

Pool Closing & Winterization Checklist

Toronto & GTA • Fall 2026 • Homeowner field record

Prepared by Ali Vaez, Senior Maintenance Engineer, AVL Custom Homes. Use this as a field record and planning tool, not as a substitute for the pool, cover, heater, filter, sanitizer, or electrical/gas manufacturer instructions. Where a step is model-specific, stop and follow the applicable manual or bring in the trade.

GTA timing note: overnight lows in the Toronto area typically start running at or below freezing from mid-October on. Book closing before a hard freeze is forecast — rushing the shutdown to beat a cold snap is how equipment gets damaged.

1. Pool Profile — complete before changing anything

Property / homeowner	
Pool type (inground / above-ground / other)	
Pool volume (gallons / litres)	
Pool surface / liner / shell	
Cover type / manufacturer	
Heater make + model	
Pump make + model	
Filter make + model	
Sanitizer / salt system	
Known water features / extra lines	
Last closing / opening notes	

2. Tools & Materials to Bring

Check against the equipment on file before you leave the shop — a missing plug or a dead compressor turns a 90-minute closing into a second trip.

☐	Winterizing plugs / "gizzmos" sized for this pool's returns and skimmer(s)	
☐	Air compressor or wet/dry shop vac for blowout, with adapter fittings	
☐	Non-toxic RV/pool-grade antifreeze (if used for this system)	
☐	Skimmer plate(s) / ice compensator(s)	
☐	Cover, water bags or cover-fastening hardware, cover pump	

☐	Basic tools — wrenches, pliers, screwdrivers, Teflon tape/thread sealant	
☐	Deck anchor sleeve plugs (for ladder/handrail sockets left empty over winter)	
☐	Silicone lubricant for expansion-plug threads and O-rings	
☐	Water test kit or strips; results log sheet	
☐	Labels/tags and marker for valves and stored parts	
☐	Camera / phone for equipment-pad and valve photos	
☐	Shop towels, small bucket, garden hose	

3. Before the Closing Appointment

☐	Locate pool, heater, filter, pump, salt/chlorine, and cover manuals if available.	
☐	Photograph the entire equipment pad before moving valves, plugs, or wiring.	
☐	Photograph each valve position and label the plumbing circuits they control.	
☐	Record equipment model/serial numbers and any visible leaks, corrosion, or damaged fittings.	
☐	Check the cover and all anchors/straps/springs/hardware before closing day.	
☐	Confirm the closing date leaves a real weather buffer before a hard freeze.	
☐	If the pool was inherited with the home, trace the plumbing layout before starting.	

Ali's field rule: if you don't know what a valve, line, or plug does, don't guess. Photograph it, identify it, then confirm the procedure.

4. Water & Chemistry

☐	Clean the pool thoroughly; remove leaves and organic debris.	
☐	Test and balance water to the sanitizer manufacturer's and your pool professional's requirements.	

☐	Confirm pH, sanitizer, alkalinity, hardness, and stabilizer are in the appropriate closing range.	
☐	Never add concentrated chemicals without following product directions and checking compatibility.	
☐	Salt systems: verify the cell and controller are operating normally before shutdown.	
☐	Confirm any winterizing chemical/algaecide is appropriate for this system and dosed to actual pool volume.	
☐	Record final water-test results and the closing date.	

Reference ranges (typical — always defer to the sanitizer/system manufacturer):

Test	Typical closing target	Reads
pH	7.2 – 7.6	
Free chlorine / sanitizer	1 – 3 ppm (non-salt); per manufacturer for salt/mineral systems	
Total alkalinity	80 – 120 ppm	
Calcium hardness	200 – 400 ppm	
Cyanuric acid (stabilizer)	30 – 50 ppm — confirm with your sanitizer type	
Salt (salt systems)	2,700 – 3,400 ppm — confirm with your specific system	

Water test record

Test date	
pH	
Free chlorine / sanitizer	
Total alkalinity	
Calcium hardness	
Cyanuric acid / stabilizer	
Salt / other system reading	
Notes / chemical additions	

5. Water Level & Pool Structure

☐	Identify pool construction and cover type before lowering the water.	
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☐	Follow the pool manufacturer's required winter water level.	
☐	Follow the winter-cover manufacturer's required water level.	
☐	Don't copy a neighbour's water-level number — confirm it applies to this pool.	
☐	Don't fully drain the pool unless a manufacturer/professional procedure specifically requires it.	
☐	Confirm any water discharge/lowering rules that apply to this property before pumping out.	

6. Accessories, Fixtures & Skimmer Prep

Clear the pool of anything that isn't part of the plumbing before blowout starts.

☐	Remove ladders, handrails, and diving boards; plug the empty deck anchor sockets.	
☐	Remove and store the solar cover/blanket and reel separately from the winter cover.	
☐	Remove the skimmer basket(s) — never leave a basket in over winter.	
☐	Remove any robotic, pressure-side, or suction cleaner; drain/coil hoses, clean the filter bag or cartridge, and store indoors.	
☐	Inspect the underwater light lens/gasket for moisture or cracking; leave the fixture in place and never run it dry.	
☐	Remove and store pool toys, floats, and other loose deck items.	

7. Plumbing & Lines

☐	Identify skimmer, return, main drain, and all auxiliary circuits before blowout.	
☐	Shut off and drain the auto-fill/leveler line; disconnect it if it draws from a hose bib that will also be winterized.	
☐	Blow out each circuit until bubbles run clear at the pool-side fitting, then install the plug there while air is still flowing — this traps compressed air in the line. Release the blower, then cap/valve the equipment-pad side.	

☐	Hand-tighten expansion plugs only — overtightening can crack fittings.	
☐	Main drains are typically left full and isolated, not blown — confirm the right approach for this pool's depth and plumbing layout.	
☐	Use antifreeze only in isolated sections that can't be fully blown dry — never in the main pool body.	
☐	Pay extra attention to water features, cleaner lines, low points, and unusual plumbing.	
☐	Record which circuits were winterized (blown vs. antifreeze) and where the plugs are stored.	

8. Pump & Filter

☐	Shut down electrical power per the equipment/manufacture procedure.	
☐	Backwash and rinse sand/DE filters before draining (skip for cartridge filters).	
☐	Drain pump housing completely at the manufacturer's drain point(s).	
☐	Drain filter tank/housing as required.	
☐	Cartridge filter: remove, clean, dry, and store as directed.	
☐	DE filter: clean/service grids and winterize per manufacturer.	
☐	Sand filter / multiport valve: set to the winterize position (or as directed) and drain fully.	
☐	Check valves, unions, low points, and housings for trapped water.	
☐	Where the procedure allows, do a second verification pass on drainage.	

9. Pool Heater & Heat Exchanger

☐	Record heater make/model before shutdown.	
☐	Shut off electrical power and the gas supply at both the unit and the meter/tank — not just the unit shutoff.	
☐	Isolate water flow as required for the heater and system.	

☐	Drain the heater/heat exchanger using the exact manufacturer winterization procedure.	
☐	Confirm drain plugs/caps are handled exactly as the manual requires for winter.	
☐	Inspect for corrosion, leaks, damaged fittings, or unusual staining before shutdown.	
☐	Route any repair, gas, electrical, or re-plumbing scope to a licensed trade.	

10. Bypass, Sanitizer & Automation

☐	Confirm whether the heater has a bypass/isolation arrangement and understand its purpose.	
☐	Don't treat a bypass as a substitute for proper chemistry or winterization.	
☐	Empty and rinse the chemical feeder/chlorinator housing — never leave tablets or cartridges in over winter.	
☐	Salt cell: remove, inspect for scale, clean per manufacturer, and store indoors.	
☐	Confirm automation, timers, and freeze-protection settings are left in the correct winter state.	
☐	Keep concentrated chemicals away from equipment left out of service, unless directed otherwise.	

A bypass is a flow-control/isolation feature — it makes service easier, but it does not “protect” a heater from poor water chemistry. Low pH and excess sanitizer can still damage heat-exchanger materials.

11. Small Parts & Documentation

☐	Put drain plugs, caps, fittings, and other removable parts in one labelled, dry container.	
☐	Photograph final valve positions and the winterized equipment pad for the record.	
☐	Note anything that needs repair before spring opening.	
☐	Keep manuals, photos, and this checklist together with the pool records.	

12. Cover & Winter Protection

☐	Inspect the cover for tears, worn straps/springs, damaged anchors, or missing hardware.	
☐	Install and tension the cover per the cover manufacturer.	
☐	Confirm the cover isn't being relied on as a safety cover unless it's actually certified as one.	
☐	Keep drainage paths around the pool and equipment pad clear.	
☐	Protect exposed equipment without blocking heater ventilation/combustion air or service clearance.	
☐	Check the pool/cover after major storms or unusual winter weather, when safe to do so.	
☐	If a solid cover collects water, manage it per the cover/pool manufacturer and local rules.	

13. Final Winterization Review

Closing date / time	
Weather / forecast checked	
Final water level	
Cover installed by	
Equipment left out / serviced	
Issues requiring follow-up	
Spring opening notes	

Final status: ☐ Ready for winter ☐ Service required ☐ Parts required ☐ Professional follow-up required

Spring opening priority	
Additional notes	

AVL maintenance principle: close the system so next spring is easier than this fall. Document what changed, where every removable part belongs, and what needs attention before restart.

14. Equipment Record

Heater model / serial	
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Pump model / serial	
Filter model / serial	
Salt cell / chlorinator model	
Automatic pool cleaner model	
Automation / controller	
Cover model / type	

15. Repairs or Concerns Identified at Closing

Priority 1 — safety / freeze risk	
Priority 2 — equipment / plumbing	
Priority 3 — cosmetic / convenience	
Parts to order before spring	
Trade / specialist needed	
Target follow-up date	

16. Spring Opening Handoff

Where plugs/parts are stored	
Valve-photo location	
Manuals / service records location	
Last water-test record location	
Known opening procedure / notes	

Homeowner / responsible person:

Date:

Technician / reviewer:

Date:

Need help identifying the system? AVL Custom Homes provides builder-led home maintenance and can coordinate the right specialist for pool, HVAC, plumbing, electrical, or other trade-specific work. Reach us through avlcustomhomes.ca or 647-466-6989.

This checklist is practical homeowner documentation, not a substitute for equipment manuals, pool/cover manufacturer requirements, applicable codes, or licensed gas/electrical work.

Bonus: Whole-Home Fall Walkthrough

Optional — not part of the pool winterization procedure. A few extra things worth a look while the equipment pad is open for the season.

☐	Roof and flashing — visible damage or missing material?	
☐	Eavestroughs/downspouts — clear and discharging away from the foundation?	
☐	Grading/low spots — any water collecting beside the house?	
☐	Exterior hose bibs/exposed plumbing — winterized as required?	
☐	Sump pump/discharge — operating and routed correctly?	
☐	HVAC — filter/service due before heating season?	
☐	Basement — signs of moisture, condensation, or seepage?	
☐	Windows/doors — obvious failed seals or drafts?	