

Pool Gnome



How to Raise the pH in a Pool

By Cecilia Acevedo | Updated: January 7, 2025

[Pool Cleaning](#)



Keeping your swimming pool in tip-top condition involves more than just skimming leaves and checking chlorine levels. One crucial factor that often takes center stage is pH balance. If your pool's pH levels are making a splash in the acidic end of the spectrum, it's time to learn the art of raising the pH in a pool.

Maintaining the ideal pH balance in your pool is crucial for water quality and swimmer comfort. Fortunately, soda ash, baking soda, borax, and aeration are effective methods at your disposal to adjust pH levels. Each of them works differently to bring your pool's pH back into the desired range. Whether you need a quick pH boost or a gradual adjustment, understanding these methods will empower you to keep your pool water in a good state.

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Pool pH Importance

Maintaining the pH balance of your pool isn't just about keeping its clear appearance; it's a fundamental aspect that directly influences the comfort and safety of every swimmer.

Picture this: your pool water is a delicate ecosystem, with the ideal pH range between 7.4 and 7.6.

This sweet spot guarantees optimal chlorine efficacy, preventing those pesky red eyes and itchy skin moments. A quick swim in properly pH-balanced water isn't just refreshing; it's a plunge that promises a harmonious blend of comfort and cleanliness for all to enjoy.

Step No. 1: Test pH in Your Pool



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Testing your pool water's pH level isn't an optional chore; it's a crucial practice. Think of it as a reality check for your pool's well-being. By using a trustworthy pH testing kit, you're

essentially peering into the soul of your pool, ensuring it stays within that coveted pH range of 7.2 to 7.8 (between 7.4 and 7.6 is ideal).

But remember, location matters: when snagging a sample for testing, aim for the middle of the pool, away from the skimmers and return jets. This approach ensures you accurately read the pool's overall health.

Here are three ways to test your pool water:

Test Strips

Simplicity and convenience find their ultimate partner in pH testing strips. While these strips might not boast laboratory-level precision, they're a user-friendly tool that gets the job done. Think of them as your reliable poolside companion, providing a quick snapshot of your water's pH health. Test strips can also test alkalinity, cyanuric acid, calcium hardness and chlorine levels.

Liquid Test Kit

For those seeking a touch more precision in their pool pH measurements, the liquid test kit stands as a stalwart ally.

Though it demands a bit more effort, the process is straightforward: extract a water sample, introduce a few drops of the provided liquid, and watch as the liquid morphs into a hue that holds the secret to your pool's pH reality. Just adhere to the step-by-step instructions on the liquid test kit, and you'll master the art of pH measurement like a seasoned chemist.

Digital pH Meter

This handheld device boasts accuracy as its crown jewel, making it a favorite among meticulous pool enthusiasts. All you need to do is immerse the probe into the water, and within moments, the digital display unveils the pH value with remarkable precision. While a tad more advanced, this tool's ease of use and reliable readings make it a must-have for those who crave a high-tech approach to pool maintenance.

Step No. 2: Choose Your Method

Let's raise the pH in your pool with the aid of these potent methods: soda ash, baking soda, borax, and aeration. Whether you're seeking rapid adjustments or gradual fine-tuning, these pH increasers have you covered, ensuring your pool water obtains the ideal pH range.

Which method should you choose? It depends on the desired effect. Each method will affect your pool differently. Some have a strong effect on pH, while others greatly affect total alkalinity with minimal effect on pH.

Soda Ash



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Soda ash (sodium carbonate) is famous for its alkaline prowess, which effortlessly dissolves into your pool's waters, leaving only a faint trace of its touch. When pH levels are in limbo, soda ash takes the lead, bringing balance and harmony. Remember, it impacts total alkalinity, but only slightly.

So, if you're after a rise in pH that leaves a minimal trace on your pool's total alkalinity, soda ash is your backstage pass to pool water perfection.

Application instructions:

Adding soda ash to your pool water is a straightforward process. Here's a step-by-step guide:

- **Test Your Pool Water:** Use test strips, a liquid testing kit, or a digital test kit to assess your pool water's pH level.
- **Calculate the Dosage:** Determine the required dosage based on your pool's pH level and volume.

For instance, 6 ounces of soda ash in a 10,000-gallon pool raises pH by 0.2 and total alkalinity by 5 ppm.

Calculate how much soda ash is needed to bring the pH level between 7.4 and 7.6.

Depending on the required adjustment, you might need to add soda ash in multiple increments.

- **Prepare for Safety and Solution:** Put on appropriate protective gear: rubber gloves, protective eyewear, long sleeves, pants, and footwear.

Create a soda ash solution by filling a 5-gallon plastic bucket halfway with pool water. Add the soda ash to your bucket and stir using a wooden stir stick until fully dissolved. Always add chemicals to water, not the other way around, for safety reasons.

- **Pour the Solution:** Ensure the soda ash is entirely dissolved in the solution to avoid cloudiness. Walk around the pool's perimeter and pour the solution in, aiming close to the return jets for even distribution.

Avoid pouring near the skimmer to prevent it from entering the filtration system.

- **Wait and Retest:** Allow around 6 hours for the filter system to distribute the chemicals throughout the water. After the waiting period, retest the pool water's pH level. If needed, add more soda ash in calculated increments to achieve the desired pH level.

Baking Soda



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Baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) not only raises the pH but also [boosts total alkalinity levels](#) simultaneously, making it a dynamic duo for pool maintenance.

It's worth noting that baking soda has a more pronounced impact on total alkalinity compared to pH.

Application instructions:

To utilize baking soda for pH and alkalinity adjustment, follow these steps:

- **Dosage Calculation:** Calculate the necessary amount of baking soda based on your pool's volume and the desired adjustments. For every 10,000 gallons of water, sprinkle in 1.5 pounds of baking soda to increase total alkalinity by 10 ppm.
- **Application Process:** Distribute the calculated amount of baking soda evenly over the pool's surface. Gently stir the pool water to aid in the distribution of the baking soda.
- **Circulation and Testing:** Allow the pool's water circulation system to operate for a period. This helps the baking soda to dissolve and disperse throughout the pool water.
- **Reassessing the Water:** After allowing the water to circulate, retest the pool water's pH and alkalinity levels. If necessary, repeat the process to achieve the desired pH and alkalinity ranges.

Borax

Imagine borax as the ultimate pool sidekick, swooping in to save the day! Borax isn't just your average cleaner; it's a pH-balancing wizard in powdered form. But here's the twist: it's not like those carbonate compounds that make your pool's pH yo-yo. Nope, borax is the steady hand that raises the pH *without* juggling the total alkalinity of the water.

Plus, it's a guardian against sneaky algae trying to crash your pool party. How? By keeping the pH in check, borax gives chlorine the green light to do its sanitizing thing effectively. The coolest part? Once borax dives into the pool, it's in for good; no vanishing act here.

Application instructions:

- **Test pH:** Before you embark on your pH-rescuing mission, gather intel! Calculate your pool's capacity, its current total alkalinity, and the pH gap you're dealing with.

- **Calculate the amount of borax:** For every 5,000 gallons of water in your pool, sprinkle in around 20 ounces of borax. This nifty amount can elevate the pH by about 0.5. The perfect potion, right?
- **Add borax to the pool:** Flip the switch on your pool's water pump and filter, and let them rock and roll. Introduce the borax to the skimmer. Then, let your trusty pump and filter do their work for the next 24 hours.
- **Re-test:** After the 24-hour, check your pH levels. Is it grooving in the ideal range? If not, no need to sound the alarm. Keep calm and add more borax, just a smidge less or equal to your previous measurements. Your new pH level is the cue for your borax dosage.

Aeration



Aeration, a splendidly natural method, holds the secret to elevating your pool's pH levels while keeping your Total Alkalinity (TA) in check. The catch? Well, it's all about time. Unlike instant fixes, aeration works its magic slowly, requiring more than a single day to nudge that pH needle in the desired direction. Applying this method involves generating numerous bubbles to facilitate the process.

Application instructions:

- You can kick-start the process by activating your Salt Water Generator (SWG), turning on waterfalls or fountains, and even utilizing an air compressor.
- Another technique involves directing the spa jets toward the water's surface, creating ripples that aid in aeration.
- And don't shy away from recruiting your water-loving squad. Let the kids and swimmers unleash their inner splashing frenzy.

After a day of aeration, don't forget to retest the water to observe the pH adjustment. Aeration, a leisurely dance with science, brings pH harmony back to your pool, one bubble at a time.

How to Prevent Low pH in Pools

Preventing low pH levels in swimming pool water is akin to tending to a delicate ecosystem. Regular vigilance is key.

- Begin by maintaining [balanced water chemistry](#) and testing your pool's pH frequently.
- Keep a watchful eye on rainwater and other potential acidic influences, ensuring they don't tip the pH scale.
- Encourage swimmers to rinse off any oils or lotions before taking a plunge, reducing their contribution to water acidity.
- Embrace proactive [pool maintenance](#) practices, using appropriate chemicals to stabilize pH levels.

By embracing these preventative measures, you can effectively safeguard proper pH in your pool, preserving its inviting clarity and ensuring an enjoyable aquatic experience for all.

What Causes Low pH In Pools?



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Low pH levels in your pool can arise from various culprits, throwing the water's natural balance into disarray.

- Rainfall, with its slightly acidic nature, can lower pH as it mixes into the pool.

- The bather's body oils, lotions, and sweat can contribute to this acidity, slowly altering the pool's chemistry.
- The use of certain pool chemicals, especially those designed to sanitize and disinfect, can wield a pH-lowering effect.
- Algae and debris tend to absorb a significant amount of the water's essential carbon dioxide, which is crucial for maintaining a stable pH level. Regular cleanings will help prevent this buildup.

The constant interplay of environmental factors, human activity, and pool maintenance can all conspire to push your pool's pH into the lower realm. Recognizing these triggers lets you dive into effective pH management, ensuring your pool remains clean and safe.

Effects of Low pH On Pools

Low pH levels in pools can turn serene waters into a chemistry puzzle. When the pH dips below its ideal range, the pool's equilibrium is disrupted, potentially leading to many issues.

Why pH Matters:

- **Irritation Factor:** Low pH levels can irritate swimmers' eyes and skin, causing discomfort during pool time.
- **Erosion Concerns:** Acidic water can subtly erode pool equipment, surfaces, and liners, leading to long-term damage.
- **Disinfectant Drawback:** Diminished effectiveness of sanitizers like chlorine or bromine due to imbalanced pH can pave the way for algae and bacteria growth.
- **Water Quality Decline:** A dip in pH contributes to an overall decline in water quality, affecting the pool's aesthetics and safety.

FAQ About How to Raise pH in a Pool

Can pool shock raise pH?

Pool shock consists of a strongly alkaline substance. Consequently, when you [administer pool shock treatment](#), it's probable that both pH and alkalinity levels will experience an increase.

What happens if I swim in water with low pH?

A pH level below 7.0 has the potential to cause discomfort and irritation to swimmers' eyes.

Can low pH in pools cause cloudy waters?

Yes. Too high or too low pH levels can result in cloudy waters.

Where to Find Help to Raise pH in a Pool

In the world of pool care, the true magic lies in achieving a precise chemical equilibrium within the water. A crystal-clear and healthy pool results from diligent effort and regular testing. Understanding the pH of your pool is your compass on this aquatic journey, guiding you toward the optimal balance.

By following the advice in this article, you can seamlessly orchestrate the pH harmony in your pool, ensuring your swims are a refreshing delight. However, if the waters get murky and the pH puzzle seems overwhelming, [local pool care experts](#) are ready to help.

So, whether you're a chemist of the waters or prefer to leave it to the pros, remember: a well-balanced pool is a canvas upon which your swimming memories are painted.

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Cecilia is a home aficionado that loves the world of pools. When she's not writing about home improvement, Cecilia takes a plunge into the specifics of pool care. With a deep understanding of water chemistry and a passion for poolside ambiance, she'll guide you through the ins and outs of creating your own aquatic haven.

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