

Goldilocks and the 3 Covers



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behind every pool

Once upon a time there was house in the suburbs that boasted the most glorious swimming pool. This pool was the highlight of entertainment for three little kids that lived in the house nearby. Unfortunately, unless they were swimming in the pool with parental supervision, their beautiful mother, Gold Locks, wouldn't dare to let them outside.



Purchasing a pool for your home is a large responsibility. It can also be confusing when you are determining things like what accessories you want to include. Other than the pool itself, the most important choice is the kind of cover you will use. The three most important features of any pool cover are safety, convenience and energy efficiency. Your family's individual needs will help determine which of these features takes priority. Ideally, a pool cover that can provide all three is what would work best.

Of the available pool covers, the three most often considered are solid, mesh and automatic. All three of these do the job of covering your pool and keeping out debris. All three also offer some measure of safety, but the rates vary. You could compare choosing from the three types of cover to Goldilocks tasting the porridge at the home of the three bears.

The porridge was basically the same in that it was food and it satisfied hunger. The temperature, however, differed, making each one more or less appealing. Think of the three covers as these three bowls of porridge and the temperature as the combination of the three main factors most people consider when buying pool covers - safety, convenience and energy efficiency. When all the pros and cons are considered, one will stand out as perfect, while the other two will lack one or more of your wanted features.

Luckily, there came a day when a pool cover dealer happened to pass by. He looked upon the sad children and asked, "Why the unhappy faces?"

The oldest replied, "We have a beautiful backyard that perfectly compliments our swimming pool, yet mother never lets us outside to play."

"What a sad story this is," said the pool cover dealer. "Be reminded that your mother loves you dearly, but out of fear she keeps you locked up inside."



The Basics

Let's explore the bare basics of the three most popular pool covers before going into greater detail.

Mesh covers - Mesh covers are made of a material that allows sunlight to filter through. This allows the water to warm a little even when covered. These covers, because of the mesh holes, will allow any water that lands on the cover, such as from rain, to filter through. What this translates into is the elimination of the need for any cover pump. These are the lightest weight of all the covers, which makes them easy to install and remove.



The pool cover dealer continued on his merry way, unable to shake the sorrowful faces of the children he had just met. It was then that he was struck with the most brilliant idea! Several days later, the mother arrived home from the grocery store to an unexpected surprise. There, covering her pool, was a mesh safety cover.

Solid covers - Solid covers are made of a tarp-like material that can be custom-shaped to fit the shape and size of your pool. They are normally eighteen to twenty-four inches wider on all sides, providing a secure fit that helps eliminate all sunlight and any debris that can accumulate over periods of no pool activity. With no sunlight exposure, algae is unable to take hold and grow in the pool. Because they are solid, a cover pump is necessary to remove any water that may fall on the cover. As with mesh covers, these are anchored to the pool deck with springs.

Auto covers - These covers are created to fit snugly over the pool, keeping out all debris and any animals. They are operated by means of computerized programs or a switch that is less accessible to anyone not authorized to uncover the pool. This includes children. They often look nicer than hard covers although they don't come in the variety of color choices of mesh covers.

Now, let's get into the details of each type of cover and see how it stands up to the three categories of safety, convenience and energy efficiency.



The kids, unable to hold back their excitement, ran out into the yard right next to the pool. Instantly, the mother dropped all of her groceries and took off running. "Get back inside," she wailed. The three little kids with their heads hung low obeyed their mother and slowly walked back inside.

The Details

Let's take a look at how each of the pool cover types stand up to the individual areas of safety, convenience, and energy saving. It should be noted that all pool covers should be checked to see if they meet the standards set forth by The American Standards for Testing Materials of Pool & Spa Professionals (ASTM). This organization regulates safety with regard to pools, and reputable businesses will see to it that all their products, regardless of type, meet at least the minimum standards set forth by this organization.

Locks, curious about the new addition, cautiously took a step onto the cover. "It holds my weight," she exclaimed! She looked a bit closer and noticed little holes and quickly added, "This will never work—it may keep my children out, but the dirt can still get in!"



Mesh Covers

Safety - Some might assume that all pool covers provide a measure of safety, unfortunately this is not the case. In fact, some pool covers, such as solar covers, can be more of a safety hazard. Thankfully, mesh pool covers have a method of attachment, involving anchors and springs, that make it difficult for small children and animals to undo. This keeps them safe from accidentally falling in while unsupervised.

The downside of a mesh cover is the amount of time required to install and remove. Therefore, they are generally used as a seasonal cover or when the homeowner is away for an extended period of time. They are rarely used as a daily stand-alone safety cover.

Convenience - Mesh covers don't take up a lot of space and can be folded up and placed out of the way so they are not tripped over. Everything you need to cover the pool is at your fingertips, although secure tightening may be difficult for children or others without a lot of physical strength. The basic convenience of these covers is seen at the beginning of the season or after returning from vacation. It is then that the covers are in use long enough to keep the water free of debris.

Energy Saving - In regards to energy saving, the best thing to note is that mesh covers will not require an additional cover pump to remove excess water, as the water will drain into the pool through the openings in the mesh.

The very next day another cover appeared, this time an entirely solid surface. Once again it could hold Locks weight but a quick tug at the corner proved it to be too heavy for her. "I love that it keeps the dirt and children out, but my husband works all day. I would never be able to remove or replace this cover on my own," said locks.



Solid Covers

Safety - Similar to mesh covers, solid covers are applied with a series of anchor and spring attachment. This makes them safe around animals and children as long as they are securely attached each time after use.

Convenience - Solid covers, like mesh covers, are custom fit to your specific pool. They can be folded out of the way when not being used and easily attached with the springs once initial installation is done. Both mesh and solid covers can be used daily, but most people don't like the time and energy involved in doing so.

Energy Saving - Solid covers keep out 100% of light and debris, so the pool will not need cleaned as often, saving time and expense. Although they will need additional equipment applied to remove any water that may accumulate on top of them. Pool owners can choose between adding a cover pump or a drain installed on the cover itself.

On the third day, Locks awoke to the best surprise of all. Perfectly installed over her beautiful pool was an automatic safety cover! No longer would she have to worry about her children falling in, constant cleaning, and time spent on applications. With the flip of a switch, and in under a minute, her pool was the perfect safety guard.

It was "Just Right!"



And they lived happily ever after...



Automatic Covers

Safety - Automatic covers are solid and virtually impossible for anything to accidentally penetrate. They are a vinyl fabric, so they can be cut or punctured, but the fabric is extremely hardy. They are operated by a switch that can be located out of reach of small hands so that children can be prevented from opening them. Of all the covers, these are the safest, creating an instant barrier that prevents accidental entry. For this reason, they are ideal when pets and young children are likely to be nearby.

Convenience - Automatic covers have a built in storage system. With the touch of a button it neatly rolls up into itself in a tucked away location, making storage very convenient. A keyswitch, wire-connected touchpad, or Wi-Fi touchpad makes it very easy to operate. The switch to open and close the cover is conveniently located within sight of the pool, allowing you coverage within a minute. Automatic covers are custom fit to your pool and flush with the ground, allowing for a seamless fit.

Energy Saving - Automatic covers are, by far, the best on energy savings. They help reduce evaporation, pool heating costs, electricity costs, and chemical use. This equals big savings. It is important to note that, in order to meet ASTM standards, automatic safety covers do require a cover pump be used to remove standing water. The standard option is a cover pump that the homeowner needs to manually place and remove from the cover. Thankfully, there is also a more convenient option called AutoDrain. This feature rolls out with the cover and automatically removes water as it begins to pool, making it unnecessary for the pool owner to go through any extra steps.



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Conclusion

One last option many people take into consideration is purchasing two pool covers: the automatic one for the safety and convenience of daily summer use and a solid one for winterization. This saves wear and tear on the automatic cover by protecting it from the harsh elements in the winter. Yet it allows for convenience in the summer.

Any pool cover is better than none, but you need to consider the three main factors and where your main needs lies before making a purchase. In the end, make sure you get the cover that is "just right" for you and your family.

