GENERAL

how to drain a pool

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How to Drain a Pool: A Complete Step by Step Guide

Whether you're preparing for a big renovation, cleaning up after a storm, or simply need to perform routine maintenance, knowing **how to drain a pool**is an essential skill for every pool owner. Draining a pool is not just about emptying water; it's about doing it safely, efficiently, and responsibly so that the pool remains in top condition for years to come.

In this comprehensive guide, we'll walk you through every detail: from the reasons you might need to drain your pool, to the tools you'll need, to the exact steps for a successful drain. We'll also cover safety precautions, environmental considerations, and what to do once the pool is empty. By the end, you'll have a clear roadmap for tackling this task with confidence.

Why and When Should You Drain a Pool?

Before you start, it's important to understand why a pool might need draining. Common scenarios include:

- Seasonal Maintenance: Many owners drain their pools in late winter to protect equipment during the off season.
- Major Repairs: Replacing a pump, filter, or installing new tiles often requires a completely dry pool.
- Water Quality Issues: Persistent algae blooms or chemical imbalances that can't be corrected through normal treatment.
- Structural Problems: Cracks or leaks that need inspection and repair.
- Relocating or Rebuilding: When you're moving the pool or rebuilding the surrounding area.

Knowing the purpose of your drain helps you choose the right method and plan accordingly.

Types of Pools and Their Drainage Needs

Different pool designs require slightly different approaches. Below are the most common pool types and key considerations for each.

1. In Ground Concrete Pools

Concrete pools have a thick shell and often a built in drainage system. They can handle high water volumes, but you'll need to be careful about the load on the surrounding soil.

2. In Ground Vinyl Liner Pools

Vinyl liners are more delicate. Avoid sudden pressure changes that could crack the liner. Use gentle, controlled draining.

3. Above Ground Pools

These are typically easier to drain because they're smaller and have a removable cover. However, the drainage pipe may be more exposed to damage.

4. Saltwater vs. Chlorine Pools

Both types can be drained using the same methods, but you'll need to treat the water differently after refilling to maintain the correct chemical balance.

Essential Tools and Materials You'll Need

Having the right equipment on hand ensures a smooth process. Here's a quick checklist:

- Pool Drain Pump: A submersible or external pump designed for pool use.
- Flexible Drain Hose: Rated for high pressure and water flow.
- Water Level Gauge or Meter: To monitor the depth as you drain.
- Protective Gear: Gloves, safety glasses, and waterproof boots.
- Drainage Pipe or Channel: Directs water away from the pool area.
- Cleaning Supplies: Brooms, brushes, and a vacuum for debris removal.
- Water Testing Kit: For checking pH, chlorine, and other parameters after refilling.

Step by Step Guide: How to Drain a Pool

Below is a detailed walkthrough that covers the entire process from start to finish.

Step 1: Prepare the Area

Clear the pool deck and surrounding area of any debris, plants, or obstructions. Lay down a tarp or protective sheet to catch any stray water or chemicals.

Step 2: Check the Pool's Drainage System

Inspect the existing drains and skimmers. Clean out any clogs with a plumber's snake or specialized pool cleaning tool. A clean drainage path is critical for efficient water removal.

Step 3: Turn Off Power and Pump

Switch off the pool's main electrical supply and ensure the pump is turned off. This prevents accidental start up during the draining process.

Step 4: Connect the Drain Pump

Attach the flexible hose to the pump's inlet. If you're using a portable submersible pump, position it in the lowest part of the pool to maximize flow. Secure the hose to the designated drain outlet.

Step 5: Set Up the Drainage Path

Direct the hose's outlet to a suitable drainage area—ideally a storm drain, a dry well, or a large container. Ensure the outlet is positioned lower than the pool's bottom to allow gravity to assist the flow.

Step 6: Start the Pump

Turn on the pump and monitor the water level. If the pump is running too fast, you may need to adjust the flow or add a flow restrictor to avoid sudden pressure spikes.

Step 7: Monitor the Drainage

As the water level drops, keep an eye on the depth gauge. Stop the pump when you reach the desired level—often the bottom of the skimmer or the pool's lowest point.

Step 8: Remove Debris and Inspect

While the pool is partially drained, use a brush or vacuum to remove any debris that has settled. Inspect the walls and floor for cracks, leaks, or other damage.

Step 9: Final Drain and Clean-Up

Continue draining until the pool is completely empty. Once drained, clean the interior thoroughly with a mild detergent solution. Rinse with clean water to remove any residue.

Step 10: Refill and Re balance

When refilling, add fresh, treated water and adjust chemical levels to match manufacturer recommendations. Test the water frequently until it reaches the optimal range.

Alternative Drainage Methods

While the pump method is the most common, other techniques may be suitable depending on your circumstances.

1. Manual Drainage Using a Bucket or Hose

For smaller pools or when a pump isn't available, manually removing water with a large bucket or garden hose can work. This method is slower and more labor intensive but can be effective for quick, small drains.

2. Using a Built In Pool Drain

Some pools have a dedicated drain pipe that can be opened manually. This is often found in commercial or older residential pools. Ensure you have a proper outlet to avoid flooding the surrounding area.

3. Evaporation and Natural Drainage

In mild climates, you can let the pool drain naturally by covering it with a tarp to reduce evaporation while the water slowly seeps out through the floor. This is a very slow process and not recommended for most owners.

Safety Tips When Draining a Pool

Safety should always be your top priority. Keep the following in mind:

- Electrical Safety: Never touch electrical components with wet hands. Use insulated tools.
- Proper Ventilation: If you're using chemicals, ensure the area is well ventilated to avoid inhalation of fumes.
- Secure the Pump: Make sure the pump is stable and cannot tip over during operation.
- Avoid Over Pressure: Excessive pressure can damage the pool's structure or the pump itself.
- Wear Protective Gear: Gloves, goggles, and waterproof boots protect against splashes and chemicals.

Environmental Considerations

When draining a pool, you're handling a large volume of water that may contain chemicals. Dispose of it responsibly.

1. Check Local Regulations

Many municipalities have rules about draining pool water. Some require a permit or have specific disposal sites.

2. Treat the Water

If you plan to reuse the water (e.g., for irrigation), treat it to remove chlorine and other chemicals. Alternatively, pour it into a designated drainage system that can handle the chemical load.

3. Avoid Over Saturation of Soil

Directing a massive volume of water into a small area can cause flooding or soil erosion. Use a proper drainage channel or spread the water over a larger area.

Post Drain Maintenance: What to Do Next

Once your pool is empty, it’s a prime opportunity to perform deep cleaning and repairs.

1. Inspect for Damage

Check the walls, floor, and equipment for cracks, leaks, or corrosion. Address any issues before refilling.

2. Clean the Interior

Use a pool brush and vacuum to remove algae, mineral deposits, and debris. A clean surface ensures better chemical distribution once the pool is refilled.

3. Check Equipment

Inspect the pump, filter, and heater. Replace any worn parts or clean filters thoroughly.

4. Re balance Water Chemistry

After refilling, test pH, alkalinity, calcium hardness, and sanitizer levels. Adjust as needed to meet the recommended ranges.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How long does it take to drain a standard 20 ft pool?

A: Typically 2–4 hours, depending on the pump’s flow rate and the pool’s size. Larger pools may take longer.

Q: Can I drain my pool during the winter?

A: Yes, but you should protect the pool and equipment from freezing temperatures. Use antifreeze or keep the water slightly above freezing.

Q: Is it safe to drain the pool using a garden hose?

A: It’s possible for small volumes, but a dedicated pool drain pump is safer and more efficient. A garden hose can’t handle the pressure and may damage the pool.

Q: What should I do with the drained water?

Check local regulations. You can either dispose of it in a drainage system, use it for irrigation after treatment, or pour it into a designated container for later use.

Q: How do I prevent algae after refilling?

Use a proper sanitizer, maintain proper pH and alkalinity, and keep the water circulating. Regular testing and cleaning are key.

Conclusion

Knowing **how to drain a pool** is more than a handy trick—it’s a crucial part of responsible pool ownership. By following the steps outlined above, you’ll ensure a safe, efficient, and environmentally friendly drain. Whether you’re preparing for a big renovation, tackling a stubborn algae problem, or simply keeping the pool in top shape, a well executed drain sets the stage for a cleaner, healthier, and longer lasting swimming experience.

Take the time to plan, gather the right tools, and adhere to safety guidelines, and you’ll be ready to handle any draining situation with confidence. Happy swimming!

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