steel reinforcing rods, or *rebar*. Secured together with wire, the rebar is then covered with a thick layer of concrete that is sprayed onto the grid and



Photo courtesy of Elite Pools by SJP.



## Concrete Pools

troweled to form the pool shell. Typically, the concrete bond beam surrounding the perimeter is 12 to 14 inches thick, while the pool floors and walls are 6 to 8 inches.

The method of spraying concrete is called shotcrete. It can be done one of two ways: by using a dry mix that is injected with water as it exits the hose (often referred to as "gunite"), or by using a wet, premixed concrete that is pumped from a truck. After curing for about a week, concrete pools need to be finished with a finishing material; the most common choices are plaster, tile, and stone aggregate.

Plaster can be tinted almost any color and is troweled over the concrete to create a smooth, waterproof surface. Tile, which can be the most costly option, is also the easiest to maintain because algae has a difficult time growing along its smooth surface. Stone aggregate offers a natural look and is available in numerous color combinations. Smooth and polished pebbles are mixed with clear epoxy and troweled into the concrete, creating a waterproof surface.

Concrete pools can be built in most environments and can be completed in about six to 12 weeks, although complex designs can take longer. Normally homeowners can expect to pay anywhere from \$30,000 to \$50,000, but size and customization may increase the costs.

