



## Troubleshooting Automatic Pool Cleaners

(Suction models)

Each year, we see customers that encounter frustration or difficulty when they set up their automatic suction-side pool cleaner. These are pool cleaners such as Kreepy Krauly or Barracuda that plug in to the skimmer like a pool vacuum and are driven by the suction power of the pool pump.

We have found, over 25 years in business and having sold THOUSANDS of cleaners, that in the vast majority of cases there is nothing mechanically wrong with the cleaner, it simply needs some adjustment or tweaking to get it to work right. Manufacturers are well aware of this phenomenon, and provide telephone support to help you get your cleaner behaving the way it should.

We encourage you to review this guide, check your owner's manual, and if that fails, call the manufacturer's 1-800 number (in your owner's manual) for support.

**REALISTIC PERFORMANCE STANDARDS:** Automatic pool cleaners are NEVER designed or able to cover 100% of the pool. Steps and other obstacles are usually out of reach or create dead spots that the cleaner cannot get to. Often a cleaner is unable to get into an area where pressure from the jets is strong. In short, expect to have to do a little bit of manual cleanup, even with the best cleaner in the world! A Kreepy Krauly or Barracuda are essentially dumb devices. They do not follow a program or drive pattern and travel via a series of random hops. Their movements are influenced by currents in the pool and random changes in water flow that can make them spend a long time in one area, and less time in another. This is normal, within limits: These cleaners are designed to clean 80% to 90% of the surfaces within a pool, within 3 to 6 hours. Given enough time they SHOULD get to most areas of the pool.

If the cleaner never makes it out of the deep end, for example, you may need to adjust the hose weights to change the buoyancy of the unit, or the position / direction of the jet eyeballs in the pool. Sometimes you need to replace the conventional eyeball fittings with a special fitting that points straight down.

A tip for long term care; if your cleaner has sectional hoses, do not store the hose in a big coil as the hose will take on a memory of the curved shape that will affect its ability to navigate over time. Try and remember to disconnect the hose sections and lay / store them flat. Do not substitute conventional vacuum hose as these cleaners perform best using the slightly stiff sectional hoses that come with them

when new. Suction side vacuums are also not designed to run 24/7. Use them once a week or so. Running them too frequently means that the pool is not skimming properly (drawing surface water) and, over time, can result in premature wear to the surface of the pool, the pump, and the plumbing.

**NOT ENOUGH or TOO MUCH SUCTION:** Flow is everything in suction driven cleaners, and you can experience problems if there is too much or too little flow. All hose joints must be sound. Water seeks the path of least resistance so if hose sections are not fitting tightly to one another, or to the skimmer adapter, water will flow from these gaps instead of the head of the unit, and there will not be enough suction at the head to drive the cleaner. ALL suction side cleaners are designed to connect DIRECTLY to the bottom (suction) port of the skimmer. Trying to connect them above the skimmer basket with a vacuum plate or adapter may reduce flow dramatically, or may result in air leaking in causing the pump to lose prime.

The hose **MUST** be routed through the skimmer door, attempting to run it out of the skimmer lid and up over the deck can, again, reduce flow and may damage the hose. Also remember that as the cleaner cleans, it is filling up your pump basket and filter! As you see the filter pressure rise, or the pump basket fill, you need to clean these (or backwash the filter) as flow is gradually and constantly being reduced. Less water flow = less suction = poor performance by the cleaner! We also, for the long term health of your pool heater, suggest that you turn it off when using a suction side pool cleaner or vacuum as the drop in flow can force the heater to cycle on an off. Keep in mind that automatic cleaners are not designed to be used when the pool is abnormally dirty; i.e. if you have a bushel of leaves in the pool, remove most of the debris with a leaf rake before you use a manual vacuum or an automatic as that kind of dirt load will overwhelm the pool filter very quickly.

Every pool has a different flow rate that depends not just on the size of the pump, but on its location (distance from the pool and elevation), the diameter of pipe used to plumb the pool, the number of jets, the number and location of appliances (heaters, salt systems, etc...). For this reason, be sure to use the flow regulator device included with your cleaner as if you have too much suction, it will open up automatically (some also have a manual adjustments) and take some of the vacuum pressure off of the head, allowing it to move properly.

Properly testing and diagnosing an automatic vacuum is usually best and most easily done from beside your pool. Bringing a cleaner into a store where the operating environment of your backyard cannot be accurately recreated often results in futility. There are some things that can be seen and fixed like a clog or a broken diaphragm, but before you haul the cleaner into the store, try the steps above, contact the manufacturer's 1-800 support number, and see if a fix can't be found.