



STAGE 1 • TOP OF FUNNEL

10 Questions to Ask Every Pool Builder

The questions that separate great builders from the rest

Why These Questions Matter

Hiring a pool builder is one of the largest financial decisions a homeowner makes. Yet most people spend more time researching a car purchase than they do vetting the company that will spend 3–6 months in their backyard and take \$60,000–\$150,000 of their money. These questions are designed to cut through the sales pitch and reveal who you're actually dealing with.

1 How long have you been in business?

Years in business is a proxy for stability, experience, and accountability. A company that's been operating for 10+ years in your region has weathered economic cycles, resolved warranty claims, and built a reputation that's verifiable. Newer companies aren't automatically bad — but they carry more risk.

GREEN FLAG

10+ years in business with local references you can verify.

RED FLAG

Less than 3 years, or can't provide references in your area.

2 What percentage of the work do you subcontract?

This question reveals how much control the builder actually has over your project. A builder who subcontracts 80% of the work is really a sales organization — the quality of your pool depends entirely on whoever shows up that week. Ask specifically which phases are in-house versus subcontracted.

GREEN FLAG

Key phases (excavation, plumbing, electrical, finish) are performed by trained in-house crews.

RED FLAG

Everything is subcontracted with no direct oversight of the tradespeople on your property.

3 How many projects do you take on per year?

Volume tells you a lot. A builder doing 5–15 pools per year can give each project real attention. A builder doing 60+ pools with the same number of supervisors is spreading thin. Ask how many project supervisors they have and how many projects each one manages simultaneously.

GREEN FLAG

A manageable volume with a clear supervisor-to-project ratio (ideally 1 supervisor per 3–5 active builds).

RED FLAG

High volume with vague answers about supervision — or a single supervisor managing 10+ projects at once.

4 What does your quote include — and exclude?

This is the most important financial question you can ask. A quote that doesn't specify fencing, permits, patio, landscaping restoration, and equipment startup is not a complete quote. Ask the builder to walk you through every line item and confirm what is not included. Get it in writing.

GREEN FLAG

A detailed line-item quote that specifies every material, brand, and scope of work — including exclusions.

RED FLAG

A single lump-sum number with no breakdown, or a quote that excludes fencing, permits, or patio work.

5 What is the realistic timeline for my project?

Ask for a timeline that includes permit processing, not just construction. In PA, NJ, and DE, permits can take 3–10 weeks depending on the municipality. A builder who promises a 6-week build without mentioning permits is either uninformed or being deliberately misleading. Ask for a phase-by-phase breakdown.

GREEN FLAG

A realistic 3–6 month timeline that accounts for permits, weather, and material lead times.

RED FLAG

A promise of 4–6 weeks total, or a builder who can't explain what drives the timeline.

6 What equipment brands do you install?

The equipment package — pump, filter, heater, automation — is what you'll live with for 15–20 years. Industry-leading brands include Pentair, Hayward, and Jandy. Ask specifically which brands and models are included in your quote. A builder who installs off-brand or builder-grade equipment to protect their margin is not working in your interest.

GREEN FLAG

Named brands (Pentair, Hayward, Jandy) with model numbers specified in the contract.

RED FLAG

Vague references to 'quality equipment' with no brand names, or brands you can't find reviews for.

7 What warranties do you provide — and on what?

There are at least three warranties on a pool: the structural warranty on the shell or walls, the equipment warranty on the pump, filter, and heater, and the finish warranty on the plaster, pebble, or liner. Ask for each one in writing. Ask what voids the warranty. Ask who handles warranty claims — the builder or the manufacturer.

GREEN FLAG

Separate written warranties for structure, equipment, and finish — with clear terms and a named point of contact.

RED FLAG

A verbal promise of 'lifetime warranty' with no written documentation, or a warranty that requires the builder to still be in business to honor.

8 What does your payment schedule look like?

A professional builder ties payments to construction milestones — not to calendar dates or arbitrary requests. A standard schedule might look like: 10% at signing, 30% at excavation, 30% at shell/steel, 20% at decking, 10% at completion. Be cautious of large upfront deposits or requests for payment before visible progress.

GREEN FLAG

Milestone-based payments tied to specific, verifiable stages of construction.

RED FLAG

Large upfront deposits (over 15%), payment requests before work begins, or no written payment schedule.

9 How do you differ from your competition?

This question reveals self-awareness and confidence. A great builder can articulate exactly what makes them different – their process, their people, their materials, their communication style. A builder who says 'we're the best' without specifics hasn't thought hard enough about their own value proposition. Listen for concrete, verifiable differences.

GREEN FLAG

Specific, verifiable differentiators: in-house crews, named equipment brands, communication process, warranty terms, or design capabilities.

RED FLAG

Generic claims ('we're the best,' 'we care about quality') with no specifics or proof.

10 Who among your competitors do you respect?

This is the character question. A builder who can name a competitor they respect – and explain why – is a builder who is confident, honest, and secure in their own work. A builder who dismisses all competitors or refuses to answer is telling you something important about how they operate. The best builders in any industry know and respect their peers.

GREEN FLAG

Names a competitor with genuine respect and explains specifically what they do well.

RED FLAG

Dismisses all competitors, refuses to answer, or uses the question to launch into another sales pitch.

What You're Really Listening For

These questions aren't just about the answers – they're about how the answers are delivered. Pay attention to:

- Confidence without arrogance – they know their work
- Specificity – named brands, real numbers, actual timelines
- Transparency about limitations – no builder is perfect at everything
- Willingness to put everything in writing
- How they respond when you push back or ask follow-ups
- Whether they ask questions about your project or just sell

The Best Sign of All

A builder who says 'I don't know, but I'll find out and get back to you' is more trustworthy than one who has a confident answer for everything. Honesty about uncertainty is a sign of integrity.

The right builder won't be threatened by these questions. They'll welcome them. And the one who answers them best – with specifics, in writing, without hesitation – is almost certainly the one you want building your pool.

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