

## Pool barrier inspection checklist for homeowners

Residential pools that are **400 mm deep or more**, including **permanent, temporary, portable and spa pools** – must have a compliant pool barrier.

Pool barriers are essential for **keeping young children safe**. They help prevent unsupervised access to the pool area, reducing the risk of drowning.

If you **own or rent out** a property with a pool, it is your **legal responsibility** to ensure the pool has a physical barrier that:

- › **restricts access** to children under 5 years of age,
- › **surrounds the pool** and part or all of the immediate pool area, and
- › **cannot be climbed** from the outside.

Importantly, **a building consent is required** for any new pool barrier – even if you are building it yourself.

### Is your pool barrier safe and compliant?

This checklist is a starting point to help you assess the safety and compliance of your residential pool barrier. It's most useful for:

- › **Homeowners with existing pools** and barriers that were previously compliant, who want to check for changes or maintenance issues before their next council inspection.
- › **Homeowners with small heated pools** and compliant safety covers, or those unsure if their setup meets requirements.

Councils enforce pool barrier rules and can issue notices to fix non-compliant pools. Failure to comply may result in fines or prosecution – up to \$20,000 for individuals and \$60,000 for body corporates.

 **Important:** This checklist is not intended for homeowners who are installing a new pool or have installed one without a consented barrier.

If this applies to you, do not rely on this checklist to assess compliance. You will likely need a building consent, and your local council will assess compliance as part of that process.

Please seek professional advice. A qualified expert can help you design a compliant barrier and guide you through the consent process. This is the safest and most reliable way to ensure your pool meets technical requirements and protects children from harm.

Pool barriers may include features that differ slightly from what's covered in this checklist, particularly if originally approved under older requirements. They require regular attention and maintenance. Use this checklist to cover the basics and speak to your local council during their visit to confirm whether your barrier meets all requirements and helps keep young children safe around the pool.

We recommend keeping a copy of this checklist.

More information about the rules for building consent is provided on the last page of this checklist.

# Pool barrier and fencing

Every pool that is filled or partly filled with water needs a physical barrier such as a fence that restricts access to the pool by unsupervised children under 5 years of age. There are requirements for the height and design of the fence, how all gates or doors into the pool area are installed, and what is located outside the fence.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | You're on track              | Room to improve             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Is your fence at least 1200mm high?</b><br>The fence must be no less than 1200mm high from ground level on the outer side of the fence.                                                                                                                               | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Is the fence free from any gaps larger than 100mm?</b><br>A 100mm sphere must not be able to pass through.                                                                                                                                                            | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>There are no climbable objects within 1200mm outside of the fence</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Is the fence strong and rigid?</b><br>If you notice anything broken or missing, you must fix this as soon as possible.                                                                                                                                                | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| If there are horizontal or diagonal components (such as rails, boards, battens, palings, slats, braces, rods, wires), or projections or indentations from the outside face sticking out more than 10mm, <b>are they spaced at least 900mm apart to prevent climbing?</b> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

## Barrier that is on a property boundary

Barriers on the property boundary must be designed to prevent children from climbing down the inside.

|                                                                                                                                                                      | You're on track              | Room to improve             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Is the fence at least 1800mm high?</b><br>If your fence is on a property boundary, the fence must be no less than 1800mm high from ground level on the pool side. | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Is there 1000mm of width between the bottom of the barrier and the edge of the pool?</b>                                                                          | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Is the fence free from any gaps larger than 100mm?</b><br>A 100mm sphere must not be able to pass through.                                                        | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Is the fence strong and rigid?</b><br>If you notice anything broken or missing, you must fix this as soon as possible.                                            | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Is the area within 150mm of the top of the fence free from anything a child could use to climb, like ledges, gaps or handholds?</b>                               | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Is the zone 900mm from the top of your fence on the pool side clear of anything a child could use to climb, like horizontal bars, ledges or decorations?</b>      | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

## Gates

This applies to all gates leading into the pool area.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | You're on track              | Room to improve             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Is the gate at least 1200mm high?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Does the gate open away from the pool?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                            | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Does the gate self-close and self-latch?</b><br>Gate latch must automatically latch on the closing of the gate.                                                                                                                       | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Is the latch out of reach of children?</b><br>The latch must be positioned 1500mm high, or on the inside of the gate.<br>The gate latch cannot be released from the outside of the pool area by inserting an object through any gaps. | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Is the surrounding area of the gate clear, so it cannot be held open?</b><br>The gate must be clear of any obstructions that may hold it open.                                                                                        | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Is the gate strong and rigid?</b><br>If the gate is lifted or pulled down the gate must not come off its hinges, and the clearance under the gate will not exceed 100mm.                                                              | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

## Doors and windows in building walls that are part of the barrier

### Doors:

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | You're on track              | Room to improve             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Is the door single-leaf and no more than 1000mm wide?</b><br>Doors providing access to the immediate pool area must be made of a single panel and must be hinged or sliding.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Does the door self-close or have an audible alarm?</b><br>The door must self-close or have an audible alarm that sounds when the door has been left open. There are certain requirements that the alarm must meet when measured. The alarm must be loud enough to notify people inside the home that the door has been left open. If your alarm has a low battery charge warning, ensure this is remedied as soon as possible. | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Does the door have a self-latching device?</b><br>The door must have a self-latching device that automatically operates on the closing of the door.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

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**Is the latch at least 1500mm above floor?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

The door latch height is measured from the floor inside the building, as this is the outside of the pool barrier.

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**Is there a sign fixed near the door that reads  
'SWIMMING POOL. CLOSE THE DOOR'?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

Signs on pool doors are a requirement under Clause F8 'Signs', which does not apply to detached dwellings or to household units in multi-unit dwellings (such as apartment units). However, homeowners may choose to fit signs to their pool access doors as a reminder for visitors.

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### **Windows:**

**You're Room to  
on track improve**

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**Are the lower edges of windows at least 1000mm above floor?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

Measured from the floor inside the building

**OR Is the window fitted with restrictor/screen, to prevent child access when it is open?**

Restrictors limit the size of the opening to a maximum of 100mm

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## **Immediate pool area**

**You're Room to  
on track improve**

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**Is the area within the barrier only used for pool-related activities?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

Activities that may be carried out in the immediate pool area are those that involve the pool or are in relation to it. However, an activity may also be carried out independently of the use of the pool.

For example, a barbeque and outdoor furniture could be in the immediate pool area but not a clothesline or vegetable garden.

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# Spa pools or small heated pools

Spa pools or small heated pools with a surface area of water under 5m<sup>2</sup> must have a barrier that meets the requirements for other types of pool or instead have an approved safety cover.

The safety cover must meet certain criteria, such as being able to withstand a foreseeable load and having lockable fasteners on all sides. The cover must be returned to the closed position and locked when not in use.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | You're on track              | Room to improve             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Is the pool wall at least 760mm high and not easy to climb?</b><br>Note: this height only applies where there is an approved safety cover.<br>Without the cover, the pool must meet all barrier requirements for pools that are not spa pools or small heated pools. | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Is the surrounding clear of any climbable objects?</b><br>There should be no external objects within 760mm of the top edge of the pool that could assist with climbing. This includes slopes or steps on the ground.                                                 | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

## Cover:

|                                                                                                                                                                                           | You're on track              | Room to improve             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Does the cover support 20kg in centre?</b>                                                                                                                                             | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Does the cover slope to edges from the centre?</b>                                                                                                                                     | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Does the pool have lockable straps or padlocks?</b><br>Covers and fasteners need regular maintenance, particularly if exposed to UV light, which affects straps and plastic fasteners. | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Is the pool cover free of any gaps that a 100mm ball could pass through?</b>                                                                                                           | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Does the pool have warning signs on two of its sides that reads 'WARNING: This spa pool cover must be kept locked except when under adult supervision'?</b>                            | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

# Temporary pools

Inflatable, portable and temporary pools – these are treated in the same way as other residential pools. They must have barriers that restrict unsupervised access by young children if they can hold water to a depth of 400mm or more and have water in them (even if the pool is only partially filled). Regardless of how much water is in the pool, if the height of the pool is 400mm or more it requires a barrier.

*If your inflatable, portable or temporary pool holds 400mm or more of water, please use the 'Pool barrier and fencing' section of this checklist to make sure it's compliant.*

*If your inflatable, portable or temporary pool holds less than 400mm of water:*

-  Actively supervise children around the pool.
-  When not in use, empty the pool and store it away safely. For example, do not leave it filled overnight.

## What next?

- › If you're seeing lots of ticks in the **left column**, you're probably on the right track
  - your pool barrier is likely in good shape, but regular checks and maintenance are still important.
- › If you're seeing ticks in the **right column**, your pool barrier may not be compliant.  
This means there could be safety risks, and you may need to take action.

## Don't guess, get expert advice

If your checklist shows areas of concern, or if there are questions you couldn't answer confidently, **contact your local council or a qualified professional**. They can help you understand what needs to be fixed and how to make your pool barrier safe and compliant.

## Extra checks

-  Take photos of pool and barrier

Note any issues:

# Important information for homeowners

## Key responsibilities as a pool owner

-  You must ensure your pool or spa complies with safety regulations.
-  Barriers must restrict access to children under 5 years old.
-  Gates and doors must self-close and self-latch.
-  Covers for spa pools must be secure and meet safety standards.
-  Regularly inspect your pool area for hazards.
-  Keep signage visible and legible.
-  The pool and its fence must be inspected every 3 years by your local council.

## Key safety tip

-  **Actively supervise children around pools.**
  - Active, constant adult supervision is essential when small children are using or around any pool.
  - Avoid distractions and always keep babies and toddlers within arms' reach around water.
  - Check and maintain your pool barrier to ensure that it continues to perform and helps to keep young children safe.

## More information

- › Contact your local council for pool safety guidelines.
- › Hire a certified inspector for professional advice.
- › Stay safe and enjoy your pool responsibly.
- › Visit [building.govt.nz](https://www.building.govt.nz) and search “pool safety” for more information
- › For general information on all kinds of water safety, including for pools, rivers and beaches, please visit the Water Safety New Zealand website. Water Safety New Zealand – [www.watersafetynz.org](https://www.watersafetynz.org)