



The bucket test

A five-minute check that tells you whether your pool is leaking — or just losing water to the sun. Costs nothing. Takes a day. Do it before you call anyone.

1 Float a bucket of pool water

Fill a bucket about three-quarters with pool water and stand it on a step so it sits partly submerged. Weight it if it wants to float. Sharing the pool's water means both lose to the same sun and wind.

2 Mark both levels

Mark the water level inside the bucket and the pool's level on the skimmer or a tile. A strip of tape on each works well. Mark them at the same moment.

3 Leave it 24 hours

Keep the pump running as normal, no swimming, and pick a window with no rain. Both the bucket and the pool are now losing water under exactly the same conditions.

4 Compare the two drops

If the pool fell about the same as the bucket, that is evaporation. If the pool fell noticeably more, the extra water is going somewhere it shouldn't — a leak.

Reading the result against the weather

Above 38°C in a Perth summer, evaporation alone runs about 5–8mm a day — so a big drop in a heatwave can be honest. Through a mild, still week it is a fraction of that, and a pool falling about 1cm a day is almost certainly leaking. Always read your bucket result against the weather of that 24 hours.

Three ways the test goes wrong

- Auto-fill left on — a float valve quietly tops the pool up, hiding the loss. Switch it off for the 24 hours.
- Rain or wind on the day — both throw the result. Pick a calm, dry window.
- Bucket in shade, pool in sun (or vice versa) — keep them in the same exposure so they evaporate alike.